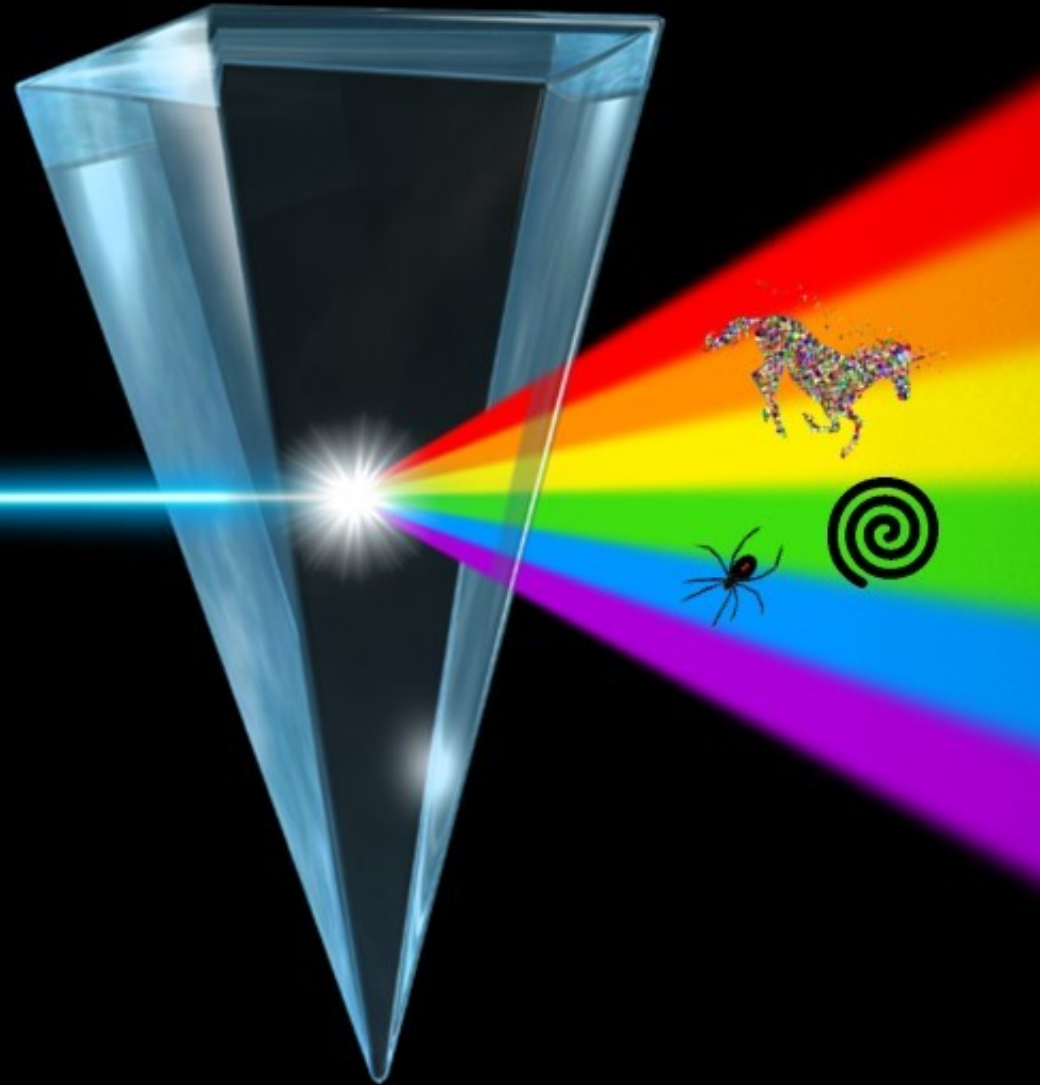


Prisms



Bradley Davidson

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DEDICATION

For Families
Big, Little, Extended
Happy, Contentious, Dysfunctional
We all have them
We all need them

.

