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# Frontiersman

*Facing the truth, however great the cost.*

September 2009

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## The Echo of a Memory

Fiction by Jim Sullivan

*If you've read "Atlas Shrugged", by Ayn Rand, then you might feel the cold wind of the Ghost of Fiction Past blowing across your back as you read this article. —editor*

I just got back from driving our town drunk to the big city, where he'll live from now on. There isn't anything left in Greenbush for him to drink. The little town of Greenbush is about to close forever.

In it's heyday, Greenbush had a bustling freight yard. Trains used to stop here every day but they ceased doing that in the early 1950s. Then, in the mid 1960s, the railroad closed altogether. The die was cast irrevocably, shortly after that, when the new interstate highway bypassed the town. Some folks, trying to sound optimistic, said that they were glad that all of that traffic wouldn't be clogging the streets of Greenbush. The retail store people were less hopeful. They knew that our town had originally been founded upon commerce. We were on a navigable waterway, the Silver River. However, our water highway hadn't been used for many years. The railroad was gone. The highway had bypassed us. The retail people knew in their hearts that the writing was on the wall.

At one time, Greenbush had employed three policemen and six town workers. Those workers picked up the garbage, cut the town lawns, maintained the park in the town square, removed snow from the roads in the winter, and generally kept the town clean and its services functioning. During the last three years, as the financial situation got tougher and tougher, the town laid off most of those employees, retaining only one policeman and two workers. There simply wasn't enough revenue to pay for more than that.

Greenbush had been gasping for years. That it lasted as long as it did was a miracle. Most of the stores and small factories that had struggled for decades to serve Greenbush had closed their doors during the years after the interstate highway had bypassed us. The two remaining hold-outs recently began the process of relocating to Mexico. None of their former employees will be going along. Some of the younger ones found minimum wage jobs in the big city. For a while, they commuted to Greenbush but the cost of commuting encouraged them to move to the big city, where their jobs are.

Historically, the town had also been a farm service center. Farmers within a ten-mile radius had come to Greenbush to store their grain in the town silo and to purchase their feed, seed, fertilizer, and equipment. They'd also come to town to buy groceries, to get shoes fixed, to get haircuts, to see a doctor, to get advice from a lawyer, to have their teeth cleaned, and to do all of the other things that lend virtue and relevance to a small town like Greenbush.

During those years of decline, when small factories and businesses were leaving, many of the farmers went bankrupt, one by one. They weren't able to pass their farms on to their children. The children didn't become farmers. Instead, they moved away. The bankrupt farmers had to sell their farms, mostly to agrobiz corporations. When the bankrupt farmers went to the big city looking for jobs, they couldn't find any. They were too old, too unskilled, or too uneducated in the ways of the modern world. The lucky ones found homes with relatives in the big city. The professional people, such as the doctors, the dentists, and the lawyers, had vacated Greenbush years earlier. The big city had offered them a steadier clientele, people who weren't on the verge of moving somewhere else.

Not surprisingly, our school had to merge with the school in the little town down the road. However, with all of the people moving out, →

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with their homes not selling quickly if at all, and with our businesses failing, there was next to nothing in revenues for the schools. Eventually, the few remaining children in Greenbush had to travel a long distance to a school in a suburb of the big city. The expense of that daily commute encouraged most of the remaining families that had children to leave Greenbush. The churches, like the schools, struggled to stay open. Despite their best efforts, their dues, their tithing, and their membership dwindled. Eventually, the houses of worship were gone. Since about a year ago, there hasn't been even one church in Greenbush.

Our public library, despite a complete lack of funds, stayed open longer than any of our other public institutions. That was entirely due to the efforts of our dedicated elderly librarian, who paid the library's bills each month from her own savings. Those savings dwindled because she was no longer receiving a salary. Then, the wonderful old lady died, breaking everyone's hearts, and the library closed. It's a further shame, but she couldn't even be buried by a funeral home in Greenbush. The town's one mortuary hadn't been able to stay open with so few people staying in town to die. It had closed its doors more than a year before the librarian needed its services.

