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The Planet

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The Planet, 1990, Fall

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the Planet





Notes From the Editor

This issue marks the start of our 20th year of publication. *The Planet* started out as the *Huxley Humus*, published by the Huxley Environmental Resource Bureau, (H.E.R.B), predecessor of today's Associated Students Environmental Center.

In 1979, the name was changed to *The Monthly Planet*. The name had little to do with the frequency of publication, since at best, the magazine came out twice a quarter. Other names suggested and rejected were: *The Environmentalist*, *Ecoviews* and *The Green Fuse*.

We'll never know if the new name was a take-off of Clark Kent's *Daily Planet*, or whether it was just a coincidence. A version of the Man of Steel, *Ecoman*, appeared on the cover of the Dec., 1986 issue.

Over the past two decades *the Planet* has tried to inform, educate and even entertain its readers with articles of local and global environmental concern. At the same time, we have tried to improve both the quality of the writing and the look of the magazine and will continue to do so in the future.

Whether you are a new or a long-time reader, your opinion is important. Write, or call us at 647-6129, and let us know what you liked, didn't like about this issue, or would like to see in future issues.

This coming year may be a pivotal one for *the Planet* and your comments could make the difference.

Look for the next issue around St. Patrick's Day.

Have fun and imagine a better planet for us all.

M.J. Lehnert

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Front Cover photo by Rich Fotheringill: See story on page one.

The Rescuer

Western student spends summer working for wildlife

STORY BY KIM MARTIN

That morning I had already fed six raccoons, prepared baby bird food, and cleaned cages. I was driving to the store to buy chicken hearts for the barn owl and seagull when I spotted a bird sitting helplessly on its tail in the middle of the road. I pulled off and found an injured black-headed grossbeak which evidently had flown into a wire and broken its tail-feathers when it fell.

Carefully, I wrapped that fragile package in a sweater and I quickly headed back to the wildlife center. Because the bird was severely dehydrated, I administered Pedialyte, which is a rehydrating liquid applied to the beak with a cotton swab. After an hour or so, when the bird showed signs of life, I put it in a small box with a towel for warmth and solitude.



An orphaned opossum recuperates at Sardis.

Photo by Rich Fotheringill

I felt confident in the procedure because I was an intern at Sardis Wildlife Rehabilitation Clinic in Ferndale. Wildlife rehabilitation fascinates me and I hope to make it my career. Through studies at Western and my internship I have learned that orphaned and injured animals can be healed and released back to the wild. In fact, Sardis treated more than 80 animals during my internship from mid-May to mid-October.

Helping wildlife survive urbanization is a challenge and a struggle. Fortunately, a good group of more than ten licensed wildlife rehabilitators is hard at work in and around Bellingham. Lois Garlick, director of Raptor Roost on Chuckanut Drive, is well known for her success with birds of prey and waterfowl.

I've learned a great deal from Lois, a veteran in this region, and from Sharon Wolters, the director of Sardis, a new and important center specializing in small mammals and birds. Sharon, a native Californian licensed in wildlife rehabilitation, opened Sardis in May, 1990. The clinic looks like a well stocked mini-



Sharon Wolters and a barn owl look at each other.

Photo by Kim Martin

hospital, complete with two incubators for infants and juveniles, one intensive care unit, and an egg incubator, all of which were completely full throughout the summer.

The center is a non-profit organization, operated solely by volunteers, like me, and supported by donations from the public. My summer was filled with challenge and excitement, fulfilling my dream of working with wildlife. Fortunately, I was able to include practical training in my biology course work.

Whenever anyone hears of my interest, I am asked how I feel about my interference in natural selection. The answer is clear: 95 percent of the animals Sardis receives are there as a direct result of human action -- the widespread effect of interference in the environment. We received raccoons, skunks, rabbits, moles, opossums, Canada geese, gulls, mallards, crows, robins, a barn owl, a field mouse, and a great



Sardis Wildlife Rehabilitation Center

Photo by Rich Fotheringill

horned owl, all orphaned or injured.

The barn owl was rescued from an on-coming bulldozer when a kind man asked if he could check the barn for barn owls first. A single fledgling owl was found and brought to Sardis. Several of the raccoons and all the skunks were orphaned when their mothers were killed by passing cars. A gull and a Canada goose were both shot while in flight and one of the rabbits came because its nest had been run over by a lawnmower; it was the only survivor. I feel I am taking responsibility for the actions of humankind in disrupting natural selection.

Some animals must stay a long time. Infants and juveniles must reach the right age and be able to feed themselves. Injured adult animals must recover. The barn owl lived at Sardis for 10 weeks; most juvenile raccoons stay for at least three months, a long time to be in a strange environment. Though instinct says to fear humans, babies grow knowing only human hands, robbed of a mother who can teach the natural way. All we can do is provide food and shelter and teach them to find their own food. The rest is left up to instinct.

