

**Iconoclastic Thinkers in the Mountains:
How Divergent Spirits Help Us
Connect and Preserve Wildness
in the Eastern Peninsular Range
of Southern California**

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*Now I understand
 What you tried to say to me
 And how you suffered for your sanity
 And how you tried to set them free
 They would not listen, they did not know how
 Perhaps they'll listen now*
 - Don McLean

Abstract

The Peninsular Range of San Diego County has been a refuge for divergent spirits, providing an opportunity to examine the potential impact time-in-nature can have on the human spirit. Three individuals who have been changed by the natural environment of the Peninsular Range are featured. It is the hypothesis of this paper that spending time in wildness, as defined by Henry David Thoreau, can indeed be the preservation of the world. By incorporating the work of psychologist Carl Jung, nature can be fundamental in restarting the individuation process whereby individuals are able to unmask the persona and discover one's true self. Protecting large refugia of wildness is essential for the survival of civilization.

The Secret of the Bonsai

The allure we feel for the Peninsular Range, a jumbled 120-million-year-old lithic layer cake with a haphazard mixture of crystals, ancient sea floor sprinkles, all covered with a photosynthetic, green frosting, can be explained at the San Diego Japanese Friendship Garden in Balboa Park.

“You’ll notice the tree has an overall triangle shape,” Neil Auwarter said while gesturing toward the bonsai, a diminutive juniper tree that could be easily mistaken for a centuries-old wooden Methuselah, growing on a rocky ledge in the eastern Sierra Nevada, but in miniature. “If you look closely, you’ll notice that triangle is repeated over and over in smaller forms for each branch, then each sub-branch.”

Auwarter is the curator of bonsais at the Garden, a tall, athletic man with a focused intensity that the bonsai requires. “There’s much more. The bonsai can help us understand why we find it so appealing and why we enjoy working with its form. In three ways.”

The first, Auwarter explained, relates to fractals, the beautiful, self-repeating patterns we see in nature. But more importantly, the bonsai reminds us of the pleasure we feel when recognizing patterns. As we evolved, those individuals who were able to recognize patterns (the trail of a deer, the shape of a branch, the change in the expected) had a selective advantage over those who could not. But even more powerful was the behavioral adaptation to “enjoy” recognizing patterns. If you are rewarded mentally when recognizing such things, you also sought them out. The reason we enjoy much in life may very well be related to this trait – recognizing, rearranging, and collecting patterns, be it gardening, cooking, or art. The enjoyment of patterns is behind many of our most beautiful creations and rewarding careers.

Our bonsai enjoyment is also tied to our natural attraction to miniatures. Small reproductions take on significant appeal in a way that actual-sized versions do not. Again, this feeling is probably linked to our past. Being able to size up a situation quickly, by being able to see the whole environment in a single glance provides an evolutionary advantage. With miniatures, we see not only the entire object, but all the details at the same time. The information rush feels safe, emotionally pleasing. The multitude of hobbies associated with miniatures is not accident.

Finally, the pleasure we feel when being with the bonsai has to do with the trees themselves. As early primates, those individuals who enjoyed climbing trees, especially trees that have an open, branching structure, who liked being up there, had a selective advantage over those who stayed on the ground. We like trees because those who didn't were less successful in passing on their genes. The lions got them.

The bonsai is reflective of a traditional Japanese world view that allows one to use nature as a path to better understand, accept, and appreciate life's journey. *Wabi-sabi* – nothing lasts forever, nothing is perfect, nothing is ever finished.

There is a sense of calmness one feels in the presence of Neil Auwarter, in the presence of the bonsai. Talk with a wilderness backpacker who has just emerged from the mountains after a ten-day trip and you'll sense the same. Spend time with those who have retreated from civilization into the Peninsular Range, for a short time, or a life time, and you will begin to understand what Henry David Thoreau (1862) meant when he wrote, "In Wildness is the preservation of the world."

The allure we feel for the Peninsular Range, for any wildland unfettered by the trappings of civilization, is atavistic. We are drawn to wilderness because it is where we came from. It is our home.



Figure 1. The bonsai as a metaphor for our natural heritage. A juniper bonsai at the Japanese Friendship Garden in Balboa Park, San Diego.

Leaving Eden

Our species evolved over millions of years, outdoors, in nature. We developed behavioral and structural adaptations while listening to the sounds of wind and water, seeing the natural curves and patterns in rocks and plants, and smelling the fragrances of aromatic chemicals and the pheromones of attraction, love, and fear.

However, about two and a half-million-years-ago we began to differentiate ourselves from the natural world by shaping tools out of stone. Those hours spent flint knapping began our journey away from home.

The use and control of fire was the next technological achievement about 750,000-years-ago. Fire had such a powerful impact on our selective success that those *Homo sapiens* who remained afraid of it were removed from the gene pool rather quickly. The fire “gene,” or the set of atavistic behaviors that cause us to be drawn to fire, are manifested whenever we encounter fire in a hearth. We get drawn in. It calms us. It becomes hypnotic. It helps us create bonds with those around us. Stories are told. Language evolves.

Our natural attraction to natural things like fire also manifests itself in other common preferences and desires. We enjoy walks in the woods, build homes along the shore, and become relaxed when we stare out onto an open plain (with the forest at our back).

About 10,000 years ago in Mesopotamia, and a bit later in other parts of the world, our species crossed a Rubicon with the discovery of agriculture and its inevitable consequence – the ability to create huge food surpluses and the need to protect them. This quickly led to the development of large civilizations, citadels, and armies. Our time indoors, away from nature, rapidly accelerated. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, it was estimated that the average American spent about 7% of their time outdoors (Klepeis et al. 2001). And that was before the ubiquitous use of computers and cell phones.

So, while we may consciously believe we are modern humans, our unconscious and physiological selves continue to live on the savanna. Our physical and mental processes have not had enough time to adapt to the controlled environments of civilized life. We are adapted to the uncertainty of wildness and pay a biological price having left it.

The differences between outdoor unpredictability and indoor stability have caused psychological and physiological shocks that we have yet to fully understand (Table 1).

Outdoors in Nature	Indoors
Unpredictable environment Many surprises Need to improvise Fractals/self-repeating patterns/irregular lines Natural fragrances Fresh air Multi-sensory Temperature variation Unpredictable wild animal interactions Greens, earth tones, sky color Activity for a purpose Movement Bird, water, wind sounds Contact with soil, dirt Unlimited views Higher risk Microorganism biodiversity Uneven ground Uncertain food sources Direct sunlight Darkness at night Eating determined by hunger Help unavailable Self sufficient Ever presence of dirt/soil Many hard surfaces	Controlled environment Few surprises Conveniences Squares and lines Constructed fragrances Recycled air Limited sensations Constant temperature Domesticated animals Muted colors Contrived activity (i.e., exercise) Sitting Artificial sounds (e.g., lights, fans, electronics) No earth contact Constrained views Lower risk Semi-sterile Flat ground Abundant food sources through storage Indirect sunlight Artificially lighted interiors at night Eating as a mental condition Help a phone call away Dependence on infrastructure Unsoiled surfaces, fabrics, objects, etc. Many soft surfaces

Table 1: Outdoors vs. Indoors.

Identifying the Fear

As if leaving our wilderness home wasn't enough of a shock, we have been told in the West that our home was a nasty place in "red tooth and claw," where nature cared little for its creations as Tennyson (1850) writes,

*From scarped cliff and quarried stone
 She cries, 'a thousand types are gone:
 I care for nothing, all shall go.*

Paradise was not nature in the raw, but was a place of luxurious gardens – gardens as opposed to wilderness. Gardens offer humans all they think they need, with bountiful fruit, no thorns, mild weather, and animals that live in harmony with human kind. However, "If paradise was early man's greatest good," Roderick Nash (1973) wrote in his seminal book, *Wilderness and the*

American Mind, “wilderness, as its antipode, was his greatest evil.” When nature was celebrated by name, it was only of the “cultivated, pastoral variety.”