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Preface

Prisms are the ultimate light bender. They take white light in all its fury, brilliance and completeness and bend and separate it into component parts outputting and displaying a vivid collection of rainbow colors. They dissect light and splay it out. They rip away the disguise of completeness, and in that, one can observe the sum of its parts. So it is with the human mind. It takes in the fury, brilliance and completeness of life and bends and separates its component parts displaying a vivid collection of thoughts, ideas and attitudes. A rainbow of perception. So it is with this collection of stories,

life as it beats upon me bent and splayed as it trickles through the pathways of my mind.

This past year, as most and in which all these stories were written, certainly has brought to me an array of the white light of life to sift through. My day job continues with an increase of changing landscape as people retire and leave. The group I've been working with all these years sort of grew up together in our professional careers, and like a family, we worked and played together usually peacefully but not always. The year has been full of natural disasters of storms and fires and of human disasters in shootings and what we are capable of doing to each other. The continued rhetoric which surrounds us all of isolationism, abandonment of our collective humanity and rains of fire are all a bit unsettling. But it is all fodder to be sorted and separated in the prism of my mind. My main pastime, though, over the past 14 years has been the raising of my son. And that continues with an ever changing scene of activities and challenges.

I'd rather be doing nothing else. At least as far as I know. My attention is devoted to all the activities which take up my time. Next year that may be

something else. But I get the impression that many in the world would rather be doing something else. I'm sure those caught up in wars and conflict would rather be doing something else. And I'm pretty sure those fleeing hunger or persecution would rather not. But it seems in more peaceful settings free from life threatening issues, some would rather be doing something other than what they are. My heart sinks and I feel sad for the person driving a car embellished either proudly or as a plea for help, I'm not sure which, with a bumper sticker stating "I'd rather be ____". Fill in the blank with fishing, skiing, rock climbing or whatever the driver is frustrated with not being able to do. This says much about his or her situation as well as that of society in general. People would rather be doing something other than what they are doing. I assume the driving is not particularly what they want to do nor does where they are driving to hold an activity in which they would rather be occupied. Blatantly stating their unhappiness on the bumper of their car with their current situation is unsettling at best.

To be fair, maybe they just don't like driving in the car that bears the bumper sticker. They would rather be doing something other than driving. Yet the statement implies they never get to do what they want. After all, the bumper sticker is always there with its words exposed for all to see. They could be rock climbing right now, but the words say otherwise. Perhaps they need a shift in perspective. Shine the light of life through a prism. It can make things look different.

I'm sailing

I'm a sailor

I sail



Government Scientists

Part 2

“It can’t be done, you know.” he nonchalantly said while eating his lunch in the government cafeteria.

“What can’t be done?” his friend and colleague asked.

“Your mind can’t be uploaded to a computer. I’ve figured it out. It can’t be done.” The first scientist replies. “It’s impossible.”

“Yeah, I’ve figured as much for some time now. It’s not just the interface and the wiring and file transfer protocol we haven’t quite got right yet, there is something else blocking us. I’m beginning to suspect

there may be some God factor involved here. God doesn't want us moving all His souls around."

"Ahhh, it's more simple than that." The first responds. "A computer is not a human brain. Doesn't look like it, act like it and certainly doesn't work like it. We've been trying to upload a bunch of apples into an orange tree, sort to speak."

"How did you come up with that?"

"If you think about it, we don't store information like today's computers do. Nor do we run individual algorithms like current machines do. We are not sure how exactly a brain works, but it doesn't work on ones and zeros or bits and bytes. A computer compared to our brain is just an analogy, a convenient way to illustrate the brain in today's terms. During the industrial revolution we compared the brain to mechanics and visualized little wheels turning in our head to think. For 1600 years before that it was visualized by flowing fluids during the invention and use of hydraulic engineering. You can't hardwire an analogy together and expect it to work no matter how good the analogy."

"Well heck. We have this huge government

project funded to do just that and find a way to upload minds and selves and souls into the cloud. How are you going to explain this to the sponsors? How are you going to tell them they will die before we can figure out a way to continue their consciousness? Boy, they are going to be pissed. You say it's impossible. Impossible is not an option! What do we do now?"