To finish the story about the grossbeak, I took great pride watching the broken wing heal. It was a nasty break and the bird couldn't be released until its tailfeathers grew back. When the wing was unwrapped it was still drooping but it needed some exercise. I called upon a friend to build a large cage (five feet by three feet).

The grossbeak was moved to my home where it flew in the cage for a week. Then it moved up to a whole room for a week. The bird progressed but the wing still drooped.

Next, I took it to Raptor Roost, which has a big aviary. The bird flew all around, going up and down and doing acrobatics. I cheered when I saw the grossbeak had adapted to the new balance in its wings.

I realized "my" grossbeak was ready for release back to the wild. I caught it once more and brought it outside. The moment when I felt the body leave my hands and head straight for the nearest tree limb is permanently etched in my mind. I watched my friend eat, fly and sing all at once. That little guy is probably in Brazil by now. ○

9 ways to lessen your impact on wildlife

I've learned that many things can be done to reduce the number of animals affected by humankind. Even simple changes in daily habits can make a difference. Here are nine ways to help:

- * Cut plastic six-pack carriers into pieces. Save animals from starving with plastic around their throats.
- * Use milk containers for throwing away bacon grease instead of glass jars, which break in the garbage and cut animals when they find fat clinging to the pieces.
- * Use biodegradable household cleaners at home to prevent poisoning habitat and animals.
- * Save old towels and rags and give them to a wildlife center in your area. Extras are stored for the next oil spill.
- * Keep the area near your home manicured if you want, but allow the rest to return to a natural state. This creates an area intensively productive for animals and plants.
- * Use natural substitutes for chemical pesticides. Hot peppers, borax and sugar, crushed tomato leaves and rhubarb leaves work on various plants.
- * Plant trees. They provide food and shelter for animals.
- * Leave old trees and snags, as they are an important step in the nutrient cycle of all life.
- * Do not dump antifreeze and used oil down storm drains as they may end up in a stream or lake.

By making careful decisions, concerned men, women and children assure more animals in the wild and fewer in wildlife care centers.

WHY WORDS MATTER

STORY AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY
SARA OLASON



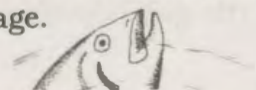
**How I
learned
to write
to save
the Earth**

When words won't come, I like to think about fishing, with all its rewards. It helps me remember why I engage in the lonely, difficult task of writing. For me at least, writing requires long hours at the computer keyboard, without radio or human company. It requires establishing a regular working schedule and sticking to it. Finally, it requires acknowledging my own mental limits, measuring how long I can work productively, and, when I need to, freeing myself to go fishing.

No one teaches the aspects of writing I describe. Unlike lessons in punctuation and grammar, they must be learned by doing. This summer was the first time I abandoned part-time jobs as janitor and file clerk, and made my living solely through writing. Michael Frome, environmental author and *Planet* adviser, hired me last spring to compile endnotes for a forthcoming book, and to

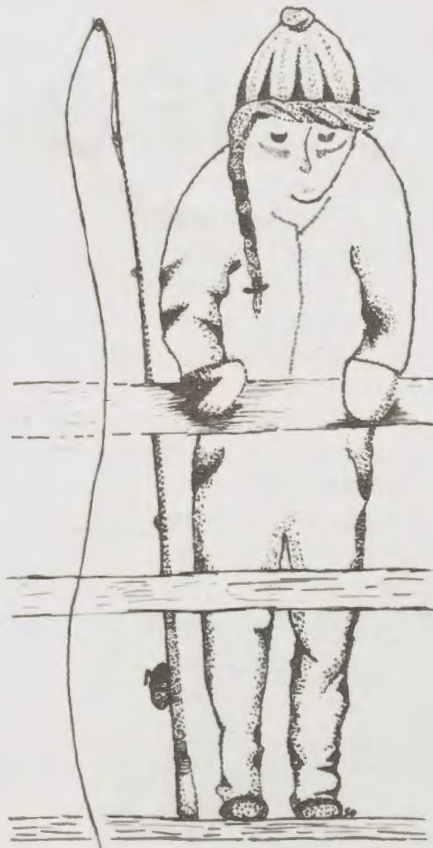
update his annual guide to the national parks. Along with discovering the realities of life as a writer, I learned much about the National Park System, which I knew before only through visits to a few parks in Washington state and in the Southwest.

Though I'm still no expert, digging into the details taught me more. Now at least I know enough to be amazed at the number and variety of parks, spread across landscapes ranging from arid canyons to snowy mountain ranges to marshes full of wildlife. I see the parks encompassing sites where ancient cultures thrived and where our nation was founded and fought for. And I understand the parks are not museum pieces; they are part of an evolving system subject to politics and pollution, but also protected by reverence and love for our heritage.