There came a time when you couldn't get prescriptions filled, have hair permanents, get a haircut, fill up your car's gas tank, or get a vehicle serviced in Greenbush. The only dry cleaner left town years ago. We haven't had a jewelry store for as long as I can remember. It got difficult, then impossible, to buy groceries in town. Even the convenience store was gone. As life ebbed in Greenbush, real estate values fell through the floor. People were glad to get 25 cents on the dollar for their homes. It was sad to see so many old people lose the equity that they'd been accumulating for all of their married lives.

A few days ago, the former mayor called me from the big city, where he now works as a salesman in a furniture store, and asked me to turn off the one remaining street light and to close the valve at the water pumping station. Transporting our poor besotted town drunk to

the big city was my last humanitarian act before I move out of town myself. Having accomplished that, I can now carry out the former mayor's requests. As soon as I finish writing this, I'll shut off what's left of the town's services and leave. I don't really care much for the big city but I don't have any other choice about where to live.

I wonder how the two families that plan to stay in Greenbush will survive. I worry about them. I especially worry about their children. I'll pray for them tonight, in my lonely little apartment in the big city.

My only consolation is the knowledge that Greenbush didn't die alone. It isn't much of a consolation but it's all that I have. No, Greenbush traveled in good company. Across this nation, hundreds of other lovely little towns like Greenbush have met a similar fate. Greenbush is the dying echo of their fading memory. ∞

### Vapor Standard

Sam Aurelius Milam III

I keep seeing advertisements for a "keep the change" scheme that's being perpetrated by Bank of America. If somebody buys something with a Bank of America credit card, then Bank of America rounds the amount of the transaction up from the purchase price to the next nearest dollar, and deposits the difference into the buyer's savings account. Can you imagine a better example of something from nothing? The funds don't grow on a tree. They don't even come out of thin air. They come from nowhere. They're nothing more than the manipulation of some electronic digits in a computer. With pranks like that as the source of our funds, it isn't surprising that the value of the currency is low, or that it continues to drop.

Not only is the Bank of America scheme ruinous of the economy,<sup>1</sup> it's deceitful and dishonest. That is, while they pretend to give free funds to their depositors, they're actually increasing the amount of funds that are on deposit in their own bank, without having to do anything at all to acquire or justify the funds. Their reported deposits will increase by millions of dollars. ¶

<sup>1</sup> I recommend my essays *Money* and *They Can Fool Too Many of the People Too Much of the Time*. They're both available on *Pharos*. They won't inflate your bank account but they will increase your knowledge. —editor

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## Fascist Mentality

Sam Aurelius Milam III

**fascism**.... 1. Fascism. 2. any system of government in which property is privately owned, but all industry and business is regulated by a strong national government....

—*Thorndike Century Senior Dictionary*  
1941

On Monday, July 20, 2009, I took 35 lbs. of crushed aluminum cans to Lanier Scrap Metal, in Gainesville, Georgia. All went well as the young fellow at the scales weighed my cans and took them away. After he'd dumped them wherever the scrap yard keeps its aluminum cans, he directed me toward the office, where I expected to be paid for my cans.

In the office, the first words out of the mouth of the woman in charge were that she needed to see my driver's license. I told her that I don't have a driver's license. She said that she needed to see some form of ID. I told her that I was undocumented, for political reasons. She wouldn't pay me for my cans. Instead, she got the driver's license from the man with whom I was travelling at the time, and gave the payment to him.