"Dunno" the first mumbled. Then after a few moments of contemplation continued. "Well first we could figuring out just how the brain **does** work. We know what parts of the brain do what and can monitor the activity of each area, we know the mechanics of how it uses 20% of the body's energy to function, but we haven't a clue on how the brain works, how it creates conscious thought, stores memory and creates new things. First we figure that out, then we build a computer in its image. Then maybe we can do all this uploading."

"There is still one problem." The first continues. "And it is a God factor, of sorts. We know how the rest of the body works down to the molecular level, yet for all the work we've done on the brain, we don't know how works. Why is that, do you suppose? It's

like there is some force or cosmic veil that prevents us from knowing how we work. Our brain may be designed to understand the world around us all the way up to our brains, then is incapable of understanding it by default. It's a built in failsafe system. A God factor, if you will."

"Oh boy..." the second trails off as he shakes his head. "I've got a headache now. I'm just going to think about what I like and understand."

"What's that?" the first inquires.

"Food and sex."



Vaporized

The writer sat at his desk, before him his keyboard and a blank sheet of white. He had a kernel of an idea, but didn't quite know how to put it into a story. It was a rather dark idea, and he didn't know if he really wanted to pursue it. But the writer wanted to look beyond the obvious darkness and make it a thoughtful tale, one that would nudge the reader to think about life, the universe and everything, his favorite topics.

So what if our jewel globe of a planet would be vaporized tomorrow? And everyone knew it. See? A bit dark. But more importantly, how would that make you feel? What would be your last thoughts? What

would you do? What are the implications?

His protagonist, he thought, could be an anthropologist working at a dig when he heard the news. An anthropologist, he thought, would have a particular insight into past civilizations and just what such a total destruction of his own would mean. And the writer would want him to have a unique vantage point where he could view the destruction of his civilization and utter some last pearl like “Oh, the horror, the horror.”, or “Oh, well” or “Wow!” But where would that be? On top of a tall building which would probably be the first thing to crumble or in a helicopter flying through the atmosphere which would probably be the first thing to vaporize or in a space shuttle? Too late to get on a space shuttle, he thought. What about Mars? He could be on Mars. An anthropologist on Mars. Then there would be some last vestige of humanity to survive! Possible. No, it had to be total destruction.

You see, it is one thing to die a regular death as millions have on this earth and another to die with everything and everybody at the same time. In the former there is some sort of hope flickering in a dying

mind, hope for the human race, your family, children, for the things you built. We all lead lives that influence the future in one way or another. Total annihilation would mean no future, at least for humanity or the squirrels, killer whales and all wildlife. There would be nothing left of what we know.

All human knowledge would be gone in a flash, the books, the architecture, the art, the future performances of future performers. But there would be our digital footprints left in the cloud, all recorded history of humankind, right? Nope. Clouds would be vaporized, too. Maybe we could hustle and launch a flash drive into deep space before we were gone. Then some future extraterrestrial archeologist or “alienologist” could study it and reconstruct our existence in some sentient minds and utter, “Oh the horror, the horror.”

“Enough with the scientists,” the writer thought. “What about the regular people.” Most would panic. No time to progress through the various stages of grief. There would be depression, suicides, parties, substance abuse, and of course, there would be those that would deny the existence of alien warships hovering in orbit

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with planet destroying weaponry having previously communicated the ultimatum. Or perhaps they would just deny the approaching meteor.

Indeed, the writer sitting before his barren, white landscape had decisions to make.

Oh, the horror, the horror.



The Chair

It occurred to me the other day I may not have been the best little boy in the world during my childhood. This epiphany came to me as I was contemplating the mysteries of the juvenile mind, specifically the one in my son, while sitting in THE chair, an old oak desk swivel chair once belonging to my grandparents. I've had this chair since they relinquished possession of it through death and redistribution of possessions and have fixed, modified and maintained it through the years. Early on I replaced the torn leather seat with good old 1960's-era American Naugahyde. Later I replaced the casters which had little steel wheels that didn't turn very well

and caused havoc on any flooring it rolled upon. However I did little with the finish which is an enamel antique paint covering the oak grain that I find ironic as it seemed to be an antique when I was little and certainly is now. On some parts of the arms, the paint has worn off revealing the dark wood beneath.

