

Opinion

Reaching back into the natural world

To a degree impossible in any previous century, it's quite possible to live and die in the city without having any real understanding of what goes on in rural areas. In some cases, without ever really seeing a rural area.

More than this, there's a separation as never before of those who work with their hands and those who don't.

We can go straight from the cradle to the grave without ever actually making anything tangible. Such is the life of the college student who graduates to work for an investment bank and spends the rest of his life shuffling pieces of paper and watching hypothetical values go up and down.

A strange world, where we are so separated from the land we came from.

Not understanding the land, or the sea or the life of the craftsman is unhealthy. It's easy for an executive to make a decision that affects the environment in troublesome ways when he has no clue what the environment really is, when he has never woken up to find his carefully nurtured strawberry plants blighted by a late frost.

Jim Greenhill

Staff Columnist

Even birth and death become more difficult to comprehend. A man used to the certainty of a stamped-out condominium, a sooty stretch of freeway and nine to five at the air-conditioned office with the windows that don't open will be traumatized by the sudden death of his wife in a tragic auto wreck.

Our lives are so distant from cold reality. People die in hospitals, behind windowless walls, surrounded by professionals.

Nature has her routine too, and the lucky ones among those who live and work on the land can expect to live her rhythms for their natural lives. But death is a part of the cycle too. I remember riding into town with the farmer down the lane who was taking a ewe to the veterinarian.

There are those who would be horrified by the thought of a ten-year-old watching a man drive with one

hand and try to hold the innards of a sheep inside the still-moving body with the other.

But there's nothing traumatizing about it. It's part of life, that an animal could give birth to twins and die as a result.

Even my first awareness of the sex act came from Tony Cradick's farm. He was moving a herd of cows from one field to another. They were stopped for a moment while he struggled with a rickety old wooden gate. One climbed up on another's back. "Stop them from doing that," Cradick said.

"Why do they do that?" I asked. "Instinct. But they're not supposed to be doing it right now."

He didn't explain any more, and it wouldn't have been appropriate for him to do so. But when I came to ask my parents about the birds and the bees, the solitary life of certain bulls separated from the heffers in their own pastures gave me a clue as to what the answers would be.

We all have different roles, and the role of the stock broker is to as-

sist in the complex process by which corporations receive the funding that enables them to create millions of jobs and manufacture products that make our lives easier.

But this summer I was shocked to see how my perspective had changed in five years away from people who use their hands and make real things.

I've been working on a construction site some afternoons this summer. It's been a particular pleasure to see wooden framing for new floors and walls carefully fitted by expert carpenters, to feel the texture of the wood, to smell the pine.

One day I walked down Franklin Street in my muddy clothes. I'd been on my hands and knees in a crawl space. I realized that most on the street were wearing crisp, pressed clothes. Seeing a friend, I was embarrassed for a moment — then annoyed. Why do we make judgments about the value of different people's jobs when we need the street sweeper every bit as much as we need the rock star?

One of my co-workers put it the best.

Apprentice Jamey White said he was in a bar one evening. There were two other men at the bar — a doctor and an attorney. "They asked me what I do," he said. When he told them, they acted as though his job were somehow less important than their own.

So White asked "Who built the houses you live in?"

They didn't say anything else about it.

Because, when the environment finally quits taking the abuse we've been giving it and the resources we've been squandering start drying up, those of us who have sat behind desks all our lives and think food comes from styrofoam containers and shelter arrives on a truck, will be the first to go.

More likely, our perceptions of what kind of work is important and what is less so will shift. And that might not be a bad thing.

Jim Greenhill is a senior journalism and English major from London, England.

Searchin' for a focus for this column

Seeing as how this is the last regular issue of the Tar Heel, and after this I'm out of a job and a regular columnists slot, I'd better leave you with some words of wisdom. So here they are:

Look both ways before crossing.

Now you can't say I never said anything wise, because if you do, you might get hit by a car and die. This column *does* have some moral fiber, and we all need fiber every day to prevent cancer and keep us regular. So there are *three* important things this column is doing. Nyah, nyah.