At the end of the summer, I felt myself linked with those who established our national parks, by a shared passion for preserving our Earth and its creatures. I recognized my kinship with the powerful, silvery bass that tugs my line, depending, as I do, on clean water. The feeling is not, as some would have it, desire to "lock up" wilderness for the pleasure of a few hardy backpackers; nor is it a conviction that plants and animals matter more than jobs and people. Rather it is simple awe and reverence for the wild places left on our planet, and a profound realization that we have already taken our share.

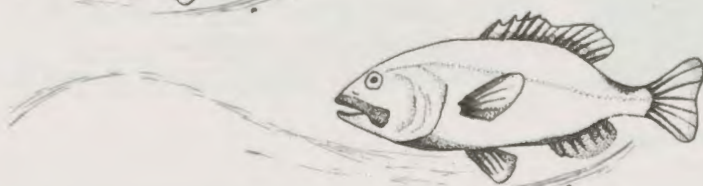
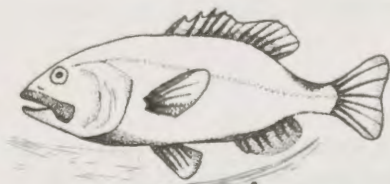
Writing about the environment is, for me, a way to return some of what I have taken. Others have found their own voices, through civil disobedience, political lobbying, songwriting, each contributing as he or she can toward saving our planet. Working as a writer this summer confirmed that words are my way, even when words won't come. I've discovered writing is difficult work — requiring lots of reading, constant distillation of pertinent facts, and interpretation of what those facts mean to the average reader. But I've also realized writing is important.



"There would be no peace for me if I kept silent." Rachel Carson wrote these words to a friend more than 30 years ago, but for me they still shine. In 1962 her book, *Silent Spring*, was published, detailing the dangers of indiscriminate pesticide use. Her eloquence and command of the facts make the writing seem easy, but it was the product of more than four years of labor. I like to recall how, as she neared completion of the book, Rachel realized her reward: "Last night the thoughts of all the birds and other creatures and all the loveliness that is in nature came to me with such a surge of deep happiness, that now I had done what I could."

**"There
would be
no peace
for me
if I kept
silent."**

My summer experiences have brought me closer to doing what I can as a professional writer. Every experience helps, building confidence, expertise and higher expectations for the future. "No writer can stand still. He continues to create or he perishes. Each task completed carries its own obligation to go on to something new." Rachel Carson knew of what she spoke. I hope someday to feel, as she did, my reward in a better world. ○



Don't Refuse It, Use It!

STORY BY BREKKE LYSAKER

It was the third call of the day, yet another customer asking for long, clear cedar boards. I patiently explained that we don't carry premium cedar, but that our specialty is working with low-grade cedar that we remanufacture. It was part of a day's work and, for me, a practical lesson in resource conservation.

On and off for the past ten summers I've worked for Cedarbrook, a small remanufacturing mill in Woodinville. When my father, John Lysaker, president and founder of Cedarbrook, first hired me, I was a teenager with little appreciation of recycling and reusing wood products. However, since becoming an environmental studies major at Huxley College I've gained new respect for my father's specialty.

Fifteen years ago he saw an opportunity to process a high-quality product out of lumber that big mills otherwise burned or ground into sawdust. Larger mills reject this lumber because it does not meet their standards: Defects like very large knot-holes, split boards, or rotten ends lower the quality customers expect for decking and siding.

I've learned from my father and friends that the physical attributes that make cedar so popular only contribute to its increasing scarcity. Cedar is the best wood for weather resistance; it has a hearty, rich grain and a pleasant aroma, and is the only wood that can be split into shakes and shingles. Second-growth cedar has the same weather-resistant qualities but is lighter in color with less robust grain. Because these trees are cut at a young age, the clear vertical-grain heartwood needed for shakes has not matured. The knotty second growth is popular for siding and fences that will be painted. Because cedar is a slow growing tree, many lumber companies won't replant it but instead plant traditional fast-growing trees like fir and hemlock.

Working at Cedarbrook I watch



Brekke at work at Cedarbrook.

Photo By Rich Fotheringill

trucks bring lumber to the mill, where we sort it and decide how it could be best utilized. The work is monotonous but it does yield returns of good cedar. We examine each piece to determine the remanufacturing process required. If the board comes with a split down one side we rip it in half and make a narrower one. If it has a large knothole in the middle, we trim it into two pieces. When a board is defective throughout, we trim out the usable one-foot and two-foot pieces and ship them to another mill which glues the short pieces together into long usable boards. That to me is resource efficiency.

I learned a lot from Jack Gerrard who supplies Cedarbrook with raw materials. On the surface Jack appears like an average rustic woodsman, but he is an enthusiastic and knowledgeable resource conservationist. For years Jack has walked into logged areas and handsplit cedar left behind as waste and hauled it to his truck.

I asked him how long cut cedar lasts on the forest floor. "I can go into an area that was logged 75 years ago and find beautiful pieces of old cedar trees that have not decayed much more than an inch, and all the wood in the center of the trees is in perfect shape."