I slid my hands over these battered oak arms feeling the smoothness of the paint and bare wood and also feeling the grooves and gouges I had put there nearly 60 years ago. You see, I had gotten a junior carpentry set complete with a rough-cut plastic hand saw and a hand crank drill with evidentially more than plastic drill bits. I had applied these tools together with my carpentry skills to the nearest piece of wood at the time, my grandparents' desk chair. I marvel now at the quality of the hard plastic saw teeth that could bite successfully into oak on the corners of the square arms and the drill which made a good start of several holes. I don't blame myself, however. Who ever heard of giving a kid a junior carpentry set without giving him a junior piece of wood to work on? My parents, of course, blamed me.

Thinking of these carpentry aspirations of mine

conjured up another incident where I had built a portion of a raised floor in our garage. Unfortunately I chose to use a supply of crown shingles my dad used to repair the steep wood roof of our English Tudor house. I spent most of the afternoon on my project flattening the crown shingles into a usable floor, and was so proud of my accomplishment when I showed it to my dad when he got home. I was amazed at his reaction and the ensuing spanking. It is not the pain on my butt that I remember more than the surprise of my dad's reaction and his disappointment of my fine creation. How was I supposed to know?

This thought brought up another time I broke a pencil while sharpening it and exclaimed in a loud and matter of fact voice "Damn it!" while my mother stood nearby. Her shocked face and stammering utterances surprised me that time. After explaining to her that dad uses that term all the time, I escaped punishment but received some education on bad words never to use. I think my dad got it, though.

But that just brought into focus a later time I went off to college and returned during a break with the mouth as foul as a sailor's. I was standing in the

kitchen with my mom and inadvertently and quite naturally spewed forth a barrage of F words and S words which shocked her and surprised me that I actually said that in front of her. One can learn so much in college.

No, I don't believe I was the best little boy in the world, but at least I have a chair to remind me how it is to be a kid as I raise one of my own.



Road Rage

He sped up to the car that had seemingly cut him off on the 405 near Los Angeles going the posted 65 miles per hour. All traffic was going a perfect 65 miles per hour. Cars were evenly spaced and moving together like the links of a well-oiled bicycle chain winding its way over sprockets and through gears. He had trouble changing lanes as the cars were so close together and would not let him merge to another lane. But finally he caught up to the car while wildly driving his 1965 Mustang convertible and listening to the Beach Boys blaring their warning about how the fun would stop once the T-Bird was

taken away. With one hand firmly on the wheel, he raised his other with index finger loaded then looked over and added the unabridged verbal version of F--- You! What he saw pissed him off even more.

He was angry. Usually a pretty laid back guy having lived his younger years in the peace and love generation as a hippie, he found he would often lose his temper while negotiating the Los Angeles traffic the rare times he had to. Living in the desert the last few decades, he wasn't used to traffic of the big city.

But what he saw responding to his raised finger of rage was a car full of hipsters, wires dangling from their ears waving back with both hands and smiling. "What the...", he thought. There was no one driving!

He sped up to the next car as best he could in the packed traffic all going the same speed and flipped off the next car just to vent his rage. Again there was no driver to accept his outburst. Every car he tried to apply his great vitriol upon was the same. There was no one driving!

This shook him so much he pulled off along La Cienega Blvd., roared into a McDonalds Drive

through and yelled his order into the waiting speaker.

“Thank you!” the speaker cheerfully replied, “Would you like to try our new Mocha Almond Latte Pumpkin spiced smoothie with that?”

“No!” he belligerently yelled as he wondered if that was a computer generated voice or just that of a really happy person.

He sped up to the window, grabbed his Big Mac meal and ate it in the parking lot trying to settle down. As calm gently returned to him, he finally noticed all the vehicles meandering around the streets were without drivers but full of a person or people looking at and tapping away on some electronic device.

How could this be? He'd heard of self-driving cars, but that was something of the future. How could people relinquish the control and power of driving their own one-ton car, racing other cars, revving the V-8 engine, feeling the power of the 4 barrel carburetor vaporize or just pour liquid gas into the cylinders to burn and explode in a vibrating process that propels one forward along an open road, unending and full of adventure?