Well, now that the *purpose* part of the column is out of the way, I can get on to the more important business of shoveling on the b.s.

Speaking of b.s., recently I was standing in the express line at a local Food Lion waiting for some pinhead in front of me who had *well over* 10 items to check out, when I noticed something strange and unusual which I had never noticed before: There's an eye over the pyramid on a dollar bill. Had you ever noticed this before? I hadn't, and it caused me such great consternation that I uttered aloud, "Hey, this causes me great

John Bland

Less Filling

consternation!" at which time the little old lady behind me offered me a bottle of Metamucil and I couldn't find the heart to tell her what I had really said.

Actually, right after that I saw a headline that really rocked my world. It was so shocking and disturbing that I misspelled "one" on my check. The headline, in bold black ink on the front page of the Weekly World News, read (and I can't be making this up): "Mechanical toilet shoots oldster through ceiling."

Now I don't want to hear any snickering, because I am trying to make a serious point here. This is clearly a matter of grave importance, and somebody is going to be in deep doo-doo when the stuff hits the fan about this one. I can just see them now over at American Standard: "Oh God, Phillips! You remember that Toilex 2000 model we shipped out without testing! Well, guess what?"

And think about what's going to happen when the government gets its hands all over this mess (and they probably won't even wear rubber gloves).

I can see it now: All over the country men and women will be afraid of heeding nature's call. Outhouses will come back into vogue, sparked by a Yuppie backlash. We'll have outhouses in Manhattan, outhouses in Georgetown, outhouses on Cape Cod. We'll have duplex outhouses in the suburbs, multi-unit outhouses for condos (probably kind of like a drydock). The White House will get its own deluxe outhouse (Dan will get a kiddie pot), but Congress will just keep on using the same old shovel.

I'm not kidding, dammit! This is a serious matter! Killer toilets are out there! This is not a time for cheap jokes!

If you write me I'll sell you some for a dollar, though.

Going from the ridiculous to the stupid, I've been doing a lot of think-

ing about life lately, and I've decided that my philosophy is basically summed up by these words: "Wonder Twins unite!" No, sorry, that's not it. It's "This is the famous Budweiser beer. We know of no other —" No, not it either. Wait, I know this... don't tell me... it's... it's... Oh, yeah. It's this:

"I been searchin' ever whi-i-i-ich a-way."

You know who said that, don't you? Nope, not Sartre, not Nietzsche, not Descartes. The Coasters. I think that pretty much sums up everybody's philosophy of life, too. It's pretty existential. The Coasters were a lot smarter than most people believe. Think about their song "Along Came Jones:"

"And then along came Jones/Slow-walking Jones, low-talking Jones/Along came lonely, lanky Jones."

This is basically self-explanatory. They're talking about the Second Coming.

The Coasters were way ahead of their time. They covered the legacy

of Adam and Eve in "Poison Ivy," tackled child abuse in "Yakety Yak," and took on labor relations in "Get a Job."

And, of course, in this eloquent treatise, they got the double whammy of education and bald white kids: "Who walks in the classroom cool and slow/Who calls the English teacher 'daddy-o'/'Charlie Brown, Charlie Brown/He's a clown/That Charlie Brown/He's gonna get caught, just you wait and see/Oh why's everybody always pickin' on me?"

John Bland is a senior English major from Charlotte who firmly believes that The Trashmen's classic epic "Surfin' Bird" is really an obscure Babylonian dialogue between God and Satan. Listen (translated version): "Papa-papa-hoo-ma-mow-mow, papa-hoo-ma-mow-mow." "Everybody's heard about the bird! Don't you know that the bird is the word?"

*I rest my case.
Hasta la vista, baby.*

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- All letters and columns must be typed and double-spaced for ease of editing.
- All letters and columns must be signed by the author(s), with a limit of two signatures per letter or column.
- Students should include name, year in school, major, phone number and home town. Other members of the University community should include similar information.
- The Tar Heel reserves the right to edit for space, clarity and vulgarity.

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