As our resources continue to diminish, integrated production processes like ours will be adopted, not out of opportunity but out of necessity. We are constantly working against old-school thinkers who don't yet accept these new practices. Problems such as mills burning their low-grade wood for boiler fuel, and machinery too large to handle small pieces, make it harder for us to do business. Everyone wants to work with good wood that doesn't need extensive grading and handling. This is the problem with our economy; it is structured for mass resource use and mass resource gain.

Our cedar remanufacturing mill is a good model of how the business world should and will soon restructure. If the businessmen of yesterday had been more conscious of the rate of resource waste and depletion, and had business ethics been created with the future in mind, today's search for more resources might not be as bleak.

The more I learn at Huxley the more I see the value of my summer work. The mill is an example of how good business can deal with and create usable products out of previously wasted materials.

John Lysaker did not start his business with conservation in mind, but he has discovered its merits and now is in the forefront of resource conservation. I am proud of my father. The sooner businessmen conduct themselves like him, the quicker we can restore our environment. I hope to play a part in it. ○



Brekke points to the raw and finished product. Photo by Rich Fotheringill

SALMON

a symbol worth saving

STORY BY BRET RANKIN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SHARON BETTIS

I expected a long day of work as I pulled into the parking lot of Versacold Cascade Cold Storage in Lynden one Wednesday morning last summer. The past two days I'd heard that a truck load of salmon was expected. That meant the long hours I wanted and needed. The other workers said I wouldn't feel that way after a few days of overtime.

When I walked into the break room and asked the question I asked every morning, my expectations fell.

"I don't know what to tell you," Butch said, shrugging his shoulders. "The salmon just aren't coming in. Last year we worked 12-hour days, seven days a week. We're not having a good year."

Butch is the supervisor of the frozen-fish half of the Versacold plant. At the start of my summer job he had told me to expect long days and not to complain about working overtime. Now overtime was not even a consideration. We simply were



Chinook

not getting the salmon supply of previous years.

Working for three months with the supply of salmon that we did receive gave me a greater understanding of the importance of salmon in our community. It also introduced me to an environmental problem that could become greater than one surrounding old growth and the spotted owl.

As I inquired into the salmon issue to find what was making business so slow, I learned about the rising concern for the salmon of the Columbia River

and its tributaries. As of last summer, eight petitions had been filed by environmentalists and North American Indian tribes requesting four species of salmon be declared endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act. The salmon spawn in the upper Columbia River of eastern Washington and the lower Snake



Coho

River of western Idaho.

The petitions led the Portland office of the National Marine Fisheries Service to begin a study of the four salmon runs for designation as endangered species. A decision is expected by April 2, 1991 on the Snake River Sockeye run and by June 7, 1991 on the spring, summer and fall runs of Chinook and Coho on the Columbia River.

If the recommendation is made, a final ruling will be made by April and June of 1992, following a one-year public comment period. Information from a variety of sources will be used in determining the final ruling.

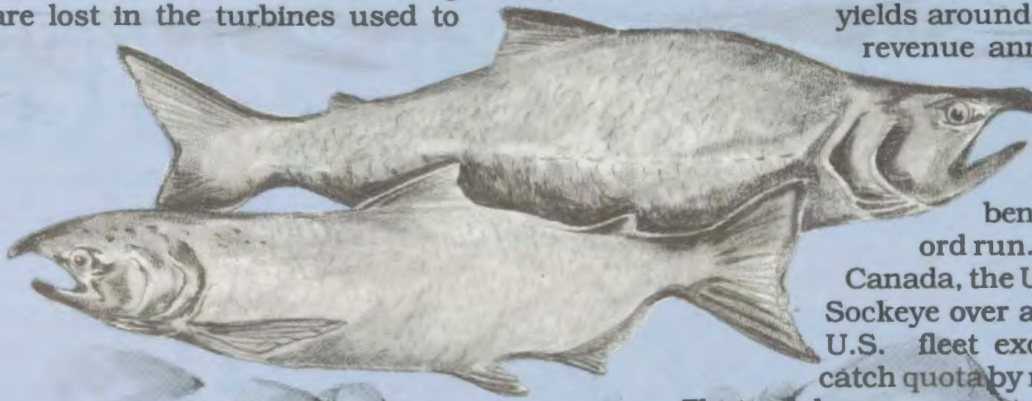
The condition of the salmon must be examined now to prevent any addition to the more than 100 species of trout, steelhead and salmon thought to have become extinct along the Columbia River since commercial fishing began on the river in the 1850s.

Controversy arises in this story when industry, dependent on the dams threatening the salmon, argues that the cost of declaring the runs endangered is too great.

Salmon must traverse the dams on their way to

the Pacific Ocean and back to spawn. An estimated 10 to 15 percent of the salmon passing through a dam are lost in the turbines used to

The Fraser River Sockeye run, the largest producing run for northwest Washington fishermen, yields around \$30 million in fishing revenue annually for U.S. fishermen.