He eventually begrudgingly got back on the

freeway and in the end navigated back out towards the desert thinking all sorts of new thoughts about the course of humanity and technology remembering the happy, serene looks all those riders had, and finally figuring out why his car insurance had gone up 10 fold in the last decade, he being one of the last actual drivers of a motor vehicle.



Summer Vacation

My parents were great. For whatever reason, they let my brother and I fend for ourselves during summer vacations.

They would set us up with a place, like our home, the city we lived in, the parks and tell us not to get into trouble and be home by dinner. My brother and I, of course, went in different directions. I'd ride my bicycle to a friend's house and we'd while away the summer days playing with electricity, making burning paper airplanes or just riding around exploring. Later, my parents joined a yacht club in our city to give us boys a place to explore our nautical heritage. My dad was a tug boat captain.

My friend and I would ride our bikes clear across town to the club. First it was the swimming pool and snack bar we gravitated to, then we just explored the waterfront around the club stumbling around abandoned shipyards and crumbling wharfs. Then I got an 11-foot Styrofoam sailboat with a lateen rig sail and we'd explore the water front along the adjacent shipping channel. Soon he got a matching boat and we had a fleet. To complete our fleet, my folks bought a 19-foot sloop that sat on a trailer at the club. It was the family boat, but after a while my friend and I were the ones that used it the most dragging it out to the dock cranes and launching it into the salty waters rife with adventure.

One day after a sail, we came in to raid the snack bar before figuring out what else to do. I nosed the sloop into the wind perpendicular to the floating club dock and eventually tied the bow line to the 2x4 dock rail with a clove hitch, sort of like tying a horse to the hitching rail in front of the saloon, except tired horses stayed still while boats in a brisk wind luffed their loosened sails and pulled and tugged with every passing wake and gust of wind. We were heading back with

our food supplies of hotdogs and candy when I noticed the boat drifting downwind away from the dock. While we ran down to the dock the feisty sloop fell off from the wind pointing to sea. The jib sheet caught on a cleat and the main sheet somehow jammed letting the sails fill with the power of the wind. The tiller was tied and the impatient boat started to sail across the shipping channel, unmanned!

We ran down to the dock in disbelief that the boat was sailing itself and maintaining course. I flagged down a cabin cruiser that was just coming in and tying to the dock and explained. “No, there’s got to be someone on there”, he said. Adults! Always skeptical of the tribulations of kids. After convincing, he agreed to chase after it. I hopped onto his boat and we zoomed off in pursuit. I told him to come along side to windward of the boat and I’d jump on. After some tense moments of chasing and maneuvering I calculated and jumped. I grabbed the sheets, took control of the tiller and brought the out-of-control vessel to bear shortly before it would have run up onto the rock shore of the opposite side of the channel. It felt like chasing down a runaway stage coach carrying

the starring lady, leaping onto it and bringing the panicked horses to a halt except the damsel in distress was the boat mistress itself.

While sailing the troubled lady back to the club docks where I had hastily left my crew of one, who should I see chugging up the channel in his tug boat but my father. As he neared I waved and he waved back. He had just missed the prior drama.



Make Our Planet Great Again

It was only a matter of time that the great American manufacturers took up the challenge to follow and support the ever evolving energy policy of the United States. To this end the big auto makers, Ford and General Motors which includes Chevy, Buick, Oldsmobile, GMC and even Cadillac, came out with a vehicle that uses the latest in technologies and innovation to reinforce what the country is emphasizing in energy. They each presented their own versions of the coal burning automobile.

Each features the latest in technological wonders of the coal-fired turbine engine complete with the latest in conveyor systems which transports the fuel

from the coal storage area to the boiler where it is combusted to boil water. The resulting steam powers the turbine which propels the vehicle forward, backwards and at times in directions unanticipated. These vehicles are technological wonders guaranteed to keep the critical coal industry in the United States running for decades to come.

There is no comparison to fuel efficiency of these vehicles mainly because no other vehicle measures fuel by weight. Miles per ton is the new EPA standard of economy, and when others try to compare absolute energy efficiency of gasoline, diesel and electric vehicles to the coal burners, the EPA only becomes confused.

