

How about juniper bushes, not George Bushes, on our public lands

Elizabeth Peterson
Contributing Writer

"Wilderness is not a luxury, but a necessity of the human spirit, and as vital to our lives as water and good bread. A civilization which destroys what little remains of the wild, the spare, the original, is cutting itself off from its origins and betraying the principle of civilization itself." — Edward Abbey

This was truly one of the greatest moments of my life. After seven miles of hiking in the desert heat, after the anticipation that accompanies each outcropping of boulders and junipers thinking that the great view will lay beyond, I finally reached that place that I had searched for all my life. Miles below my feet was a story of the earth's changing moods, a vast expanse of canyons sculpted by wind and water—the most silent, most magnificent place. It is an abandoned wilderness of red canyons adjacent to Canyonlands National Park in Utah, one of America's last wide open spaces, and it is currently being threatened by the Bush administration's relentless pursuit of oil and natural gas. Several other wilderness areas will also be up for grabs if

Bush has his way, including areas of wilderness surrounding Yellowstone, the Rocky Mountains and the Western Arctic Reserve in Alaska.

In November 2003, Bush and his allies attempted to pass one of the most environmentally damaging pieces of legislation yet posed, the Energy Bill. The passage of this bill was successfully stalled until now, thanks to the loud objections of concerned citizens. However, the administration will attempt to push it again now that Congress has reconvened for 2004. Bush's Energy Plan of 2004 calls for fewer restrictions placed on oil companies for domestic drilling in wilderness areas, includes provisions that overstep the Clean Air Act and omits any reference to global warming, a glaring negligence in the face of scientific evidence.

Perhaps this administration is merely ignorant of the possible results of this bill's passage, since only industry executives and experts, but no environmentalists, were consulted during the construction of the bill. Perhaps those that benefit from this legislation don't know and don't care about how this industrialization creates air, water and soil pollution, drives animals from their habitats and upsets the sensitive

ecology of our most treasured lands.

But it is completely unconscionable to ignore the will of the people, who desperately need this unspoiled wilderness to fill that void in the human psyche created by schedules, bills, buzzing phones, buzzing cars, buzzing everything.

People in every niche of the political spectrum love our National Parks and wild areas — over 200 million people visited our national parks last year alone. But even those of us who didn't make it to the park or wilderness this year must admit there's some comfort in the knowledge that they exist. It is like knowing that you have a friend to call should the need arise.

It is my hope that the ghost of Edward Abbey will materialize in the citizens of this country and will produce an outcry so deafening that this tragedy of legislation will be officially killed, never to rise again.

To take action on this important issue, visit the National Resources Defense Council Web site at www.savebiogems.org, and write to our senators, Bob Graham and Bill Nelson, about the need to preserve our public lands.

Let's spruce up television's vast wasteland

I was recently reviewing Shakespeare's plays, wondering how much of his poetic background influenced his work in dialogue (as we all do on those crazy Friday nights).

As I was doing this, I came up with an idea that I'd like to get some opinions on. (You understand that by simply reading this column you are accepting a non-disclosure agreement to never speak of this idea or ever claim it as your own. This also goes for any of your ideas that I like.)

Here's the idea: You take a Shakespearean play, and you convert it to the modern form of theater: TV sitcoms!

And don't settle for the second-rate plays! That would be a disaster. "This week on 'Will and Grace,' Will goes gaga over Brad Pitt! Next up, 'The Tragedy of Coriolanus!'"

I say let's go for the big momma! Shakespeare's greatest work! Hamlet! This fall on ABC!

Here's the pitch. You have Hamlet. He's still a prince. Still in Denmark. Somewhere cool and European. But he needs a modern twist, something to keep it fresh. Which brings us to our title! The "Fresh Prince of Denmark!"

So Hamlet, he's this wicked cool guy. He's a prince, but he really wants to be a big rap star. Plus, he has these two wacky friends, Rosenchronic and Spinmaster G, who are showing him the ropes.

But life is tough at home, because his dad just died and his recently widowed mother just married his uncle!

It's "Brady Bunch" meets "Oedipus Rex." As our story opens, Hamlet's father rises from the grave to find him. But we're losing the boring "supernatural visitation." Everyone will be thinking "Patrick Swayze and Demi Moore. Been there, SEEN IT!"