This attitude has been part of Western culture since the beginning. For the ancient Greeks, wild places were where all sorts of wild spirits and fauns lurked. They were terrified over encounters with Pan, the half animal, half beast maven of the forests (hence the term “panic”). The Roman poet Titus Lucretius Carus saw the wild as “filled full of restless dread throughout her woods, her mighty mountains and deep forests,” and perceived much of the earth being “greedily possessed by mountains and forests filled with wild beasts.” Early folk tales told of trolls and man-eating ogres in the wilderness. It was not the place to be.

Judeo-Christians picked up on this anti-wilderness theme and viewed it, originally identified with deserts, as cursed by God and hence, a place of evil. Wilderness was for pagans and outlaws, where cutting down sacred forests where pagans worshipped was a noble task for pious Christians.

Such fear and anger over wildness eventually shaped how the American wilderness was treated by European settlers, with the control of nature being a key feature of Manifest Destiny. There is a direct line from this fearful, man-shall-have-dominion-over-all-the-earth philosophy to the modern-day American land managers who see nature as something that needs to be manipulated to remain “healthy” and the loggers who vandalized the giant redwood that Julia Butterfly Hill lived in for 738 days in an attempt to protect it. The fear demanded that wild nature and the wild people who value it over civilization must be domesticated.

The West’s repulsion of wilderness contrasts sharply with other cultures. In India and the Far East, nature is viewed with respect and a sense of kinship (Nash 1973). And while the Indigenous cultures of America were incredibly diverse, many felt a strong, reciprocal relationship with nature in that the land was not a separate entity, but rather, an integral part of the self (Booth 1975).

So, as Chinese and Japanese philosophy have proven, successful civilizations do not need to see nature as something in need of control, as only a commodity. In fact, simple message from Ancient Greece provides an opportunity for the West to embrace this view as well if utilized to pursue what psychologist Carl Jung (1967c) defined as individuation – the process of unmasking the persona and discovering one’s true self.

In large letters above the entrance to the Temple of Apollo in Delphi was the phrase, “Gnothi Seauton,” or Know Thyself. Although we will never understand exactly what the phrase meant to the Ancient Greeks, Socrates had this to say in *Memorabilia* by Xenophon,

Who do you think knows himself— the man who merely knows his own name, or the one who behaves like people buying a horse? They don’t consider that they know a horse in which they are interested until they have satisfied themselves whether it’s obedient or disobedient, strong or weak, swift or slow, and how it stands with respect to all the other qualities which make a horse desirable or undesirable as regards its usefulness; and the

man I am thinking of has in the same way ascertained his own ability by examining his own qualifications in respect of human relationships.

In other words, by examining our inner selves, our strengths and weaknesses, we can reveal the multitudes in the purest Walt Whitman sense.

Thomas Hobbes (1688) in the *Leviathan* viewed Gnothi Seauton in a purely Jungian fashion – one learns much by examining how emotions can trigger thoughts and reactions.

Therefore, by knowing thyself, we can identify, acknowledge, then heal the counterproductive hostility our culture has for the natural world.

Minimizing Surprises

As social animals, we began modifying and repressing our thoughts and behaviors to get along with the group as soon as consciousness allowed us to be aware that we were aware.

Those repressed personality traits were pushed into the unconscious, and continue to be for modern humans, forming the shadow self as described by Jung.

In hunter gatherer societies, where one's relationship to nature is immediate and constantly changing, there are many opportunities to reconcile the conflict between the inner self and demands of the group and to relieve the nervous tension that results from that conflict. In shifting to a sedentary agricultural society where nature is subsumed and controlled by the artificial, spontaneous opportunities for reconciliation and relief are rare and far between – hence the popularity of sports. Chariot racing in Ancient Rome and football in the United States are not just for amusement, they provide the physical challenges and uncertainty humans have evolved to expect.

Since the advent of agriculture, we have been especially driven and capable of creating homeostatic lifestyles where we seek to be warm, healthy, and full all the time. But in doing so, we have inadvertently removed ourselves from the very environment in which we adapted over millions of years and nearly eliminated the stimulus that kept us mentally and physically healthy – surprises.

As a result, our bodies and minds have responded in not so healthy ways. Our cortisol levels, the hormone that helps us deal with stress, increase as do related diseases such those affecting the heart and cell reproduction (i.e. cancer). Our minds are less cognitively nimble. We develop neuroses, self-medicate, become narcissistic, and try to run other drivers off the road who upset us.

The exact mechanisms that manifest our civilized maladies are yet to be completely understood, but we do know what happens when leave society, if only for a moment, and spend time in nature (Suttie 2016). We experience reduced stress (Lee et al. 2014, Tyrvaainen et al. 2014), less worrying (Bratman et al. 2015), increased creativity (Atchley et al. 2012, Aspinall et al. 2013),

increased generosity (Zhang et al. 2014, Piff, et al. 2015), feel more “alive” (Ryan et al. 2010), and show improved immunity (Li et al. 2008).

A number of philosophers have also suggested that nature can play a restorative role in increasing confidence and self-respect. Abrams (2014) writes,

Nature teaches you that there is nothing wrong with you. When you're in nature, you don't have to look at advertising that tries to convince you there's something wrong with you, in order to sell a product. Nor do you have to look in mirrors. Instead, you're either focused on the setting around you, or on what you are doing, like climbing, setting up a tent, or gardening.

Essentially, escaping the trappings of society and the confines of civilized living and spending time outdoors in nature is a healthy choice.

The question is why? What is it about entering nature, if only for a few hours, that causes so many positive benefits? Carl Jung may have found the answer in his investigations of the unconscious.

Jung proposed that we are all born with behavioral templates, archetypes, through which our eventual personalities are shaped. These archetypes are cross-cultural and appear in many of legends and mythologies around the world.

... the archetypes are, as it were, the hidden foundations of the conscious mind, or, to use another comparison, the roots which the psyche has sunk not only in the earth in the narrow sense but the world in general. Archetypes are systems of readiness for action, and at the same time images and emotions. They are inherited with the brain-structure – indeed, they are its psychic aspect (Jung 1967b).

Although Jung did not propose a specific archetype for nature, considering humans evolved for millions of years in wildness and that many myths reflect our intimate relationship with nature, surely archetypes relating to such things as fire, rivers, forests, and savannas are within our collective unconscious.

Ottosson and Grahn (2021) investigated this hypothesis and identified ten potential archetypes. The two that are of interest to us in this paper are “the Path” and “Eternity.”

“The Path” connects one with the innate desire to wander.

More than anything else, hiking is a bodily act that unites man with the landscape. You do not only observe the landscape as a view: you move through it, where all the senses are present. During a long walk you more or less could become absorbed by the landscape. It is an activity during which the embodied-self experiences the natural landscape.

“Eternity” relates to sensory experiences, recognizing patterns/fractals, hearing leaves crackling, and seeing water.

Considering the pathological condition in the West of fearing nature, the social message to our inner natural selves is that nature can't be trusted, so it needs to be controlled. Thus, according

the Jungian model, we repress the desires, thoughts, and behaviors emerging from our nature archetypes and they become part of our shadow selves. The individual psychic costs of repressing such innate components of ourselves through a social construct are likely similar to other imbalances of the psyche.

The repression's impact on nature itself has also been devastating. Nature is reduced to a commodity. The life forms that we share the earth with are subject to extinction. Legions of justifications and deceptive terms are generated to mask the actual impacts of human actions on the natural environment. Forests are "thinned," the killing of endangered species is called "take," habitat is referred to as "fuel," the clearance of landscape by livestock is "stewardship."