The vehicles come with an array of options. Most can travel up to 100 miles on one load of coal. For those taking longer journeys, an optional trailer is available to carry enough coal to go 300 miles.

Some convenience is sacrificed, however, as there is some warmup period to start the boilers and get a good head of steam up enough to power the vehicles. But technology once again triumphs with automatic timers which can be set a half hour before use of the

vehicle is anticipated so your car will be energized and ready for your use.

And safety is always a concern of the automotive industry, so extra reinforcing and armor is installed to keep the boilers from exploding during a collision. However, if and when they do, preinstalled fire suppression systems are included with each vehicle, and first responders are now equipped to handle injuries caused by steam burns, a unique class of and most serious type of burn. The insurance industry is okay with the additional risks as recent legislation has excluded coal powered vehicles from any sort of insurance liability.

Air quality suffers slightly, but the use of filters and carbon scrubbers mitigates these concerns if they are changed often enough. Disposal and sequestering of discarded elements however is an ongoing problem, but EPA scientists are working to store such waste with the nation's nuclear waste stockpile, wherever that is.

Technologies for electric and other clean energy vehicles has continued to be developed, however not in America. Most American innovation of zero

emission car technology has shifted to France as that country extended an invitation and a promise to support engineers, scientists and innovators working in these fields.

Work overseas continues in an effort to make our planet great again as we tend to our little (and getting smaller) corner of our planet to make America great again.



Laughter

I could hear my mother sighing and then laughing. I've heard these noises on and off in recent years which is weird because my mother died over 12 years ago. I hear her sighing when I or my brother does something particularly stupid, and she laughs at the antics I go through raising a child. She's getting payback sitting upon her high perch watching us. It's all live entertainment from planet Earth for those hard working parents who have raised children and have gone on to the other side. Who have raised us! It is a heart wrenching drama and a hilarious comedy rolled into one.

This particular instance which prompted the sighs

and laughter from my mother was when my son comes up to me and says, "Dad, watch this", as he takes a spoon and bends it into a right angle. This would be of no particular interest had the spoon been one of the cheap ones I picked up at Target. But this one happened to be from my Mom's collection of good silver. My reaction was quick and surprised my son as much as it did me. "It's okay, Dad. It's okay. Watch." And he bends it back straight again trying to appease my outburst. "See, I know what I'm doing". He might, but I'm not sure I do.

He had gotten the spoon out of the daily silverware drawer where some time ago I had taken some of Mom's good silver from its wooden chest and put them into general circulation, but for adults only. My son proved early on he was a bit hard on silverware as he showed his ability to bend fork tines with his teeth on a regular basis. So when I pulled some of the good silver out, I meant it for those who could appreciate it.

And why, one may wonder, do I use good silver daily. Well, that's probably where my mom sighs. I've always liked this particular set of silver and could never

understand why we only used it once or twice a year when we entertained guests or had family dinners on Thanksgiving or Christmas. And since I don't entertain dinner parties at all, I hadn't seen it for years since I inherited it after my mother's passing. So I took some pieces out and use it and see it and enjoy it all the time. There is the heft in silver. It's a bit weighty. And the intricate designed handles of the baroque design are interesting. And, of course, there are the memories. This silverware reminds me of all those dinners and family gatherings and family and particularly dear old mom. I knew my mom would have a fit knowing I didn't coddle and hide the silver. But she wasn't around. All I heard was a deep, sad sigh.

But I know she got a good laugh seeing my son bend one of her spoons and extra guffaws out of my reaction. I'm sure I didn't tell my son enough times about the good silver, or not to bend silverware in general, or destroy anything by using it for purposes not intended. Never enough times. But I'm sure he just wanted to impress me with his strength or new found ability. So I'm impressed.

I just wish sometimes mom would watch more of

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my brother's channel, but I imagine where she is, they got some super streaming service that watches everything at once.



Full Astern!