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## Fun and Games

Sam Aurelius Milam III

I don't know much about holography. Maybe these ideas aren't feasible. Maybe one of the subscribers can enlighten us. Anyway, put holographic projectors in your car. Project an image of somebody in the passenger seat and use the commute lane. Project your license plate and change numbers at the touch of a button. Surprise the cops with an image of a gun turret on the roof. Project an image completely around your car and appear to be driving a Rolls Royce. At home, put a flying saucer hovering over your house or a bear trap just outside of your front door. Surprise your wife with a lovely blonde in the bedroom. Two blondes. Get new curtains on the front windows and never need to wash them. Impress your neighbors with an expensive boat in the back yard. I see a new business opportunity here. Somebody can start selling images for people to use in their projectors. Figure out how to do it and you might be the next Bill Gates. ¶

There might be various excuses for a government ID requirement as a prerequisite to selling 35 lbs. of crushed aluminum cans at a scrap metal yard. No matter how many excuses there are, they don't constitute a justification. There isn't any justification. The only reason for the requirement is the fascist mentality that has become prevalent in this country. That is, a man isn't considered competent to conduct legitimate business unless he can prove, by way of government ID, that his every transaction has been authorized, and is being carefully regulated, by the fascist police state that has destroyed our liberty in this country. ¶

History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the vitriolic words and the violent actions of the bad people but the appalling silence and indifference of the good people. Our generation will have to repent not only for the words and acts of the children of darkness but also for the fears and apathy of the children of light.

—Dr. Martin Luther King  
as quoted in *Driving Miss Daisy*

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## Letters to the Editor

*These two messages are with regard to my article "Remembering Mere Keep", on pages 1 and 2 of the August issue.*  
—editor

The most recent change in language that annoys me is the sudden use by journalists of the word "troop" as a synonym for the word "soldier". I'm puzzled as to why this change occurred, and why it was widely accepted.

—Sir Donald the elusive

I really enjoyed your article on specific uses of words as especially in here 99.5% of those here do not know the differences and that includes the C/O's and Administration, yet they really believe their "intelligence" allows them to do/act whatever their hearts desire! They think that because they can, they may! — a prisoner

## Stray Thoughts

Sam Aurelius Milam III

Sad Fact — Willful ignorance isn't much different from stupidity.

Eternal Vigilance — Eternal insecurity is another part of the cost of liberty. ¶

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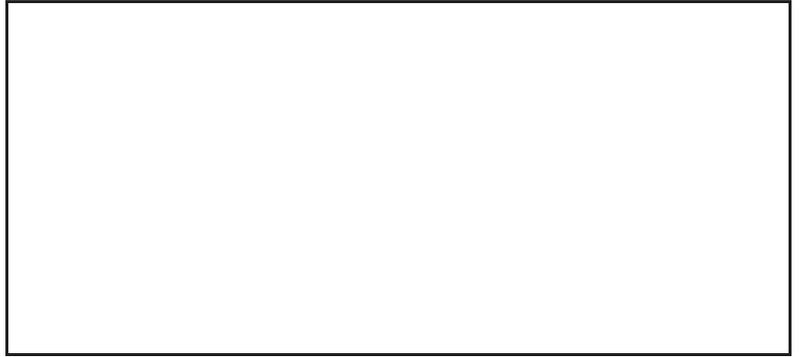
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Nation in Distress

A liberal is someone who feels a great debt to his fellow man, which debt he proposes to pay off with your money.

—G. Gordon Liddy



### Acknowledgments

My thanks to the following: SantaClara Bob; Lady Jan the Voluptuous; my mother; and Dewey and Betty. —editor

### Court Quotes

From *Humor in the Court* and *More Humor in the Court*, by Mary Louise Gilman, editor of the *National Shorthand Reporter*. Forwarded by Don G.

Q: How old is your son, the one living with you?

A: Thirty-eight or thirty-five, I can't remember which!

Q: How long has he lived with you?

A: Forty-five years. ∞

### Lights On, Nobody Home

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Don G.

I was in a car dealership when a large motor home was towed into the garage. The front of the vehicle was in dire need of repair. The whole thing generally looked like an extra in *Twister*. I asked the manager what had happened. He told me that the driver had set the cruise control and then went in the back to make a sandwich.

A lady at work was seen putting a credit card into her floppy drive and pulling it out very quickly. When asked what she was doing, she said that she was shopping on the Internet and that they kept asking for a credit card number, so she was using the ATM "thingy". ∞

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—Sam Aurelius Milam III, editor

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