The U.S. commercial fishing fleet, however, did not benefit much from the record run. In an agreement with Canada, the U.S. is allowed 7 million Sockeye over a four-year period. The U.S. fleet exceeded its 2.2-million catch quota by netting 2,298,000 fish.

This number compares to Canada's 12,160,000 fish and non-commercial catches totalling 721,000.

The Department of Fisheries anticipates Fraser River runs as bountiful in the future.

Nevertheless, the close monitoring of the runs in all parts of the Northwest will continue to ensure that over-fishing does not threaten the existence of any salmon species.

There appears clear need to maintain a close watch on the condition of runs throughout our region. To lose any more wildlife for the economic good of humans cannot be tolerated. As the spotted owl has reached the brink of destruction due to human disregard for the environment, these four species of salmon face the same fate. The maintenance of this valuable member of our culture must be a priority over any economic concern.

Although salmon runs in northwest Washington do not yet face the danger of extinction, a lesson must be learned from the controversy. We need to stop the destruction of our resources before the situation becomes as critical as the spotted owl and the Columbia River salmon. ○

generate electricity. The more dams, the greater the loss to the run. Some species must travel through eight or 10 dams to reach a specific spawning ground, dramatically lowering the survival rate.

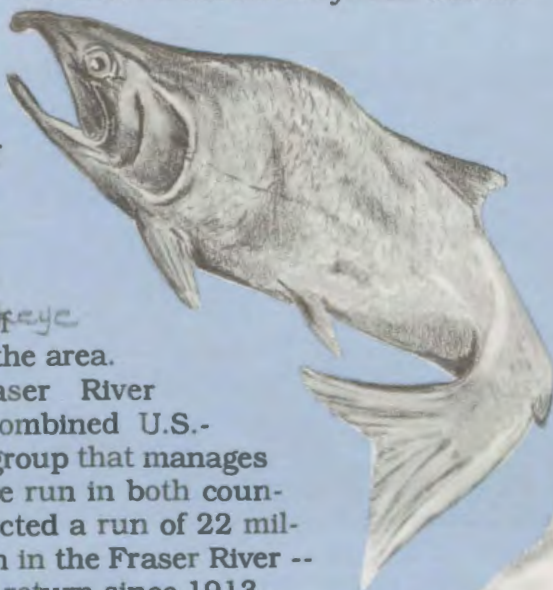
To protect the fish, a reduction in hydroelectric power generated by the dams would be necessary. Industry claims an estimated 1.4 million households would be affected, raising electric rates as much as 33 percent. Flood control, irrigation and recreation would also be affected. Environmentalists, however, believe otherwise.

The old-growth controversy could easily be overshadowed if industry doesn't realize salmon is a natural resource that must be protected. The salmon is a Northwest cultural and economic staple. As environmental and North American Indian groups warned, to lose any more species of any creature is inexcusable, and to lose these salmon after being warned of the danger is intolerable.

While the situation along the Columbia and Snake Rivers is under scrutiny, the run most affecting the work at Versacold in Lynden was unexpectedly

good. The slow summer of work could not be attributed to a lower

number of salmon in the area.



The Fraser River Panel, a combined U.S.-Canadian group that manages the Sockeye run in both countries, predicted a run of 22 million salmon in the Fraser River -- the largest return since 1913.



Keeping gardens green and homes toxic-free

STORY BY JIM SPAICH

A Bellingham homeowner wanted me to spray her peonies with diazinon because she feared they would be ruined by ants and, even worse, that the ants might invade her house. Reading the label, however, convinced me diazinon is environmentally harmful. Spraying insects which might in turn be eaten by birds meant that I would introduce this poison into the food chain. After we discussed it awhile, I took the diazinon back to the store and sprayed her peonies with a safer, organic product.

Another homeowner asked me to fertilize a small garden of strawberry plants and several rose bushes. I bought and applied a fish emulsion fertilizer suitable for both roses and strawberries. Again, the product was organic, thereby posing no threat to the environment. Several weeks later, the strawberry plants produced a bounty of berries and continued producing for months; the newly planted rose bushes blossomed in pleasant pink, yellow, and crimson. The organic product worked wonderfully.



Photo by Gary Gray

I've been working my way through graduate studies at Western as a factotum of Bellingham backyards, helping clients keep their estates neat, trim and healthy, and learning practical environmental lessons in the process.

I continually find earth-sensitive products available. Although I could use a synthetic chemical formulation, I prefer a product which offers reasonable results with minimal environmental impact. Buying non-toxic products is an excellent way for consumers to participate in the

campaign to save the environment. It is important to avoid products which jeopardize the planet and ourselves. Unfortunately, many homeowners have been led to believe certain products are "reasonably" safe.

These products are seductive: readily available, simple to apply and effective for specific problems. Nevertheless, I find more and more people taking the progressive attitude necessary to curtail their excessive use. One client and I planted fruit trees, grape vines, raspberry bushes, and a fine selection of herbs and perennials using no synthetic chemicals to enhance growth. To increase soil quality, we spread a liberal amount of topsoil and periodically added compost around the plants. We created an attractive landscape using organic principles.