No, we're going modern all the way! Hamlet's father contacts him through AOL Instant Messenger, and his screenname is "SpookyDaddy1300." This part will be great, because we can save on special effects. His dad can type stuff like *boo* or *lightning crashes* and the audience will fill in the rest.

Obviously, we're going to lose all that funky dialogue. "Imposthume?" "Prithee?" The last time I heard someone say "prithee" was in a Bill and Ted movie, and that is just too 80s to even consider.

Let me show you what I'm thinking. Here's Shakespeare's famous "to be or not to be" speech.

*To be, or not to be, that is the question.
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them?
Can you believe that? Are you still awake?!*
Forget that poetic jabber. Progress marches on. Hamlet should keep a weblog. Take all those dry soliloquies and turn them into off-beat monologues! Like so:
*2B or not 2B (i feel like i'm playin' battleship heheheheh)
should i kill myself or not?
hums Jeopardy theme
wish I had a magic 8-ball ...
ARGH! this sucks...*

It almost sings to the soul, doesn't it? Let's face it, Shakespeare was writing for a captive audience. Do you think they would have sat around listening to Prince Hambone whine about "who would these fardels bear?" if they could have been downloading mp3s and looking for naked pictures of Ophelia? I rest my case.

(P.S.: If you loved this, you're gonna die happy over the next one! I just sold another idea to the folks at Playstation! Coming soon: "On Walden Pond: the Man vs. Nature Ultimate Combat Showdown!")



Earl Newton
Commentary

'Jeopardy' success doesn't lead to lots of lovin'

Grant Hutchinson
Contributing writer

Ok, so I was on "Jeopardy" a few months ago. Let's flashback to that time period before I was on TV, just for kicks. Want to know the No. 1 comment I heard when I told people I was going to be on TV? "Jeopardy, eh? You're so gonna get laid."

These were the words bestowed upon me by countless individuals on the days preceding my television debut. It was a benevolent prophecy — one which I became increasingly anxious to fulfill.

But the prophecy, my friends, was a lie. It was just like "The Matrix," except the

prophecy wasn't delivered by a candy-eating grandma whose face completely changed appearance in between sequels.

No, this prophecy was delivered by those I trusted most: employees at the UWF bookstore, random drunken frat guys and that hot exchange student from Latvia. I believed the prophecy wholeheartedly and steadfastly prepared for its fulfillment.

Sadly, I soon learned that appearing on Jeopardy gets you little more than a pat on the back and knowing, gawking stares from your peers. No digits. No dates. No ladies.

So it occurred to me that perhaps the simple act of appearing on television in general was not enough to get some action.

What type of show you appear on makes a marked and substantial difference. It goes like this:

- On TV as an athlete or musician = Tons of action
- On TV as an actor = Action
- On TV in a reality show = Action with other members of the show's cast
- On TV in a game show = Prize money

So ladies, next time you see me at a party, don't ask me the capital of the Czech Republic. Don't ask me to explain the Second Law of Thermodynamics or the Theory of Relativity. Just remember that I have \$25,000, and give me your phone number.



Grant Hutchinson
Contributing writer

Bush's space program: Red planet or red herring

J. Bryant Roberts
Contributing writer

President Bush is spending a great deal of time these days promoting space exploration. This is a change for Bush, who has no prior history of interest in outer space. According to an article in USA Today, Bush never even visited the Johnson Space Center while he was governor of Texas. This leaves many to wonder exactly why the president now feels so strongly about space exploration.

It has been reported that Vice President Dick Cheney wants to use the moon as a military base. This idea has little merit because there are no 'terrorist cells' or other military organizations on the moon. The United States does not need to use the moon for Earth observation. Numerous spy satellites circling our planet are capable of far greater photographic resolution than a lunar-based system because of their closer proximity to Earth.

Bush's administration defends the president's

interest in an expanded space program as an attempt to unite and inspire Americans across party lines.

There are many more realistic opportunities for the president to woo the democratic vote.

For starters, he could help create jobs on this planet. He could also stop borrowing billions of dollars that our grandchildren will have to pay back.

It's difficult to see how putting men on Mars will help America's poor who struggle just to put bread on the table. This plan will not unite the masses or bring them to the polls to vote for Bush. Instead, it will only divide them on the basis of wealth.