But what of the impact on the psyche of individuals who have either consciously rejected the repression of nature archetypes or have accidentally discovered and embraced the archetype's influence on the personality? What of the people who have rediscovered that nature is indeed home?

Three Divergent Spirits

As with most wildland areas, the Peninsular Range in San Diego County has attracted a number of individuals who have sought refuge in nature.

There has been renewed interest lately in Nate Harrison, the freed slave who established and worked a homestead on the western side of the Palomar Mountain range between 1880 and 1919, right below what is now Palomar State Park and near the top the appropriately named, Nate Harrison Grade. As do many who leave civilization to create their own life in the wilderness, Harrison became a curiosity to the tourists of San Diego, providing water and tall tales to any who would brave the steep climb in their wagons and early automobiles.

Unfortunately, although there has been extensive archeological work and ethnographic investigation conducted on Harrison's life (Mallios 2020), most of what he shared with his visitors and how he felt about nature has been lost. But it is reasonable to conclude that the mountain wilderness allowed Harrison to actualize his true self, discarding the destructive social constructs he was forced to live under as a slave.

However, the words and perspectives of three other divergent spirits of the mountains are available to us. Marshal South, who completely rejected the constraints of society, called the Anza-Borrego Desert his home, raising a family as close to nature as one could on a waterless mountain top. Duncan McFetridge, a gentle spirit who has lived a life challenging the powerful who only see nature as an "amenity," continues to speak for nature from his rural home in the Cuyamaca Mountains. And Ruth Barry, who, as a young girl, found the chaotic life of her divorced family in Ramona intolerable, spent a year in a secluded cabin on Mount Palomar and discovered peace for the first time.

Desert Freedom: Marshal South

The water heater had just about expended its last warmth. The young man had stayed in the shower until the cooler water indicated the civilized treasure was spent.

After spending twelve years growing up in a primitive, desert homestead with barely enough water to drink, much less bathe, a hot shower was an unbelievable extravagance. Staying in the hot shower until the water heater ran cool became a lifelong habit for Rider, the eldest son of Marshal and Tanya South, the poet couple of Ghost Mountain, a dry mound of desert varnished granitic boulders in the Anza-Borrego desert foothills of the eastern slope of the Laguna Mountains.

Marshal South left civilization with his wife Tanya in 1930 to build a simple home away from it all on their desert mountain. The move wasn't particularly unusual at the time because the Great Depression had caused a lot of people to seek out new ways of living.

The Souths ground wheat to make bread, collected cactus fruit, and wore clothing only when visitors arrived. Using handmade adobe bricks made on site and materials transported by backpack and litter, the family constructed their home, Yaquitepec, named after the Yaqui Indians of Sonora, Mexico, and "tepec," the Aztec word for hill.

Over the next 16 years, the Souths wrote poetry and philosophy, had three children, and lived a life of their own making.



Figure 2. Marshal and Rider South. Photo Courtesy of Sunbelt Publications.

Marshal earned a meager, but sufficient income to buy needed supplies by writing Western novels, creating art in the form of pottery, jewelry, and paintings, but most significantly writing a monthly column for *Desert Magazine* about his family's adventures, living free from society's conventions and harried routines. Marshal gathered a large following of fans, who eagerly awaited each copy of the periodical. In his March, 1944, column, Marshal addressed an exception with a pointed description of a behavior reflective of what Duncan McFetridge would later label as that of the Sphinx.

Once in a while we get letters of censure—frank scoldings from good folks who declare that we are very wrong to have “deserted civilization.” They say that we are deliberately erecting stumbling blocks in the path of progress. And when sometimes I answer and ask innocently what “Civilization?” And what “Progress?” they become very angry and their replies sound as though, while writing them, they had been jumping up and down like our enraged pocket mice do when they are squabbling over grains of corn.

Marshal's columns were initiated after the *Saturday Evening Post* published his essay, *Desert Refuge*, on March 11, 1939. Shortly afterwards, Marshal wrote a letter of inquiry to Randall Henderson, the editor of *Desert Magazine*. Henderson wrote back saying that he thought very highly of the *Saturday Evening Post* story and offered Marshal the opportunity to contribute. He offered a rate of one cent a word, “Not because my partner and I are a couple of Scotchmen, but because our publishing venture is only 18 months... but have little doubt as to the ultimate success of our project.” And a success *Desert Magazine* became. Eventually Marshal was offered to contribute a one-year series about life at Yaquitepec beginning February, 1940. The first paragraph of his initial contribution reflected both his love for the desert and the contrast it provided to life in modern society.

There is always something tremendously exciting about beginning a New Year. Especially in the desert. Here at Yaquitepec we don't make “resolutions”—out in the brooding silences of the wastelands one doesn't need to bolster confidence with such trivial props. But every time January first rolls around we greet it with joy. It is the beginning of a new page; a page of some fascinating, illumined parchment. An ancient page, but to us still unread. What will it hold? The desert is full of mystery and surprise. No two years are ever the same.

After the year was over, Marshal began another monthly column in May, 1941, that continued until December, 1946. His columns read like personal journal entries with stories his readers loved. Marshal detailed the family's daily adventures, relationships with the native flora and fauna, as well as offering philosophical wanderings concerning the personal freedom the desert inspired.

Often writing in his study near the main house, situated between two massive boulders, Marshal created a tale of curiosity and discovery, often highlighting the things that are missed by the casual visitor.

Rider, who always is investigating, has discovered a new world—one containing more thrills than that found by Columbus. With a small lens, which he salvaged from an old camera view-finder, thrown out as useless, he has begun to explore the mysteries of those regions which lie just beyond the range of the unaided eye. He is fascinated by the results even from his lowpower magnifier. Tiny flowers and herbs, that one ordinarily would pass without noticing, reveal unexpected beauties that are breath taking. A wealth of tiny life exists in the desert. And it is for the most part unknown. Many worlds has the Great Spirit set, one within the other and each complete within itself. Yet men close their eyes to all save the affairs of greed and hate. (August 1944)

Occasionally, Marshal would receive a letter from one of his readers asking for advice about how they too could break free from their own hectic lives and find an unspoiled place similar to Yaquitepec. In his June, 1945, column, Marshal provided a response that offers insight into his respect for the individual, the differing values others may hold, and the challenge that confronts anyone who wants to take a path different from the dominant society.

This is a natural and healthy desire. And one that is a bright gleam upon the drab curtain of lock-step civilization. But these questions are always almost impossible to answer with any degree of satisfaction to the questioner. The reason is that every problem of this kind is different. It all depends upon the circumstances and upon the qualifications of the particular individual. It is a question, too, of values. Of what one values most—freedom and independence; or money, comforts and gadgets. That anyone who really wants to, can break away from civilized props and carve out his own life in “the great open spaces” has been proved many times. But the unknowable factor in each case is just how sincerely does the dissatisfied individual want to change his lot. Many think that they do—and really don’t. Deep in their hearts they would be horrified to face the prospect of throwing overboard almost every one of the advantages to which they have been accustomed, and to engage in a life of hardship and scanty monetary reward. Few can stand the test.

Then Marshal touched on the role divergent spirits who retreat into the wilderness can play in the broader society. While the larger population may view them as loners and escapist malcontents, they can be the incubators of new ideas that society is either unwilling or unable to understand.

Yet it is to those few that America—that the whole human race—owes its vital life spark. It was men and women who had ideals greater than money and comfort who won the West. Barehanded, friendless, moneyless and alone, the man who has a vision of freedom and of self reliance will go forth against all adversity and against the gibes of his fellows. This is the breed that builds empires, that blazes the broad trail that others, the weaker, the more timid and the more crafty, follow. Not in money does the pioneer take his reward. He takes it in something infinitely finer—in freedom, in the satisfaction of being his own man, no chattel dependent upon the whims of another. It is to these freedom-loving souls who will not march docilely in the ordered ranks to the piping of those who would sway them, that all freedom owes its life. They are the bearers of the sacred fire. When any nation has succeeded in

crushing out these independent souls—in bludgeoning them down with the rest into the conventional mould—then that nation is dead.