This client, however, is the exception rather than the norm. Most customers feel the various chemicals they use on their lawns and in their homes pose no significant problems. Garage shelves stocked with formulas designed to kill dandelions, slugs, and insects or to produce giant pumpkins, dahlias, and sweet corn accentuate this common misconception. I look at people's shelves and consider the magni-



Photo by Gary Gray

tude of the crisis by multiplying this individual usage by several million.

This calculation proves spraying toxic insecticides on flowers poses a threat; so does spreading chemical fertilizer on the lawn two or three times a year, or using any toxic product. Rectifying this reliance on chemicals requires effort. A change in consumer attitudes will reduce the amount of toxic products manufactured, used, and abused.

Buying non-toxic products is an excellent way for consumers to participate in the campaign to save the environment.

So why do I stain houses and decks with oil-based stain? Why do I add insecticide and a mildew control formula to the stain? Why do I use any toxic chemicals? Although I hate using these products, homeowners want to beautify and protect their homes. The most frustrating aspect of my work is dealing with my conscience. Although I try to avoid such products around my house, I let people pay me to apply their poisons. We all have room for improvement.

I feel increasingly sensitive about my role in environmental degradation. My awareness has been developing for several years. I also appreciate the people for whom I work. They're interested in my personal endeavors, and in many cases are like an extended family. I try to recognize the individual awareness in my employees and work with them accordingly. Some are open to suggestions; others are not. Sometimes I recommend safer products; other times I am hindered by the lack of alternatives. Often if an alternative exists, it is cost-prohibitive.

A change in consumer attitudes will reduce the amount of toxic products manufactured, used and abused.

Cost is an important issue when considering alternative products. I recognize people's apprehension toward spending two, three, and even

four times as much for eco-sensitive products. Working for people in Bellingham has been a pleasant experience. While outside, I look around at the mountains, the bay, the lakes and realize this area's unique beauty. I hope as I become more confident of my personal environmental attitudes, I will encourage others to make necessary changes so we might preserve this beauty. ○

WHAT TO DO WITH LEFTOVERS?

It's simple to utilize leftover rice, spaghetti, or beans. Utilizing partially-empty containers of toxic household products might not be as simple. Many people leave them in the garage or closet for years. Unfortunately, when the time comes to discard the leftovers, the trash can becomes the receptacle of choice. Toxic household wastes should not be discarded with other household waste or recyclables.

In Bellingham we are fortunate to have a facility that specializes in handling toxic household products. The Disposal of Toxics Program (DoT) has been a public service for six years. The program recycles waste fuels, paint, solvents, and antifreeze. All other toxic products of household origins — pesticides,

fertilizers, medicine — are put into appropriate containers and transported to a chemical-waste landfill in Oregon. DoT receives revenues from a utility tax on garbage collection. Business has increased during the last two years as environmental awareness grows. Following a promotional campaign to increase public awareness of the service, future plans include local handling of moderate-risk waste (household and small business), a larger facility, and satellite stations in the county.

Using this service makes disposal of household toxics almost as easy as making burgers from Tuesday's beans and Thursday's rice. For more information call the DoT at 676-6961.



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HOME

1. Apply high-quality paints and stains that offer at least 10 years' protection, preferably more.
2. Avoid products known to cause problems (i.e. aerosols, chlorine bleach, detergents, and other products that are either non-biodegradable or toxic.)
3. Make cleaning products from vinegar and water or other non-toxic recipes.
4. Recycle old paint, oil and batteries.
5. Give unused products to someone who can use them.

LAWN AND GARDEN

1. Be more tolerant of insects, weeds, and other "annoying" entities. If you must rid your turf of these pests, do so manually: uproot weeds; collect slugs and other insects in a container and transport them to another location.
2. Use pesticides and herbicides which are environmentally benign.
3. Use plants requiring less care.
4. Start a compost pile with kitchen and yard waste.
5. Research and practice organic gardening principles.

Think of positive, healthy ways to enhance your home, lawn, and garden. Don't make your environment a toxic waste dump.

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*****DISCOVER*****

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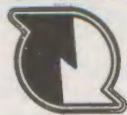


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Speaking the language:

Communicating environmental awareness

STORY BY PETER DONALDSON

"Chuck," I asked, "how about using rocks instead of chemically treated wood?" I held my breath.

When he said, "Okay," that was a big victory.

I spent the summer of 1990 building decks, fences and walkways for a Bellingham landscaper. Every day was a battle between my feelings about the environment and the attitude of my boss about finishing the job. I saw waste and it didn't make sense.

As I've found in the past, most businesspeople take little notice of the environmental implications of their work. But, unlike most summers, the things I've learned about communication at Huxley College helped make this summer more than just a paycheck.

