

What's on your horizon?

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“TOPOCK”

The time and tide of Arizona has definitely changed. Changed by the people who have used and abused her beyond the allowable limits imposed by God.

At one time, which seems farther away than ever before, the little pit stop of a town called Topock used to be the place that I held near and dear to my heart. The skies were perfect, clear and blue, and filled with billowy white clouds lazily drifting to adorn more easterly skies. There used to be a delightfully wonderful place to seek refuge from the riotous clamor of society, the silently beautiful Topock Marsh. One could actually get in touch with one's higher self there. You could reach up to the heavens with spiritual arms outstretched and honestly feel an embrace in return. Sadly, it's now part of the Lake Havasu National Wildlife Refuge, which is nothing more than a fancy sobriquet for marshal law of nature's gift to the Colorado River.

Naturally, to support the increased numbers of tourists and transplants, a prodigious coal fueled powerplant towers over the sand dunes that once graced the shoulders of Davis Dam. It spews its offensive, health devouring exhaust of putrid smoke which drifts lazily along the Colorado, filling the once splendid valley with a weird greenish brown haze.

At its feet, an even more demonic demise to the valley grows every day, inch by inch, tower by tower—Laughlin, Nevada. It's a mini Las Vegas, but it comes complete with added tourists, workers, emission spewing automobiles and seemingly endless lines of mobile and motor homes towing their little runabouts. Those range in size from mini pickups to full size trucks, from compact cars to Cadillac's.

I don't understand why refugees from other cities all escape to the Topock valley. After all, there is no break in the smog from the coast to the valley, from Tucson to the valley, or from Las Vegas to the valley. It is solid haze now where once stood majestic, prehistoric mountains weaving their tales of ancient times, standing as a final monument to the tremendous upheavals in the earth's surface from day's gone past.

My beloved Topock Marsh is nearly inaccessible for the sheer enjoyment of watching graceful cranes, catching once healthy, fighting trout, bass, and even tasty catfish. The fish are sluggish from the toxins that poison their water, the cranes are slowly leaving, and my enjoyment is dwindling as fast as the marsh is fading.

This once beautiful, majestic valley has been horribly violated. Everyone sat back and watched it happen to Los Angeles, even San Francisco, Phoenix, Las Vegas, and other cities too numerous to name, and now we sit back and watch it take over yet another precious spot of nature. Watching it makes me angry because I know I can do nothing. I have attended Green Peace rallies, environmentalist protesters, and a myriad of other groups who untiringly protest to prevent ecologic disaster from spreading, but it's of no use. If our government truly doesn't care, then it's all lost. I'm not talking about the care that oozes and drips off the lip service they give us, I'm talking about care enough to stop the environmental bombs that are robbing us of our future, of our children's future.

Anger seems to be the prevalent emotion in this valley as well. At one time the snowbirds (retirees), as well as the young and the restless, came here to either relax and enjoy the peaceful, calm, healthy life, or to party their brains out for a couple days a month. Now, most of the snowbirds have emphysema or are dying of the pollution in their water, and the raving party-goers are worse than ever. And everyone is angry with everyone else, always blaming the other guy for the pollution, the crowded streets, the congested river, and so on.

This once peaceful and serene valley is now filled to the brim with angry, old, jackasses who think the world owes them a living. It used to be that the only jack-asses were gray furry critters up in the quaint little town of Oatman, but now they own gigantic motor homes and tear up the highways faster than they can be repaired. The once lazy, innocent little desert town of Topock, the strategic intersection for Interstate 40, Laughlin and Needles, has now become the geriatric Indy 500. The number of older drivers has increased, naturally in keeping with the increased size of their go karts. Only now their once economical retirement vehicle has grown into a train like motor home, trailing that once economical second car.

On these little back roads one will never argue with the civilian renditions of the Bradley Tank and the Armored Personnel Carrier's driven by senile old rascals who think they're the living incarnation of General Patton himself. It's frightening how things have changed. Even though I'm also getting older, I find that the only fear I have is turning into one of 'them'.

Ironically, I've never even been frightened of death, but becoming a senile old fart who's bent on bullying my way through the rest of my days and the lives of innocent bystanders, truly does frighten me. Death seems to be a graceful alternative to what or who inhabits this valley now.

God, hear my prayers. Don't let me grow up to become a mean, cruel offender of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness welding 30,000 pounds of steel, fiberglass, and rubber beneath my feet. Don't let me abuse this precious planet anymore than it's already suffered, and take my life from me if I ever abuse another person as I have seen going on lately.

I'm leaving this nightmare that dares call itself Topock, to find the quiet, lazy, summer memories I once held dear to my heart. That's the Topock I want to remember. Not this one, the abomination of societal atrocities against an unassuming little plot of earth. This used to be my home, my beloved Topock Marsh, but not any longer. I missed it when I left years ago, sadly I shall miss it forever.

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