Marshal finishes his answer with a message that was characteristic of his personality – sincere, heartfelt, and encouraging.

Balance your values. Make your choice, without illusion and with eyes open to what lies ahead. And if it be that in you stirs that spark of divine fire which must have freedom or perish, then fare forth with an untroubled heart. And the blessing of all the gods go with you. For the world has need of you.

American society has a schizophrenic relationship with personal independence and the decision to turn away from the crowd. On the philosophical level, both are cherished national values. On the practical level, many who have actualized these values have found themselves to be ridiculed, shunned, or on the wrong end of the judicial system. As a consequence, few are willing to risk friends, colleagues, and careers to challenge current paradigms.

Marshal took personal independence one step further. He and his wife Tanya shared it with their three children. It was a decision that was often challenged by those who disapproved of Marshal's life choice. They would ask, as Marshal wrote in his February, 1946 column, "Why, oh why, did you do it?" He answered, "I did it to break the mold."

I did it, and am doing it, with the deliberate intention not only of freeing myself from the shackles of a system of existence which is drugged and paralyzed with error and convention, but to give opportunity to several other souls to grow up in an atmosphere and an environment in which they would not be afraid to think for themselves. In which they could face, clear eyed and clear brained the fundamental realities of life.

A mould is a terrible thing. Whether it be human thought or melted iron, the moment you pour it into a mould you kill its individuality. The pot which the Zuni Indian makes by hand, singly, is a thing of soul and beauty. Let a commercial organization get hold of that pot and make a plaster mould of it and start to turn out cast moulded pots from it, in wholesale numbers—even though they be cast of the same clay as that from which the original was fashioned—and you get things not of soul and beauty but of soulless, uninteresting mediocrity...I had almost said of horror. The life, the individuality, everything worthwhile in the original pot is gone.

So also with human beings. The moment civilization is firmly established it begins to cast them in moulds, to crush them, to hedge them around, to prohibit their individual thinking. Their ways are ordered for them. Their thinking is done for them. They are afraid to accept any idea that is at variance with the mob. They are victims of the mould. And it is a mould more difficult to break than any mould made of steel.

But, in the case of my "desert experiment"—as some have called it—I have broken the mould. For myself absolutely. For my children almost definitely. I say "almost" because there are two of them still who have not yet had enough years of freedom to

enable their mental outlook to stand alone. Rudyard and Victoria are young. If they were dragged back now into the “factory” it might be that their early training would not be strong enough quite to resist the corroding influence of the “acid.” Rider, however, is free. For though in later years he may perhaps elect to associate himself with civilization it will have no power over his free thought. Neither now nor then will he accept any condition or statement without challenge—without subjecting it to personal analysis. Names to him mean nothing. But truth means everything.

As a testament to the transient nature of a man’s life, Marshal South’s desert experiment was not to last forever. Toward the end of 1946, Tanya was suffering from extreme depression and loneliness. According to Rider, his parents began to fight constantly with each other. On a fateful trip, sometime in early October, Marshal took the family to Julian during one of his regular monthly visits to pick up his check from *Desert Magazine* and buy supplies.

While Marshal went shopping, Tanya and the children ended up in the town’s library chatting with Myrtle Botts, the librarian and close family friend. Marshal came in with an ice cream cone he had bought for Myrtle. Tanya became enraged because Marshal had previously said he didn’t have enough money to buy ice cream for the family. The trip home was a nightmare, as Rider remembered, with Tanya yelling at Marshal all the way back to the mountain top retreat.

That night, Tanya wrote an angry letter to the welfare department asking them to rescue her. Shortly thereafter, Tanya left the mountain with their three children, moving to San Diego. On October 18, Tanya filed for divorce.

All three children were fitted in civilian clothes, the two boys received their first professional haircuts, and all three were enrolled in school in Point Loma, trying to adjust to a world they had never known. Rider was just becoming a teenager, his brother Rudyard was nine, his sister Victoria was six.

Marshal’s world fell apart when Tanya and the children left. It was a fear he had always lived with at Yaquitepec. He had experienced similar heart break when his first wife, Margaret, asked him to leave in 1920, taking their son, Marshal Jr., with her.

“That’s why he did not want children with Tanya,” author and South family historian Diana Lindsay said, “but then he realized after years on Ghost Mountain that he would lose her unless they did to keep Tanya occupied. Their breakup was almost inevitable – the children just delayed what was going to happen. Tanya was just a different person.”

Marshal’s last vision of his entire family was in court during the divorce proceedings. Due to a restraining order, Marshal was forbidden to see the children again. He left Ghost Mountain and headed to Julian, staying for a time in the town’s library, sleeping in a space created for him by Myrtle Botts – a bed behind a small curtain. During that time, he painted a mural running along to top of the wall as a way to pay Myrtle back for offering him a place to sleep at night. He would also visit Myrtle and her husband Louis at their home in Julian, often spending a night or two. Marshal eventually moved down to Agua Caliente Hot Springs, but the Botts grew worried about his health and moved him into a small trailer in their back yard.

Marshal's regular monthly column in *Desert Magazine* ended after the divorce. He began writing again later the following summer, August, 1947. He submitted his last column in the summer of 1948. It was published posthumously in December of that year. Marshal died October 22 at 59 years old of a heart condition he had held in check all those years while living the desert life on Ghost Mountain. Louis and Myrtle were at his side when he passed away.

By chance, Marshal did see his son Rider after the divorce. "Rider was on a bus with the Boy Scouts coming back from a camp trip and saw his dad on a corner," Diana recalled. "He managed to get the bus stopped and had a few words with his father. That was it. Marshal wrote to Rider during his last two years, but we don't know if Tanya showed the letters to him at that time."

Upon Tanya's death, Rider inherited all of Marshal's letters including the letters his father had written him.

After Marshal died, his body was taken to El Cajon before it was transported back to Julian for burial. Tanya and Rider went to the mortuary to visit the body.

When Diana Lindsay began researching the South story in 1971 as part of her Master's thesis at San Diego State University, she tried to interview Tanya, but was met with a door slammed in her face and a demand by Tanya that she never come back. Rider was more polite, but said he would honor his mother's wishes to not talk about the family. After Tanya died in 1997, Diana made another attempt to talk with Rider and this time he said yes. Over the next two decades Diana slowly gained Rider's trust and he shared the memories of his childhood and the family. He wrote a personal recollection for Diana's book, *Marshal South and the Ghost Mountain Chronicles* (Sunbelt Publications 2005). Rider died February 6, 2016, at 82 years old.

After donating the documents she had collected about the South family, including volumes of notes, photos, and letters from Rider, to the San Diego Historical Society, Diana ended up keeping one personal memory. "Marshal made a ring for Rider in a special wood box. I kept that – it's just so special."

The divorce and the family's silence fostered a rumor mill that generated hostile gossip about Marshal. His iconoclastic personality was an anachronism in conservative San Diego County. The townsfolk of Julian, founded by veteran Confederate soldiers, did not think highly of the independent women of the Botts family nor their friendship of the strange family on Ghost Mountain. The gossip proved to be enduring and has been the focus of several articles, including one in the San Diego Reader, and an extend version of the short film shown at the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park visitor center.

It wasn't until Diana Lindsay's book was published that the full story of Marshal South and his dream on Ghost Mountain was revealed truthfully. "After the book was published, Diana said, "Rider gave me so many more wonderful details that I wished I'd had before. There's another book to be written, someday."

Black and white photographs of the South's children, sitting naked on granite boulders outside their home or making pottery under a shaded patio with their father, are haunting. It is easy to

imagine them laughing as they hop from boulder to boulder or snuggled up under blankets listening to their parent's stories by the glow of the kitchen's hearth, with the sounds of the desert night filtering in under the front door.