My first assignment was to build a 200-foot cedar fence. The longest side (150 feet) was four feet high, while the shorter side was six feet high. In ordering the wood, my boss used little foresight and even less concern for the possibility of wood waste.

Instead of ordering eight-foot picket sections for the four-foot side he ordered six-foot picket sections for the entire fence. I told him that by cutting off two feet on every picket he would be



The author examines wasted wood.

Photo by Gary Gray

wasting over 300 feet of wood.

He brushed me off: "Whatever is left over I can burn this winter." I didn't think things could get much worse until I saw the nails he had bought. Small tacking nails were all we needed. Instead, he ordered two-inch framing nails. I told him that this size would split the

thin pickets, but Chuck was more concerned with finishing the job.

When the contractor saw the split wood he told us to replace it. The half that needed replacement became another 300 feet of old-growth cedar turned into kindling.

I convinced my boss to purchase eight-foot sections to undo his mistake. Although the fence had been a disaster from the start, taking this small step felt good.

As the summer went on and I felt more comfortable with my job, I expressed my feelings concerning the environmentally unsound way he ran his business. I didn't get fired. I was thanked.

We began buying unleaded gasoline for the company truck and recycling his used motor oil. We built a rock wall instead of using chemically treated landscape timbers. I got my fellow employees to carry their pop cans back to the shop where they could be recycled.

The company is small, but everything we did had some relation to the environment. Knowing that the ideas I brought with me didn't leave with me was the greatest achievement. The guys kidded me, but in the end they picked up their trash. Diplomacy worked; my landscaping summer was a learning summer. I learned to speak their language and I felt they learned to listen. ○

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KEEP THIS COUPON

The scoop on Styrofoam

BY PETER DONALDSON
AND SARA OLASON

Should Styrofoam make a comeback at Western?

Two years ago, Western students voted to remove Styrofoam from campus eateries, because of concerns that chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), used in making plastic foam, were damaging the Earth's ozone layer and public health. Marriott, Western's food service company, obliged by replacing Styrofoam with paper.

Things have changed since then. In November, McDonald's announced plans to eliminate its plastic foam meal containers.

But Styrofoam may be Western's disposable dish of the future.

Marriott recently proposed a switch from paper back to Styrofoam. Food service managers say it's an environmental plus because they will collect used Styrofoam dishes and

ship them to a factory for remanufacturing.

On the surface, the idea seems plausible. Paper containers contaminated with food or waxy coating cannot be recycled. Used Styrofoam, however, can be salvaged.

But our investigation turned up three critical issues that must be addressed before the campus community can make an intelligent choice:

**Toxins.*

Styrofoam food service products are made from polystyrene, which is composed of the chemical, styrene. The raw material for styrene production is benzene.

These chemicals are toxic. Styrene exposure causes health effects ranging from drowsiness to death; it may cause genetic changes and may damage developing fetuses. Benzene is a suspected human carcinogen.

The Polystyrene Packaging Council of Washington, D.C. claims workers in styrene plants are not exposed to harmful amounts of chemicals during manufacturing. But we wondered: Should Western, a leader in environmental studies, be a consumer of toxic chemicals?

**Food contamination.*

Researchers have found styrene can move from polystyrene containers into food. Exactly what risks this poses to human health remains unclear.

"Concentrations found to be safe in animals are 10,000 times higher than potential exposure from food service products," claims the Polystyrene Packaging Council, adding that styrene occurs naturally in such foods as nuts, beer and milk.

Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes (CCHW)

THE GREENS ARE BACK

BY JENNY FLYNN

"Green" is making headlines. The color has become associated with all that is positive in this era of environmental concern. In particular, "Green" is the name of a political party in Germany devoted to advancement of environmental awareness in politics. That same green spirit has reached Western Washington University in the

form of The Western Greens, an Associated Students club devoted to discussing and getting involved in local enviro-political issues. The Western Greens are part of a loose international coalition of Green Clubs (including the German Greens) all supporting the philosophy of non-violence and decentralization combined with political action.

The Greens are not new to Western, but in former years the club was plagued by a lack of organization and cohesive focus. Co-coordinators Amy Dearborn, Stephanie Moe and Jeff Quiggle feel optimistic about new members and feel the club can avoid previous pitfalls.

Recognizing the two-party system in the U. S. is too entrenched to allow for a successful third-party bid, American Greens are attempting to "green" the Democrat party. During the recent election Western Greens worked on Kelli Linville's unsuccessful state senatorial campaign.

In addition, the group participates in information sharing with other

Greens around the world. The group also plans to bring speakers on environmental issues to Western's campus. Local Green projects will be decided by the group itself—there is no set agenda. Amy Dearborn said, "Environmental action needs to come from the bottom up. A true revolution in thought comes when people take action instead of someone telling them to take action."

The Western Greens hope their club will give those complaining about the condition of the environment a way to put their words into action. Mostly, they want to show that something can be done about environmental degradation.

