

Chronicles of Diversity

Your leadership weekly



*Future Home of
Posada Wonder Springs?*

Barbecue gold

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Last week we pretty much finished my intellectual thoughts on community creation, so this week I thought a change of pace would be a good thought. This story will be sort of an introduction to the direction we will head hence forth. It was originally written a few years ago and updated for current rumination.

Justin - Grace and BBQ gold

For some reason unknown to me I had the urge to watch the sun rise over First Thought Mountain. I sort of mused to myself as I threw my sleeping bag in the back of my truck, "I wonder what my first thoughts will be when I wake in the morning."

Since this was at the close of a day of physical work at my cabin, I decided to stop at the Orient Inn, or Tavern as it is best known, to have a cheeseburger and some fries for dinner. As the plate of greasy food was served I mused again, "What this place needs is some good barbecue, yes, some 'Authentic Kettle River Barbecue.' I wonder what is 'Authentic Kettle River Barbecue'?"

After finishing my supper, I figured I had about an hour of daylight left, so I hoped I could find the road without much trouble. Up the highway towards Lauier, then up Little Boulder until there was a road, that looked all over grown, and then about half a mile in, to the spot I wanted to spend the night. As always the road is much easier to spot coming down the mountain than going up, so before I decided that must be the road, I had driven perhaps another quarter mile. After finding a place to turn around, I returned to the spot and edged off the main road onto what looks like a completely abandoned trail. "The brush is thicker than it was the last time I was in here", I thought as the wispy branches of the alder scratched along the side of my truck. "I'm sure glad she isn't new anymore, because if she was I would want to walk in, to save the paint."

Finally, just as I remembered, about a half mile off the road I entered the clearing and I was in a small quarry of sorts. Boulders, or blocks of almost pure quartz crystals, slightly larger than kernels of

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corn, all fused together into what looks to be a huge deposit. The sun was really beginning to set now, so I figured I better find a place to sleep soon. Because no rain was expected, when I had left the cabin I had decided to use the stars for my tent. But as I opened the back of the truck I saw that I had forgotten to throw in any kind of sleeping pad. "Oh, well. It might be a fitful nights sleep up on that rocky ridge, especially if I can't find a place, with a little soil or something to soften up the hard rock. After all, pure quartz has a hardness of 8, with diamond being a 10 hardness. This is sure going to be a night at the Hard Rock Hotel unless the Lord provides."

I passed through the maze of pure white boulders and reached the mass of the unbroken formation, I was again aware of the massive scratches running north and south, still plainly visible after these many centuries. This whole area was covered with the continental ice sheet during the ice age, and those scratches in this pure rock are still only covered with a thin layer of moss and lichens.

As I reached the top of the ridge, the sun had fully set behind the Kettle River Range to my back. Beginning to be lost in the deepening twilight, to the east was First Thought Mountain with the Kettle River between us. "Now to find a place to lay my sleeping bag, some soft spot, where I can still gaze at the stars. What's that over there, it looks sort of like someone many years ago built a browse bed there." Right out there in a small depression on the ridge was sort of a square area perhaps big enough for two people to sleep. Then twenty feet away, facing the river was what looked to be a fire circle, from one huge or often used bonfire. "Hey, there is a small piece of burnt wood, and what looks like some remains of charcoal. Someone build a fire here a long time ago - and probably slept over there just like I'm planning to do. Perhaps, I can find some wood for a fire too."

Looking around, I spied a small sapling that looked like alder or some other deciduous tree that had succumbed to the forces of nature a couple of years previous. Perfectly seasoned and just the right size to be one nights fire wood and still small enough to be broken into pieces by jumping on the trunk. "I'm sure living right tonight!" Within minutes the fire was ablaze and my sleeping bag was laid out for a restful nights sleep. "Life is good, and the smell of smoke reminds me of my desire for barbecue for supper! 'Authentic Kettle River Barbecue' must be smoked, as well as slow cooked, and messy with tasty sauce." "

While it was now dark, through the fire light, I now noticed a little farther down the ridge what looked has if it was once a stone cairn. There was enough light from the fire to safely make my way down to the heap of stones. It was made up of some of the boulders from the quarry. There was also what looked like a well decayed wooden box and some kind of tin can. Picking up the parts of the can, I returned to the fire to inspect it. It was the remains of an old Prince Albert tobacco can. I could still make out, right along side the Prince himself the words, "Crimp cut, Long burning, Pipe and Cigarette tobacco. Net wt. 14 oz." "I wonder who did this, and when?"