The image gnaws somewhere within the heart, like an ill-defined longing that just won't go away. The broken commitment to see it through to the end and the sudden interruption of innocence, no matter the reason, hurts inside and disturbs the secret hope that someone somewhere is still able to escape the rat race. If only for just an hour, a day, or for 16 years.



Figure 3. The South's home on Ghost Mountain. Rudyard (L) and Rider (R) sitting next to Yaquitepec's seasonal pond. Photo courtesy of Sunbelt Publications.

What did Marshal South find in the desert foothills of the mountains? He wrote the answer in his August, 1945 column.

In the first place we get freedom. Freedom of mind and freedom of body. In this sunlit desolation of rock and thorn, where the sun beats down through an unending march of days and the desert silence which broods among the boulders and ocotillos is broken only by the harpings of the wind, we can spread freely the net of our minds to gather those priceless, fundamental stirrings of the infinite which are most easily come by when one is

close to nature. Our thoughts are our own—to weigh, to digest, to evaluate. No coloring lens or distorting mirror—either of the printed word or the shouted aerial tirade—can stir our judgment, or influence it. What we think we think ourselves. That which we value we can develop. That which we hold to be trivial and unworthy we can escape. By dawnlight or starlight or in the glare of noon we are spared the constant effort of thrusting aside a ceaseless stream of readymade thought, which sponsored by every diverse “interest” under the sun, beats constantly upon the eyes, ears and brain of the marcher in Progress’ proud parade. Thus, quite unassisted, we can do our own thinking more easily. Not that it is impossible to think, even in the clamor of a boiler factory. But the process is more efficient and more pleasant in the wasteland solitudes where silence is stirred only by the desert wind.

And, even as it grants us freedom of mind, so does the desert grant us freedom of body. Here, far in the friendly shelter of our sun-seared rocks we need bow no knee to any sacred cow set up by the gods of fashion or of convention. Nature, the Great Mother, who with wise and loving hands directed the costumes and the health of our dusky Indian predecessors upon these wild slopes, extends her kindly care over us in similar fashion. When the snow falls or the bitter winds roar we can, if we feel so inclined, wrap ourselves in the warm folds of a blanket. When the sun shines and the warm breezes bring the glad tang of bodily comfort over the ridges we can discard our blanket. And there are none to say us Yea or Nay. From the cramping bondage of shoes our feet likewise have escaped. If, in the winter, the ground is frozen, or if, in summer, the rocks and gravel are too hot for comfort, we can—and do—wear a simple sandal such as the Yaquis wear. But for the most part we can go barefoot. And this without “scandal” or exposing ourselves to the “pity” of our neighbors, or the kindly “advice” of interested medicos...

Further, our “unnatural turning aside” has brought us peace and contentment. It has brought us to the state of consciousness where each day is a separate jewel to be lived and enjoyed for itself. Where each hour is a living thing, filled with the singing joy of fundamental life. Of the whispered mysteries of the drifting wind, of the glad notes of the birds, of the glinting sparkle of sunshine gold upon rocky pinnacle or upon swaying thorn. It has given us a deep kinship and understanding with all nature, the abiding sense of the oneness of all things, a clearer perception of the glory of the Great Spirit, as much in the jeweled eye of the desert lizard as in the majesty of the desert dawn.

Yaquitepec, the Marshal South home, remains atop Ghost Mountain, but its adobe walls and metal cisterns are slowly becoming part of the desert landscape.

The mural Marshal painted in the Julian library can still be seen, but the building now houses the local real estate office.

On January 22, 2005, fifty-seven years after his death, Marshal South received a marker on his grave in the Julian Pioneer Cemetery.

“I’d like my father to be recognized as the author that he was,” Rider South said before he died. “The genius that created things. He created a house out there, out of nothing.”

Revealing the Sphinx: Duncan McFetridge

The lathe kept spinning.

His severed finger lay on the metal platform, blood still draining from the dismembered stump. Bits of flesh cast across the workshop.

Outside, the flow of life continued on, oblivious to the human drama inside. Acorn Woodpeckers flew between a council of four old oaks. A horse and donkey quietly nibbled on alfalfa. The stone Buddha, mountain lion, and bull, all hand carved from massive boulders, maintained their silent presence. Eroded flecks of mica and feldspar sparkled in the sun, crystalline testaments to the Cuyamaca Mountains’ plutonic movements 120 million years ago.

It was this natural calm the mountainous terrain provided, filled with the sounds of bird, wind, and water, decorated with repeating fractal patterns of trunk, branch, stem, and leaf, perfumed with fragrances of sage, damp earth, and pine, that provided the man the mental space, the atavistic connection to wildness, that usually helped quiet his internal dialogue.

“When your head is filled,” the man told a friend, “you can’t see the world.”

But as he moved the wood toward the blade that day in his workshop, his ego’s voice distracted, if only for a moment.

Duncan McFetridge, drinking tea inside his mountain home of 36 years, glanced at his partially healed hand. “My machines, like the Sphinx, will instantly eat you alive! Instantly. I looked down and part of my finger, gone forever.” He raised his eyebrows, nodded, then reached over and tapped the head of a small Sphinx statue, one of four, resting on the massive wooden table that fills the central space of his library. Each sat at the corners of a small tablecloth with a painting of the bhavacakra, a symbolic representation of the samsara, or cycle of life, in Tibetan Buddhism.

For Duncan, the Sphinx is a metaphor for our primal, self-centeredness, devoid of any moral guidance, capable and eager to consume our fragile, conscious egos. The Sphinx is forever busy, always ready to pounce when one’s internal dialogue distracts or dominates, causing fingers to be severed, or worse. We are vulnerable to being completely consumed by the beast if our dialogue fools us into believing our own subjective reality; the animal body consumes the intellectual head. When the Sphinx consumes, we become marionettes, our reactions, behaviors, and beliefs determined not by fact, but by a conflicted mix of instinct and destructive complexes shaped during our youth as we tried to adjust to society’s constraints.

When the Sphinx triumphs, not only does the individual become lost, but decisions are made that negate the community, negate nature.

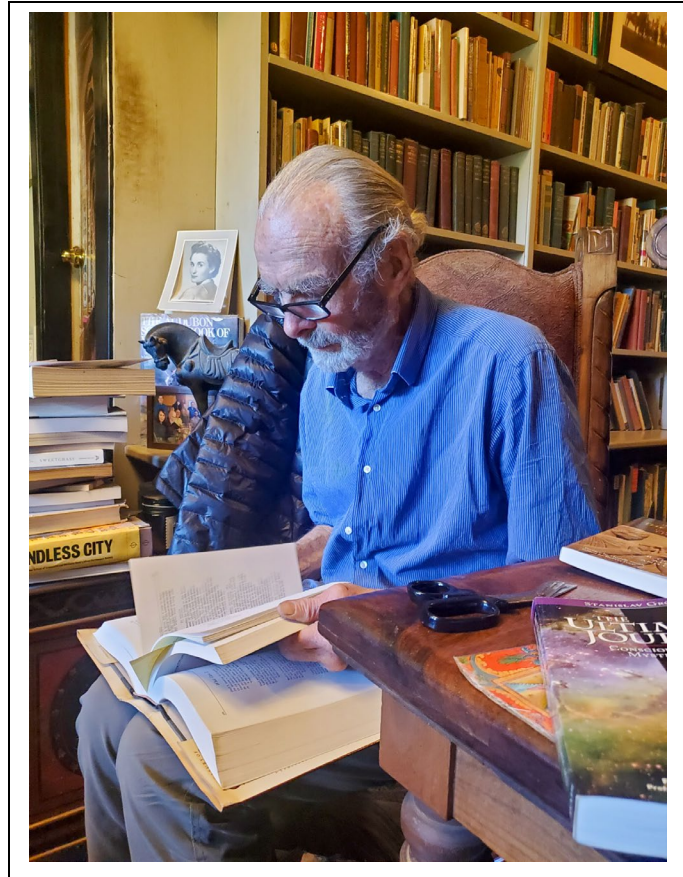


Figure 4. Duncan in his library.