“Full Astern!” the captain barked. He grabbed the handle on the tall brass pedestal of the Engine Order Telegraph and pulled it back to the maximum position and repeated twice more. Bells chimed each time and the engine room indicator moved to full astern indicating the engineers were on it. In the bowels of the ship levers were pulled and the mighty steam engine stopped briefly and the entire drive train reversed direction. Having just gotten underway, a full head of steam pushed the pistons of the revolutionary triple expansion engine slowly at first gaining momentum as it turned the great single propeller in a

reverse rotation. The mighty blades grabbed big pieces of seawater and flung it towards the hull of the ship, and as revolutions increased it started forming vacuum pockets in the water as it tore the liquid apart. The heavy propeller began to cavitate as it lost efficiency which could be felt throughout the ship in an ominous vibration throughout. Like locking your wheels on a wet road by stomping on the brake, you continue forward, but it's the best you can do.

The captain put the wheel hard to port to swing the stern to port and the bow to starboard out of harm's way, but intended only when the vessel started its reverse track. It continued to slide forward as the laws of physics and momentum demanded as the propeller worked on this multi-ton object already set in motion. The bow swung to port into the oncoming traffic.

The day was clear and calm as the steam ferry Berkeley began its first run from the San Francisco Ferry Building to the Mole Pier in Oakland at 6:00 AM. There were few passengers aboard the ferry with capacity for 1700 persons. The Wednesday morning commute across the bay would bring more to the big

city on its return. The date was October 3, 1900, two years after the Berkeley was built, it being the first steam ferry on the west coast to be propeller driven rather than powered by side wheels. And it was almost 12 years before the Titanic met its watery fate in the Atlantic.

Captain Jim Blaker of the Berkeley started his run right on time, and the mail steamer Columbia was just arriving from its normal run from Portland. When leaving the dock, Blaker sounded one long blast on his horn indicating underway and leaving the dock. The Columbia returned the signal indicating it had the Berkeley in sight, understood and would give way. But the beginning flood tide had given the Columbia a speed and momentum unanticipated. Blaker immediately realized this and put the Berkeley full astern. The Columbia also reversed engines.

The two ships, the Berkeley and the Columbia, collided, both trying to occupy the same space on San Francisco Bay. It was a gentle collision, a kiss of two behemoths. The Columbia struck aft of the wheel house of the Berkeley crushing a life boat and destroying the rail. The Columbia bit into the

overhang of the Berkeley's hull with its steel bow, and in the ensuing dance as the two ships swung together as momentum and physics demand, a big chunk was ripped from the Columbia. No lives were lost. No injuries reported. But both vessels were taken out of service. It would be up to the Inspectors of Hulls and Boilers to determine the blame.

The Berkeley would continue to serve as a ferry boat on San Francisco Bay until the Southern Pacific Railroad decided to discontinue the service in 1958. Bridges had been built, you see.



Birds Chirpping

Birds chirping in the early morning,
Their cacophony fills the air and my ears.
They celebrate naïvely in surprise and relief,
That the long night's deep darkness is fading.



Daemons

George found himself in the absolute scariest position of his life. Never before had he felt so much fear. He was petrified yet he needed to speak. You see, George was possessed by a daemon and he knew it, and he was sitting across from his priest telling him just that, trying to convince this holy man that a daemon possessed his body and made him do all those bad things. And the scary part was that George was requesting an exorcism.

Now the church has had a rollercoaster ride in dealing with daemons and performing exorcisms. Exorcisms declined through the 18th century only to rise sharply in the second half of the 19th. Modern

times brought out the daemons. But it wasn't such a cut and dried process to get an exorcism. George was afraid he'd be denied. First, all mental illnesses had to be ruled out.

George had been through that route being diagnosed on and off with hysteria, mania, psychosis, Tourette's syndrome, epilepsy, schizophrenia and dissociative identity disorder. He'd taken the medications and changed the medications and then took other medications. Nothing helped but instead the ordeal made him act a bit more peculiar. So, when he sat before his priest, he appeared to be mentally ill.

"You look like you might have some mental issues, George," the priest said seriously. "Your problem isn't a daemon. I cannot recommend you for an exorcism."

George became a bit animated in his arguments and started acting more like a crazy man before the church security guards escorted him out.