As I sat by the fire, I began to make up all sorts of interesting stories about this place. Approximately 10 o'clock I got tired of speculating and the small tree was now only glowing embers, carbon dioxide, and water vapor. It had been a long day. I decided to get some sleep. With the stars in this moon less night providing an aura of light you cannot imagine in the city, within a few minutes I was sound asleep.

Suddenly, I was wide awake, I thought I heard someone talking. No, it just must have been my imagination, or wind, or some animal back in the brush. After a few moments, I decided this was just a creation of my mind after speculating about the building of this magnificent campsite. Making sure that I was only dreaming, I checked my watch, 1:30. Another four hours and I will begin to see the sun rise over First Thought. I drifted back into dream land.

John Justin was a visionary sort of a guy, a fisherman by trade, he was known around town as the "Big Fisherman". He used to make his living by catching, drying, smoking, or canning the mighty Chinook as they fought their way over Kettle Falls of the mighty Columbia, a few miles below the mouth of the Kettle River, probably twenty five miles or so from the pit. John had a small acreage just at the mouth of the Kettle on the shore of the Columbia. He use to make a really good living, even through the depression, because a lot of the Indians also brought their fish to John to be put into those tin cans of his. Even though everyone around knew of his smoked salmon, this canned salmon could last for years. Now that canning process had taken on new importance, because the construction of Grand Coulee Dam a hundred miles or so down stream, would soon cut off wild salmon runs forever.

As the crow flies, Paul Grace didn't live many miles from John, but his place on the other side of the Columbia on Marcus Flats, was almost a days journey by horse. Because the Columbia was quite swift in the neighborhood of Kettle Falls, crossing the river there was not something you wanted to do for most of the year. But the new bridge had helped. Paul had a small orchard but supplemented his income from gold mining. Every year, sometime in mid summer, Paul would disappear into the woods for a couple of weeks and return with a gold stake to keep the farm running through the winter and to buy seed for spring planting. Paul was from back east somewhere, New York, or Boston. Not too handsome, some of the local rumors stated that Paul might be a Jew, because of his ability to find gold. But no one in the whole county had ever seen a real Jew, so Paul was just accepted for who he was. A hard working, caring, family man who was always willing to help someone in need.

The Justin's and the Grace's became close after meeting at some revival services held in Meyers Falls in 1922. The meetings were held by an evangelist from Spokane by the name of Jonathan Lake. The Reverend Lake was quite well known in the area at the time, because of some of the ministry's documented healings that had appeared in the Spokesman Review. Soon after this Meyers Falls Revival, the Reverend had sort of went off the deep end, and the last anyone knew he was now living somewhere in California disgraced and unknown.

During that revival all of the Justin's and the Grace's got saved. They quickly found that a life of religious experience was not something they could continue to participate in. But their love of Jesus Christ and the truth of the Bible message guided their humble lives. This was a good thing, because in the spring of '29 there was a bad epidemic of flu, and both John's and Paul's wives succumbed on the same day to the outbreak. After that, the two were best of friends. As widowers with children of about the same age, they definitely had some things in common. John's son had moved to Seattle to work for some new airplane company named Boeing, his daughter was one of the early coeds at Washington State College and had married a rich wheat farmer from Colfax. Paul had three sons and was able to send them back east for their education and they never returned.

During the depression, when plans were finally in place for the construction of the Grand Coulee Dam, both John and Paul knew that their lives were about to change again forever. Both of their homes were going to be drown under the reservoir of the dam. They would have to move and change there whole lives. It was about that time some say that the two of them began wandering the hills. Together they found this quartz deposit up Little Boulder and tried to figure out what to do with it. At first they thought it might be loaded with gold, as a lot of quartz is, but if there was any to be had, it wasn't of commercial quality. From the quarry, or pit as they called it, they could look over the valley and see First Thought Mountain and its commercial mining operation and contemplate what might have been.

As the Coulee Dam neared completion John and Paul spent more time up at the pit, as much to contemplate their future as to try to figure out something to do with their beautiful pile of rocks. The best they could come up with was to slice it into thin slices and use it to make lamp shades and pretty windows, perhaps staining it for church windows. But the only thing that would really cut stone that hard was diamond. They knew that in their lifetime that would not be economically feasible.

With John as the lead visionary they began to contemplate a world that might one day be. But even up at the pit they always had lots of company. These folks said they were visiting to see how Paul and John were fairing, but they also seem to bring some piece of meat to last the pair a few days, even after John prepared his version of barbecue supper, up on the ridge, slow cooked and smoked on the embers of a large fire, with a recipe John kept secret from all his guests, only saying, "It's all in the pit!" But that secret method, guests began to call, 'Authentic Kettle River Barbecue.'