The shadow, as elucidated by Carl Jung, can also be seen as a modern manifestation of the Sphinx. A collection of rejected personality traits that we have repressed into our subconscious to conform to society's norms, the shadow, like the Sphinx, remains a constant threat and will suddenly emerge at the most inopportune time, or completely consume the conscious ego, if not acknowledged and addressed. As Jung (1967a) explained,

“The shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge.”

After spending decades fighting to protect the forests and native habitats in the eastern mountains of San Diego County, Duncan has come to the conclusion that those charged with regulating growth, planning for the future, have succumbed to the Sphinx, permanently blinded by their own internal chatter, marionettes to their shadow selves, unconscious adherents to unacknowledged biases and prejudices in favor of development and sprawl, at the expense of oaks, bobcats, and butterflies. They have completely rationalized the decisions they make with their shadow selves, dismissing or ignoring data contrary to their beliefs.

“The value of the forest is intrinsic, completely independent of human use and desire,” Duncan said while describing his fight in the early 1990s to protect a beautiful oak meadowland, southwest of Guatay Mountain, right next to the Cleveland National Forest. “When developer Julie Dillion characterizes the forest as an ‘amenity,’ she reveals that, despite her protestations of concern for the environment, she sees the forest as a mere means to human gratification.”

“What I’m suggesting is that we have values here that cannot be evaluated in terms of money. But folks, just hang on. In 30 years, we’ll be thanking God we still have this forest... We’re going to raise the money. If I have to mortgage my house, I will.”

Duncan did end up mortgaging his home to fund the fight and was ultimately successful in protecting the wildland from development. A 714-acre oak meadowland is now part of the Cleveland National Forest as a result.

As is the case for many who stand up to the powerful to defend the voiceless, fighting injustice and greed is an integral part of Duncan’s personality. He cannot look away, regardless of the personal consequences and the opinions of the crowd.

So, consistent with his principles, Duncan, a military veteran, became outraged over the injustice in the case of Mohammed Jawad, a 16-year-old-boy who was incarcerated at Guantanamo for allegedly throwing a grenade at a US military vehicle during the war in Afghanistan.

After being subjected to beatings to extract a confession in Afghanistan, torture at Guantanamo, and enduring 5 years of indescribable legal limbo, the boy was given a hearing. Writing a letter to the Office of Military Commissions to plead for justice, Duncan articulated the principles that have guided him throughout his life (McFetridge 2008).

Without doubt, Mr. Jawad’s trial will take place in a difficult and politically charged arena. Yet, America’s own political and legal history provides some guidance in this matter. I believe that in all the essential elements there exists an analogous event in America’s own history.

I speak of the Boston Massacre, March 5, 1770. There our fledgling Nation saw an attack and slaughter of innocent civilians on American soil by what was considered a foreign entity. The following efforts to hold British soldiers accountable for alleged crimes brought to the forefront the consideration of rules governing fair trials and the rights of accused, all at a time when public sentiment against the foreign entity and outrage against the accused was white hot.

The Boston Massacre, one of the most indelible events in our Nation’s history, also placed Justice itself on trial. And it was just then when, with emotions at fever pitch and no attorney could be found to defend the accused, that John Adams stepped forward. John Adams -- Patriot, founding father, and future President -- accepted the role without hesitation, “firm in the belief,” as he said, “that no man in a free country should be denied the right to counsel and a fair trial, and convinced, on principle, that the case was of the utmost importance.” Nevertheless, he stepped into an arena where public emotions were running so high, he feared for his family’s and his own safety.

Reflecting in later life on this case, he recalled his efforts as, “one of the most gallant, generous, manly and disinterested actions of my whole life, and one of the best pieces of service I ever rendered my country.”

At the beginning of the trial, John Adams invoked the words of the famous jurist Cesare Beccaria: “If, by supporting the rights of mankind, and of invincible truth, I shall contribute to save from the agonies of death one unfortunate victim of tyranny, or of ignorance, equally fatal, his blessings and years of transport will be sufficient consolation to me for the contempt of all mankind.” In his argument, Adams noted an important maxim -- it is more important to community that innocence be protected, than guilt be punished. “Facts are stubborn things,” he told the jury. “And whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictums of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and the evidence.” What John Adams called one of the best pieces of service to his country was acquittal of the Boston Massacre defendants based upon rule of law, and in contravention to the wild mob spirit of an affected citizenry.

Duncan has continued to be successful in challenging developers and San Diego County planning officials and their questionable interpretations of facts and the law. In 2022, the California Superior Court ruled in one of Duncan’s environmental lawsuits that the San Diego Association of Governments had “abused their authority” in developing a transportation plan that failed to account for the large increase in carbon emissions the resulting traffic would create – a transportation plan that would have encouraged sprawl into the wildlands.

But the fights have taken a toll. The hope that enlightenment will eventually come to the bureaucrats, a common one among those who spend their lives protecting the environment, can wear thin.

In 2018, Duncan sent a prophetic message that reflected both his love for the natural world and the frustration he felt over fighting an unending stream of new environmentally damaging projects, and others that kept being resurrected, that threaten yet another pristine wild space.

Team, please allow a little poetry, because I can’t help returning to ancient ideas of soul: ‘the incredible lightness of being’- as a delicate winged entity oriented to light not darkness.

Last year, on March 12, a beautiful and slightly rare giant moth landed in my carving room to lay eggs and die. She was so vulnerable, so beautiful, and her last act was to give life. This fragile little messenger from heaven caused me to think how shameful humanity has become covering the earth not with life but with death...

After citing a Los Angeles Times article that described his successful fight to protect the oak meadowland in 1990s (Wallace 1990), he reflected on how, after 30 years, “we still can’t keep our hands off our fragile forest.”

My beautiful little moth friend puts us all to shame, I thought at the time.

Guess what? Her offspring returned this year, a month earlier than last time, and landed right next to the chipmunk I'm carving. It is her last act; she doesn't move, doesn't fly. She will deposit the eggs of life again, and die!

To say that I was astonished is an understatement. I immediately stopped working and gave up my art space to her creation space.

If only we could hear what she is saying...



Figure 5. Duncan's "beautiful little moth friend" at his workbench.

When exploring Duncan's workshop, a large oil painting hanging on the wall will surprise, then terrify. It portrays the physical manifestation of the shadow when it gains control of those in who determine how land shall be used, and who it will serve. The painting depicts a tall, gargoyle-like creature scooping up handfuls of a mountain forest, consuming it in great gulps, and defecating dozens of buildings, all falling down onto a neat landscape of rows of homes and freeways filling all available space.

