Sonoran observation

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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Culture Change Letter #184

Note: I spent much of April up and down Mexico, and this little essay is one result. More to come, along with a new section for our website called Spanish Speaking World that will feature unique and timely contributions from our special contacts. - JL

Beyond the usual thoughts and feelings that dominate in my daily life, such as those about food, bus tickets, beautiful Mexican women, etc., insightful observations come to me that I sometimes commit to paper. My good and bad luck, as well as keen interest in the future, have afforded me -- with my self-preservation discipline -- a bit of heightened awareness. If it's useless in the coming industrial collapse, it has at least been a hobby.

As I view the beautiful countryside north of Hermosillo and marvel at the steady if not eternal overall dryness that somehow permits so much life, a tranquility and peacefulness descend on me. Others around me, and those who have been here, seem to share it.

If I took much notice of the rarely appearing rude soldier or even more rare bitter fellow passenger, I would miss the intense pastels of this land, and my calm and open state of mind would not form in the first place. Then again, I belong here because I was born in this country, and I thus have an incentive to understand it.

I regret the commitments of modernity that speed me along and deprive me of meeting wise old locals who might share secrets of the land. What experiences await the horseback rider beyond those intriguing rocky mountains?

Writing these passages or paying attention to a Hollywood movie on this bus can make me miss a garbage bag flapping on a barbed wire fence. Who would want to go in past there anyway? I surely would, to reach the protective shadows of a wild canyon and seek out a spring.

To the south, time spent on a Guyamas beach presented me with two beings I never had had the pleasure to meet. As I waded into the turquoise water, marking the rocks beneath me to avoid, one "rock" shot ahead of me as it skirted the bottom: a ray skated away to avoid being stepped on and perhaps stinging me. The last time I saw a ray was in Tenacatita Bay, hundreds of miles to the south almost to Manzanillo -- a manta ray bigger than a skiff, and a lot more graceful besides. The image stays in my mind forty years later.

Back on the Guymas beach: a rather big lizard, almost as big as an iguana (or a species of iguana), performed push ups on a rock before my close presence sent it scurrying into a hole in the rocks. How did the reptile get any fresh water in that dry area? It is wise enough to do so, but a city human without the petroleum support-system would die of thirst here. Another wise native of this desert, a huge hare, also drinks enough water somehow.

We humans can slice open a cactus and build a shelter, and more. But, thanks to a relatively recent divergence from loving nature, that we can call Western Civilization, we stand naked next to our technology, imagining it doesn't fail and that it can self-perpetuate to convenience us forever.

So we are vulnerable to self-destruction: both of the collapse variety that cuts off supplies, and to the consequences of opening ourselves to dangerous swings in weather from the climate change we have wrought. The bus powers along and disturbs the harmony and air of the desert and the planet.
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