Paul began to take John on his mining excursions. While many people tried to follow them, as they had tried to follow Paul earlier, the two would always give them the slip somewhere up Pingston Creek, on the slopes of Gold hill, above Meyers Falls. When they would return a few weeks later, all either one would say was, "There's gold in them there hills!" One of the things that frustrated the local trackers, was that Paul had trained his goats to follow him into the wilderness. Since the tracks of the goats and their droppings looked just like deer, once Paul and John were lost from visual contact, they were impossible to follow. In any event, when they would return, both men would have a good enough polk of gold to last them for the year.

Once they got there money from the government for their land, Paul and John, now well into middle age, decided to rent a house together in Meyers Falls. Since they were continually writing about their thoughts for the future of the world, it seemed like the best thing to do.

One of the most interesting things about this era was that Meyers Falls, the town founded by Luther Meyers in the previous century, was being taken over by the town of Kettle Falls from down on the Columbia. While the house they were living in was built in Meyers Falls, and had always stood in Meyers Falls, one day in 1939 it was going to become a house in Kettle Falls. Meyers Falls had just disappeared, into what John called virtual reality. The town was still there, the people were still there, everything appeared the same, only Meyers Falls was no more. The town of Kettle Falls was now reality.

In the summer after the name change, both John and Paul decided it was time to go see some of the bigger world. They each bought a new car and after selling their remaining household goods decided to spend the rest of the summer up at the pit. They both felt that it was important to work out a vision that they could both pursue for the remainder of their lives, even though they may never see one another again. They set up a tent in a little depression on the ridge above the pit and every night they would start a fire on the hard quartz rock and talk about a new world that they believed would one day come into being. In a sense they believed in a new creation, being created out of the existing world, even though they couldn't see it, they knew for some reason that it was just as real as the great north to south scratches the glaciers had made on the ridge formation thousands of years ago.

As John continued to outline his vision, Paul kept notes in a leather bound journal. For many days the title page was blank. But that didn't stop John from talking about this new world order. He was quite sure that this was not something that their remaining life's work would accomplish, perhaps just a beginning. It was not to be heaven on earth, but more a vision of a new earth with nothing but good news. One August morning after their breakfast of oatmeal, bacon, and coffee, Paul said, "Why don't we name it Wonder Springs. A place where gold is always one of the mediums of exchange and your "Authentic Kettle River Barbecue" is the center of local hospitality.

John responded, "That's it, Paul, Wonder Springs, and the name of this journal is the Good News Report, as it will be the local Wonder Springs paper. Nothing but good news. Even in bad news there is always some good to report, if you search for it. With times like we have gone through, we sure would have liked to read some good news, even if it comes from some town we can't see and will never ever visit."

Paul wrote on the cover page of the journal, "The Good News Report of Wonder Springs." With that, they placed the journal in a gold metal box they had made, and sealed it with wax. They then placed the golden box in a Prince Albert can, and put that all in a small wooden box. Finally, they packed stones from the pit and built a cairn over their testimony, hoping one day that someone would come, read, and understand their vision. They took down their tent deciding to spend their last night together under the tent of the heavens, with God's stars and creation for inspiration. After a barbecue supper they built a great bonfire with their remaining wood.

With the morning they packed up camp. After embracing one other for the last time in their lives, John headed towards the Palouse and eventually to Seattle and beyond. Paul headed to the east to his family there. As they went they talked about their vision of this new world that existed in a state of present virtual reality, but one day be truly real. However, almost everyone thought they were crazy.

The legend says, the pair meets each August at the pit, to share some "Authentic Kettle River Barbecue" with their friends. They then head to the back country to withdraw from God's golden provision, a grubstake for the new year. Finally, for one night they sleep under the stars and make sure the cairn of their testimony is still standing, until the day comes that the vision of Wonder Springs can be properly understood and implemented.

As the first rays of the sun beamed over the summit of First Thought Mountain, they pierced my sleep, I again awoke startled. Almost till noon I searched for the golden box and the leather journal, but they were not to be found. The remains of the fire circle, the tent area, the wooden box, and the Prince Albert Can were all easy to establish. The question that remains, was the whole encounter with John Justin and Paul Grace a dream, or a vision, or a creation of my own imagination? - Or could it soon be the time for Wonder Springs to exist in something other than virtual reality?