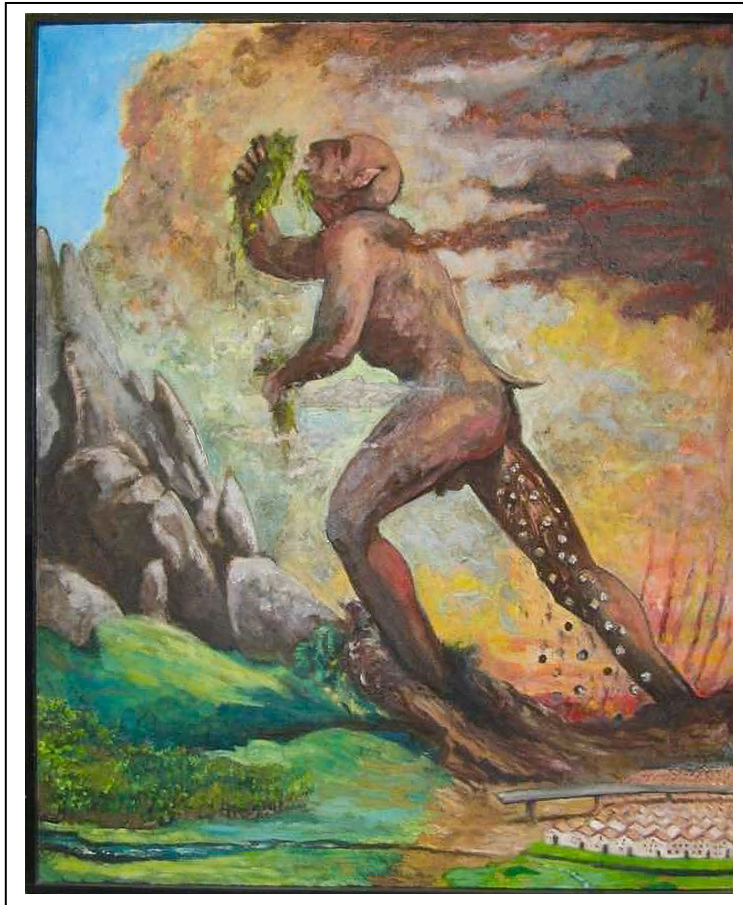


Figure 6. The Developer. An oil painting by an unknown artist in Duncan's workshop.

During the COVID pandemic, Duncan took advantage of the world's forced pause to engage in a process that he had hoped those who viewed nature as merely an "amenity" would eventually do themselves; to confront their Sphinx within, to recognize and reconcile their shadow selves. Or as he describes it, "To go beyond knowing, and truly *see* the good."

Carlos Castaneda (1972) explains it as stopping the world, stopping one's internal dialogue so as to see the world free of one's personal story, rules, and biases.

Over the course of that pandemic year, Duncan used his stone carving skills to turn a large outcropping of granodiorite, a salt a pepper granitic rock that has served as his canvas for several works of art on his property, into the face of Buddha, an evocative symbol of transformation.

The mountains provide Duncan an environment that continually inspires him, offering an uncluttered space to think, to feel. However, the child's innocence required to see Nature, and the consciousness needed to embrace that innocence, are qualities Duncan brought to the mountain himself.

“Childhood innocence, insight, truth, beauty, and goodness are self-generated,” Duncan said while looking through the large picture window above his library desk. The four old oaks were still holding council in the opening beyond. “These qualities are treasures on their own. The mountains, Nature, can lead adults back to them, but the darkness, the Sphinx, must be recognized and acknowledged before the spirit can be free. Before one can truly see.”



Figure 7. The lion and the Buddha. Stone statues carved by Duncan McFetridge outside his home.

Mountain Sanctuary: Ruth Barry

She needed to get away from Ramona. The family home had degenerated into chaos. The divorce, when she was 12-years-old, lit the fuse.

It would be the mountains that would provide her the stepping stone she needed to discover that an enjoyable life was indeed possible. And then there was Steve, who she would meet on the mountain and eventually marry, creating the family she dreamed of having.

“When my mother left my dad...” Ruth said, pausing for a moment while sharing her story on the patio of her home. “I was heartbroken. He was such a sweet man. My mother...”

She didn’t need to finish.

Ruth Finely moved from Palo Alto, California when she was four-years-old. “We came down to Ramona to return home, according to my family anyway. My granddad was a butcher there. It never made sense to me, the move, even as a kid. I’d ask my dad, what does Ramona have? He’d say, peace and quiet.”

After high school, there were parties on weekends. Lots of parties. “I drove down to Grossmont College and tried to keep up being a student, but it was really difficult. I was a kid without any guidance, sense of security.

“Then my mother died. In 1981. She was walking across the street in the crosswalk when a car hit her. Just like that. Killed her. Shortly afterwards, my dad, who was living in San Diego, left to live in Arkansas with his new wife. Loneliness became overwhelming for me. Home became intolerable. I was 23-years-old. I had to escape.”

The chance came the following year. Oma, an older woman in her 80’s who lived alone in cabin-like home hidden in a deep canyon along Palomar Mountain’s east grade, needed help. She had suffered a heart attack and could no longer live alone.

The secretive house had been built during the war, World War II, by the original owners out of fear of a Japanese attack on the west coast.

“The place was constructed from half logs and surround by huge oak trees. It depended on a generator for power and an oil heater for warmth. And it was dark, because of the trees. It felt like the middle of nowhere. It was the middle of nowhere!”

Ruth would drive up the mountain from Ramona every Monday morning, staying with Oma all week long, keeping her company, taking care of the house, cooking, and doing the chores. Then she would drive back to town, Ramona, Friday evening, back to the family chaos.

“I sat in my bedroom a lot at Oma’s, and read books. I listened to the radio too, mostly 91X, a new alternative rock station. I loved the music so much. I even wrote them a note to let them know. One night while listening, the disc-jockey, Bryan Schock, announced right there on the air, ‘I got a letter from Ruth Finley!’ I couldn’t believe it.”

Ruth would occasionally wander into the oak forest surrounding the house. “The oak’s acorns were huge! I had grown up with scrub oaks with their next-to-nothing acorns, so these were something else.

“I stayed with Oma for about a year. During that time, I started becoming friends with some of the local mountain folks. Bill and Abbey. Bruce and Shraddha. They were older than I was and became my mentors, not just for how to enjoy life, but nature too. I knew it was beautiful on the mountain, but they helped me understand why.”

“We took a hike in French Valley, I think it was in 1985, the beautiful grassy meadow in the middle of the state park. It was filled with wildflowers. Tidy tips. Goldfields. Lilies. Everywhere! And my friends knew the names of every one of them.”

“I began learning the names of the flowers too after that hike. I just felt, and still do, that we have an obligation to know all the flora and fauna that surrounds us. Discovering each new living thing is like hidden pictures. You become familiar with what you expect, then you can see the different.”

Ruth met Steve Barry in 1984. He was living in a rented cabin and worked as the nighttime assistant with the 60-inch telescope at the Palomar Observatory. “My friends introduced me to Steve. He had such a wonderful sense of humor, was a pilot, *and* he had a college degree! He played in a band too. Music! He was such a wonderful contrast to anyone I had known before.”

Within two years Ruth and Steve were married, moved into the home down the mountain that Steve had bought earlier, and began raising their family.

“In ‘88, Steve bought me a pair of binoculars for my birthday. It was morning, so I rushed out into our yard to see what I could find. There were birds everywhere. Once you start looking...

“I think my love for nature has passed on to our two boys. Alan came up to Steve and I one day when he was 7 or 8-years-old and told us in no uncertain terms, ‘I want to go *into* the forest.’ It was the ‘into’ part that he stressed. Steve took him for that hike and exploring the forest became his love. As he grew up, he’d take off with his friends into the wilds and not return ‘til dark.”

Ruth stood in the middle of the kitchen, offering another cup of coffee. Steve walked in. “There he is!” She rushed over to hug him. “He’s my rescuer. He allowed me to carry on.

“It was the mountain that gave me the time to find peace.”

Outside, a pair of White-crowned Sparrows sat on the patio wall, looking in.



Figure 8. Ruth Barry.

Reconnecting with Nature

Fierce Independence

The one characteristic that stands out for Marshal South, Duncan McFetridge, and Ruth Barry is fierce independence. And while all three ventured into the mountains of San Diego County for different reasons, each found the solitude and peace supportive of their individuality.

Of course there is a personal cost in being independent in a society that demands conformity. Marshal South described it well.

If you have anything of individuality about you, you must be prepared to pay for it. Each thought of yours – each expression of opinion; each little mannerism of deportment or dress that is different from the accepted standards of the herd will lose you many friends and make you many new enemies. But what of it! A wise man lives not for the opinion of his “friends” but for the advancement of his own soul. And the individual develops and goes forward just in proportion to the extent that he does think and act for himself. He proceeds, under his won power, towards broader horizons. The herd remains – milling and bellowing and wallowing in the mud.