So again, why on earth do Americans need to go to Mars? Spectacular photos of a lifeless desert are cool, but for a fraction of the cost, we can get all the photos we want right here in places like Death Valley or the Gobi Desert. Why go to outer space?

One possible reason that the president is sud-

denly taken with places such as Mars and the moon is that they are very, very far away — distant from the killing fields of the Middle East, where Americans die almost daily in an effort to procure peace, or oil or something.

President Bush says, "Look to the stars!" But in doing so, we are not able to focus on the real and dire problems facing many Americans today. Laid-off workers, outsourcing, bankruptcies, foreclosures, corporate rip-offs and overall moral degradation seem to have become the norm in Bush's version of the American dream.

Yet there is one solution that may satisfy both Bush's goal to put a man on Mars and our national need to repair the damage done by the failed policies of this administration.

Bush himself could be the first man to walk on that cold, dry Martian soil. Just imagine the headline, "Bush goes to Mars."

Unfortunately, that isn't likely. But it is election year, so anything is possible.

Letters to the Editor



In Response to Travis Huisken's 'Confessions of an Islamophobe'

On behalf of the UWF Muslim Student Association, I would like to thank you for the interesting article you published in The Voyager "Confessions of an Islamophobe." We specifically thank you for your confidence and praise of the UWF's MSA for offering beneficial programs and events to the UWF and the Pensacola community at large. However, we have few concerns we would like to bring to your attention.

First, you indicated in your article that the Quran instructs them (i.e. Muslims) to bomb crowded public places. We would like to point out that this is an untrue statement and has no foundation in the Quran or anywhere else in the religion of Islam. When I read such a strong statement, I wonder whether you have ever read the Quran!

You also stated that "distinction between

fear of Islam and fear of the radicals who follow Islam seems "blurry." The conclusion was drawn after you stated that "the world's most prominent Islamic religious leaders preaching that hatred and violence to non-Muslims is commanded of Muslims by Allah through their scriptures." This is not only an untrue statement, but is also based on inaccurate information. I am not aware of a single "prominent Islamic leader" who ever permitted the killing of non-Muslim innocent people. You are also indicating that the radicals are indeed following Islam.

Finally, the MSA respectfully requests that you clarify these two points to your readers to eliminate any confusion in their minds about Islam and the Quran. I would also like to present to you a collection of two books about Islam as a gift from the MSA. The collection includes one book about "The Rights of non-Muslims in the Islamic World" and a

book about "Discover Islam Your Birth Right." You are welcome to order free books from our Web site. www.uwf.edu/msa.

— Mohammed Alghamdi
Muslim Student Association president

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This letter is not a lecture about Islam, nor is it an attempt to convince or convert anyone.

While I respect Travis' honesty in admitting his concerns, I feel that some of his ideas are based on unfortunate generalizations in a snap-judgment, mass-media world. It's a tragedy that in this day and age of awareness and tolerance, he is a self-proclaimed 'Islamophobe.'

He practically challenges the 'peaceful majority' of Muslims to speak up against terrorism, and I believe I speak for most Muslims when I say that I do not condone

violence, and simply want to live a good life. Speaking as a female, an American and a Muslim living in this country, I want my voice to be heard on this campus and in the community at large.

Islam emphasizes accountability for one's actions—while the 'normal' majority cannot always control its deviant followers, we believe that they will one day be held responsible for their brutal behavior.

Radical or ill-behaved minorities often get the spotlight, much to the chagrin of more balanced adherents (i.e. Catholic priests accused of child molestation). Comparing faiths is like comparing apples and oranges — each must be viewed in its correct context. The Quran does not instruct anyone to kill an innocent person, much less bomb crowded public places.

I believe it is widely understood in the Western world, as in other countries, that the

scriptures in the Quran itself are not excuses to wage war on non-Muslims.

It is a guidebook on how to live life through divine instruction and example, and unfortunately, is sometimes abused and manipulated when placed in the wrong hands — those with religious fervor and the undercurrent of rebellion in many poor, corrupt countries.

While the Muslim Student Association does put forth immense effort in demystifying our great religion, we cannot alter the misperceptions of every single person, nor do we intend to do that. Muslims embrace anyone who is open-minded and willing to listen, and respect those who do not share the same beliefs.

I encourage you to perhaps get to know a Muslim on a personal level. After all, we all live in this pluralistic society. Do not fear us.
— Madeeha Mir

VOYAGER

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