Stephanie Moe summed up the group's hopes by saying, "So many people think environmental consciousness is a fad that will fade, but hopefully we can disprove that attitude and we won't forget about our responsibilities."

For more information on the Greens contact Jeff Quiggle at 733-5950. O



is not convinced, as we learned from CCHW research analyst Brian Lipsett in Arlington, Virginia. In 1987, CCHW launched a campaign to convince McDonald's to stop using polystyrene packaging. One reason, Lipsett said, was concern over migration of toxics into food.

We wondered: Exactly what health risks does regular use of Styrofoam pose to consumers?

**Ozone.*

Ozone-damaging CFCs, once used to "puff up" polystyrene into foam, are on the way out: The Foodservice & Packaging Institute, an industry trade group, says its members have eliminated CFCs from their production process.

And "at least on the West coast, CFCs have never been used in the production of Styrofoam," said Gary Heindrick, sales manager at Kenco, a distributor of paper and plastic food service products. (Kenco supplies products to Food Services of America, which in turn supplies Marriott.)

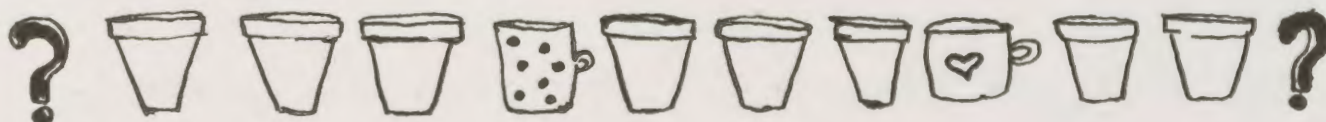
Common alternatives to CFCs are, according to our research, pentane or butane, hydrocarbons found in gasoline or cigarette lighters.

Another alternative is a hydrogen chlorofluorocarbon, HCFC-22, a CFC with a hydrogen atom attached. While it is said to do 95 percent less damage to the ozone layer, it is still an ozone-depleter.

The Polystyrene Packaging Council says HCFC-22 will be replaced within three years with ozone-safe blowing agents. We were glad to hear this, but we wondered: Couldn't Western wait for this change before discussing a switch to Styrofoam?

In the end, we concluded the question of "paper or Styrofoam" misses the point: Western needs a switch from disposable dishes, period. We need washable, reusable dishes -- an option Marriott and university administrators must weigh against ecological costs of any disposable.

Stay tuned for more on the issues above. If you have others, let us know. ○



Marijuana: the answer to deforestation?

BY JEFF QUIGGLE

The National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws is convinced it has a practical solution to some immediate environmental problems.

Bryan Estes, co-coordinator of the NORML chapter at Western, claims making paper from the marijuana plant is ecologically sound. "Over a 20-year growth cycle, marijuana provides four times the yield for paper products than trees, and, compared to wood, marijuana needs only 10 percent to 20 percent the toxic chemicals to break it down into paper products."

The process for bleaching hemp is also much easier on Mother Nature than that of wood. Because you can bleach marijuana products with hydrogen peroxide instead of chlorine, no dioxin pollutants are released, unlike when paper is made from trees.

Examples of documents made from hemp include the original drafts of the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights.

Not only can marijuana be used to make paper, but it can also fuel automobiles. Marijuana is the number one

biomass producing plant for methanol fuel, a cleaner burning fuel. This is balanced by the fact combustion byproducts are equal to metabolic needs of the plant.

Marijuana can also be used as an alternative to pesticides because of its rapid rate of growth. Two growing cycles will force out weeds which have a low shade tolerance.

With all this on its side, NORML should have tremendous popular support, and could even be in a position to spearhead a campaign to restructure our entire economic system with marijuana.

Is it that simple?

"Yes," insists Co-coordinator Kevin Keyes.

So how can it be done?

"By becoming the dominant major political movement. The resistance to this changeover comes in large part from the usual collection of suspects: pharmaceutical companies, oil companies, energy companies, and Dupont in particular have a history of trying to keep it illegal so they can make more money.

"There is speculation that because it has so many medical applications, some of the pharmaceutical compa-

nies could wind up losing up to 33 percent of their market share," Keyes explains. "When you think about how much money that actually is, you have to ask yourself, how far would a giant corporation like that go to preserve a 33-percent market share? And the answer to that question is they would go quite a ways.

"Remember that they are the people who are in charge of doing research on whether or not marijuana has any medical validity, and the answer they keep coming up with is 'No, of course not, you have to buy our products instead.'"

Estes could write a book on the benefits of marijuana. "Not only would the forests be saved, but there would no longer be the high levels of pollutants being released by pulp mills (and no dioxins). It also would provide a valuable crop for farmers, which could end the government's current practice of subsidies. Legalization would reduce the prison population, and drug war funds aimed at marijuana could be used for rehabilitation and treatment, all the while creating revenues of up to \$80 billion a year."

For information on the group call Kevin Keyes at 734-7399. ○