South identified the one quality that allows the divergent spirit to carry on – the ability to understand what is under one’s control, and letting the rest go.

This is an idea that humans have been trying to perfect for more than 2,000 years. From the Greek Stoic Epictetus, the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, to the modern alcoholic endeavoring to conquer addiction.

*God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
And wisdom to know the difference...
- Alcoholic Anonymous Serenity Prayer*

While South, McFetridge, and Barry were independent, divergent spirits prior to their journeys into nature, being away from society’s constraints undoubtedly alleviated the tension they felt.

That helped them put things into proper perspective. But more importantly, time in nature relieved the expenditure of mental energy that’s necessary in society to deal with the conflicts between their personas and their inner selves.

It is the hypothesis of this paper that by spending time in nature, one’s psyche is more readily able to restart the process of individuation – the process of unmasking the persona and discovering one’s true self.

Trying to heal neuroses, cure depression, recognize emotional triggers, and visualize many of the potentialities available in one’s life within the very social system that caused the problems or behavioral blindness in the first place is nearly an impossible task.

Restarting individuation through nature

Beginning with the development of the conscious ego during the innocence of childhood, individuation barrels along at full steam during adolescence, but typically comes to a standstill during adulthood as we begin to mistakenly believe that our persona, the self-image we have constructed to survive in society, actually reflects who we are. We create justifications for our reactions and beliefs, form stereotypes to force the world to conform to those beliefs, and assume that our behaviors, thoughts, and feelings are under our conscious control.

As a consequence, we are ignorant of the world beyond our own socially constructed reality, both the external world and that of our own inner psyche. While we are more than willing to judge and point out what we perceive as errors in other people's behaviors and beliefs, we are blind to the fact that many of those judgements are merely projections of suppressed personality traits buried deep within our own unconscious selves.

Most know very little of this inner universe, or for that matter the entire psyche, a self-regulating system that includes both the unconscious and conscious mind – a system as real as the physical world (Jung 1967c). Thus, we think our reactions to events are based on fact and logic, when in reality we are often unconsciously triggering off patterns formed when younger and deeply imbedded archetypes, none of which have anything to do with the event in question. Hence, the observable fact that every person reacts to the same event differently.

Restarting the process of individuation can be a challenge because it requires a person to objectively question everything. Individuation means acknowledging and gaining control of one's patterns and complexes that dwell within the world of the unconscious so that we are no longer slaves to them. Rather than being like marionettes, with our reactions and behaviors determined by our shadow selves, the individual is conscious of the moment and develops the power to choose how to react in that moment.

Although recognizing, then leveraging one's strengths is part of the individuation process, little will be accomplished without also acknowledging one's shadow. Confronting the shadow, the Sphinx, can be emotionally painful because we have to stop and identify the counterproductive reaction (e.g., being offended, fighting with a partner, compulsive habits), acknowledge the reaction is the result of an unconscious pattern, then replace that pattern with an equally powerful, but productive action.

We learn to be humble and truly embrace the notion that our persona may not allow us to see and react to the world accurately. We become wise as Jung (1997) explains it.

Wisdom begins only when one takes things as they are... So it is a healing attitude when one can agree with the facts as they are... only then can we thrive.

The wonderfully encouraging aspect of individuation is that it is a lifelong process. It means constantly learning new things about one's self and the world. And we begin to realize that our carefully constructed persona is a mere sliver of our potentialities.

While there are many techniques and therapies that assist people in restarting the process of individuation, there is one that is easily accessible to all – nature.

How much time in nature do we need?

Author Florence Williams (2017a), who has collected a significant amount of research about this question, has assembled an excellent survey of answers in her book, *The Nature Fix*. One suggestion she shared was from University of Virginia professor Tim Beatley (2012), based on what he calls the “nature pyramid.”

At the bottom of the pyramid represents the most basic opportunities available to reconnect with nature – hourly exposures to nature easily obtained in our neighborhoods: stepping outside, hearing bird songs, looking at green, connecting with our pets. The next level includes explorations of a nearby park for a couple hours on a weekly basis, the positive benefits of which have been documented by research (White et al. 2019). The only caveat is that the park needs to be big enough, and far enough away from civilization, to muffle car sounds and offer unencumbered views of nature. Then once a month, a visit to a wildland area for an entire weekend is recommended. And finally, at the top of the pyramid, intense, multi-day (three days or more) excursions at least once a year into the wilderness where the trappings of society are completely absent – car camping doesn’t count and technology needs to be left behind.

The positive impact three days in the wilderness has on us has been coined as the “three-day effect” by cognitive neuroscientist David Strayer (Williams 2017b). This too has been confirmed by numerous studies (Atchley et al. 2012, Osika and Stenfors 2021).

Expanding this concept to multiple week experiences forms the basis of many treatment programs for troubled youth and PTSD sufferers. Williams (2018) does an excellent job explaining these experiences in a recent pod cast.

Once one has been in nature three days or more, away from the pressures, expectations, and comforts of society, the unconscious becomes more accessible, the inner Sphinx is more vulnerable to exposure, and the persona becomes more pliable.

The main concerns become meal time, locating the next source of water, staying warm, and not doing stupid things that might get you hurt. Life returns to the model of immediacy, as with the hunter-gather, rather than one of delayed-return found in agricultural societies where the focus is on the accumulation of assets and the future, all which discount the present moment (Garcia 2008). We begin to enjoy the flow of life as it is happening as Marshal South noted when he wrote,

Further, our “unnatural turning aside” has brought us peace and contentment. It has brought us to the state of consciousness where each day is a separate jewel to be lived and enjoyed for itself. Where each hour is a living thing, filled with the singing joy of fundamental life.

And we allow nature do what it does best, surprise.



Figure 9. The Laguna Mountains escarpment. Looking southeast from Garnet Peak into the Anza-Borrego Desert. Photo taken by Alexander Kunz.

There are many powerful ways to force a reassessment of one's life that could help restart the individuation process – hitting the bottom, the death of a loved one, a personal calamity. But time in the wilderness, in nature, offers a pleasurable method to restart one's journey to actualize the true self. Spending three days in nature, away from the social forces that caused us to suppress our potentials, would be an effective beginning to any program focused on improving mental health.

To prevent its own extinction, civilized society, with its square buildings, soft cushions, and penchant for group delusions, requires wild refugia far from the stultifying conformity of human communities. It is in those wild places, where life is unfettered by artificial controls and expectations where a man or woman can reacquire themselves with the infinite possibilities of the human psyche and create new ideas essential for the continued advancement of the species.

It is conformity, fear of risk, and suppression of independent thought that lead to the eventual downfall of institutions, corporations, and empires. It is a lesson humans have learned and forgotten many times over.

Every settlement, city, metropolis, needs its Sherwood Forest where society's Robin Hoods, anarchists, and iconoclasts can escape from the sheriff – for civilization's sake. For it is in these wild spaces where the independent spirit can be protected, nurtured, and rediscovered. Even if

one never sets foot in a wild place, the knowledge that such places exist is enough to keep the ember of creativity flickering within the heart of even the most repressed soul.

And this is why the Marshal Souths, the Duncan McFetridges, the Ruth Barrys of the world are so vital to the human condition. They provide us hope that it is still possible to escape from the constraints of society to find the freedom to discover our true selves.

Understanding our origin, and the evolutionary journey we have travelled for millions of years, it should come as no surprise that the best place to discover who we truly are is in wildness, the preservation of the world.

Nature is an incomparable guide if you know how to follow her. She is like the needle of the compass pointing to the North, which is most useful when you have a good man-made ship and when you know how to navigate.

- Carl Jung (1973)

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