"Christianity doesn't have a monopoly on daemons", he thought to himself. So started George's odyssey through the religious spectrum of the world. He tried them all learning their histories and rituals and

actually joining some in an effort to get someone to exorcise his daemon. Yet again, he was unsuccessful.

“Religions don’t have a monopoly on daemons”, he thought. So he started looking through the Yellow Pages and Reader advertisements and found several New Age groups that worked with daemons. He tried several but found they didn’t take him or his daemon seriously until he started emailing this group in Northern California. They said they could help him.

So George drove up to Bodega Bay in Marin County and in a back alley of a little hamlet outside the small town where Alfred Hitchcock’s *The Birds* was filmed, he met up with an exorcist who promised, for a fee, he could chase the daemon out of George’s body in one sitting.

The New Age holy man danced and chanted and burned incense and sang and smoked an assortment of herbs and swallowed an assortment of plants and made George do the same. Slowly the presence began to leave George’s body. Little by little the spirit was pulled from George, until in the end only one entity remained. Unfortunately for George it wasn’t him. He

had been evicted from his own body leaving only the daemon.

So, the sad but true moral to this tale is to be careful what you wish for. Eliminating something might be easy but not always the best solution. Face your daemons, make peace. Make them your own because in the end they are.



Dear Santa

The little boy climbed up onto the lap of the department store Santa, a bit nervous, but ready to tell Santa his Christmas list. There was only one wish on it, really, and Jimmy didn't know how it would go over.

‘Ho, ho, ho little fellah. And what’s your name?’ Santa asked as he does every child that that makes this odyssey. Full-time bus driver and part time Santa, this guy was making it up as he went along.

“My name is Jimmy.” The boy said while staring at the obvious fake beard and trying to avoid Santa’s direct bad breath.

“And what can Santa bring you for Christmas? What is your big Christmas wish? A train? A pony? An Ironman action figure?”, Santa asked.

Jimmy looked anxious and hesitated but finally said, “You know, I’m a bit worried with all the talk about war and fighting and atom bombs. What I really want this Christmas is world peace. Can you make that happen for me Santa? Huh? Can you?” He stared up into Santa’s face with sad, worrisome eyes.

This request caught Santa off guard and he let out a string of Ho, ho, ho’s as he tried to mask his own laughter and also as he tried to figure out how to respond.

He finally wrapped up his jolly fit with a “Ho, ho, ho,... No. That would be impossible little Jimmy”.

“Oh? Why is that?” Jimmy asked in wonderment. “Is your magic not strong enough? Can’t you just wave your arms and have all the atom bombs of the world disappear?”

“Well Jimmy. Let me tell you a story. It’s all about human nature...”, and Santa went on to tell the boy the history of human civilization beginning even before that when one caveman beat the other with a

rock to take his bigger club from him. He progressed through serfdoms and kingdoms then nation states explaining all the while that one group wants what the other has or to prevent the other from having or to make the other believe as they do. Great armies marched to increase the size and wealth of a kingdom assimilating other kingdoms and people along the way. He explained how mankind was created with free will which created an uneven distribution of wealth and influence, and that wars were just a result of that unevenness. War is therefore inevitable due to human nature, and bombs and guns are just the current instruments of war. Making bombs disappear would not make wars go away.

And as he told this story to Jimmy, the line before him got longer and longer and wrapped around the department store Christmas tree enough time to tangle it up. Parents were cutting in line and children were pushed out. Yelling ensued and punches were thrown.

“And that’s why I can’t give you world peace for Christmas.” Santa concluded. “It’s not possible.”

Jimmy was crying by this time trying to wipe away tears. The store manager was giving Santa the “Your

fired!” look.

Finally the boy looks up with wet, sad, fearful and disappointed eyes and mutters, “Golly, I wish I had a space ship so I could just fly away.”

“That I can do, Little Jimmy”, Santa says brightening up. “As I often tell my wife, “To the moon, Alice! To the moon!””



About the Author

Bradley Davidson works, plays, sails, meanders the trails of the Zoo, paths of SeaWorld and the corridors of the Aquarium, wanders the National Seashore and beaches, explores the parks, and endures the malls, all accompanied by his 14 year old son and all in San Diego, California.

