

TOXIC



**THE ENVIRONMENTAL AWAKENING
OF A SOMEWHAT CONTAMINATED
WIZARD OF O₂**

THIS STORY IS THE WIZARD'S FAULT

...so he is not going to blame it on anybody else,
even indirectly in the acknowledgements!

But he loves everyone who contributed in any way
whatsoever, particularly the Joint Ozonian/Alqui
Network of Active Readers & Critics.

They know who they are.

NIGHT

Many, many years ago in a far country that lay on the shore of a great inland sea, or at least such a large body of fresh water that you could not see the other side of it, even if you tried, the Wizard's mother bought 92 acres of woodland that was swampy, covered with thorny vines and briars, and inhabited by tens of thousands of mosquitoes, and swore to retire there, and she did, and she took the Wizard's father there with her, too.

The Wizard hated to go there as a child because the whole family was put to work cutting briars and consequently getting eaten by mosquitoes. There were no birds, there were no butterflies, there were no frogs, there were no flowers, there were no herbs, there were no raccoons or deer or squirrels or snakes or anything that the boy Wizard liked to watch or catch and keep in jars. This place, called The Land by the Wizard's mother, had been logged off in the 1900's and left for dead. The rotting corpses of the huge trees lay scattered on the ground, cesspools in which mosquitoes bred.

Over time, and it took many, many years of time, The Land reached a balance. The deer returned, and the Wizard's mother protected them from hunters. The uncommon and esculent morel mushrooms came back. The mosquitoes departed for other places. Frogs sang. Birds moved in to raise their families. A wildcat took up residence far from the house. Orchids bloomed, and they were rare pink and yellow lady's slippers. Giant silk moths fluttered around the lights at night. The Wizard's father fed hummingbirds, and hundreds zipped and zizzed over and around the grapevines that grew in profusion near the woodland ponds that the Wizard's mother kept fresh with bubblers and Koi.

The Land became a paradise for the plants, birds, beasts and his parents, and its spirit grew strong and wonderful.

Then, in 1996, the Gypsy Moth arrived in that far country, and infested The Land, too. The caterpillars ate anything that was green. On the herbs and shrubs in the forest they wove in the air, searching for the next leaf. In the tall trees there was a ceaseless sound of tiny munching mouths, and a rain of tiny pellets of frass, which is the polite name for caterpillar poop. Everywhere there was a restless and directionless marching of furry larvae, which would often pile up so high at the door of the house that the Wizard's father would shovel them away like fallen snow every morning.

They would return the next day.

The Authorities decided to take Drastic Action, and spray the far country, including The Land, with a biocide, BZ, that was harmless to birds and mammals. It only killed insects. Unfortunately, it killed almost *all* insects, and this was a great mistake. The Wizard's mother knew this was a great mistake, and objected to having The Land sprayed, but she was only one person with only one voice, and hers was not listened to. The far country, including The Land, was sprayed, and the Gypsy Moths died.

So did most of the other insects.

And the birds left. The wildcat took off for another country. The snakes and frogs had nothing to eat, and died. The hummingbirds, which ate small insects attracted to nectar, left, but the Bald-Faced (and bad-tempered) Hornets thrived on the sugar water at the hummingbird feeders, until the Wizard's father stopped feeding them. The orchids

disappeared. The raccoons and squirrels had no food for a year because the Gypsy Moths ate the oak buds, and since everybody else left, they left, too. The mosquitoes came back because there was nothing left to eat their vast progeny. The giant Luna and Polyphemus and Cecropia and Io moths were poisoned by the biocide and died. Their population was sparsely spread throughout the far country, but *all* of the far country was sprayed, and those that had come to visit The Land from miles away, drawn by the delicious perfume of virgin female moths were either dead or too distant to smell their fragrance, even if there had been any to smell. The Land lay silent, empty, barren and desolate, without even the thorny vines and briars.

Its spirit had been horribly, heartlessly mangled by the most damaging and dangerous, pervasive and powerful toxin on the planet. It is an intelligent, thoughtless, usually well-intentioned, soulless, bureaucratic, and technologically capable contaminant.

Man.

THE DARKNESS

As above, so below. As a man sows, so shall he reap. Garbage in, garbage out.

These and other statements from many spiritual (and even secular) traditions suggest that humanity has an instinctive knowledge that it is not divorced from the universe, although some humans act as if they are. Shamans say that what we do to the Earth, we do to ourselves. Shamans also believe that healing ourselves heals those around us, including the Earth. And the Wizard has come to believe in these connections. But he has also come to believe in a duality with a darker side, an *ancient light*, if you will.

If there is a Web of Life, there is a Web of Death interwoven into it. If we can invent a healthy reality, we can invent a diseased reality. If *anyone* gets sick, we get sick, also—to some extent. If we can be restored to health, so can others. If the Earth gets sick, we can help heal it. But, sometimes, for there to be a return to light, the darkness must spread.

And so it did.

The Wizard cannot explain what happened, although, being human, he tries. However, he can observe coincidences, and knows of the saying that there is no coincidence, only providence. Big healings need big sicknesses. Bright light needs pitch darkness.

The Wizard got it.

In the years immediately after The Land was rendered barren, the Wizard's parents retreated into their home, and stayed there. His mother, in particular, grew bitter, angry and miserable. She began to look only for what was wrong with the world, and since she watched a lot of television (instead of the life on The Land, as she had before), she found it. She spiraled into darkness, and lived in a room with the windows boarded over, leaving it seldom. The Wizard's father maintained some connection to the outside, doing chores, running errands, and staying in touch with friends by mail and over amateur radio. He orbited the black hole of despair that his wife felt, as she grieved over the harm to The Land.

During these years, the Wizard spoke only to his mother, who had no other outside contact, and listened to her recount What Was Wrong With The Whole World. Now, the Wizard also had some problems in his family, his profession, and his health, but they had been *manageable* so far (which makes most Alquis gasp in horror). And it would take years for him to learn that we are “linked” to those near and dear to us in the Web of Life. When he visited his parents just before The Authorities took Drastic Action in 1996, he did not know this. But he became even more closely linked to his parents and The Land anyway. And after the disaster, *unmanageable* things began to happen to him.

They did not show immediately. During his six month sabbatical, the Wizard rented a small cabin in the Cumberland Falls State Resort Park, and alone in nature, in a “dry” part of Kentucky, studied a difficult theoretical paper that would lay the groundwork for his future research. He wrote a seminal paper of his own that formed the basis for a practical new paradigm of computing. After a long day’s work, he would hike down the gorge to relax by watching the beauty of the falls, listening to its hypnotic roar, and cooling himself in its mist. Occasionally, back at the cabin, he would enjoy a beer from the sole six-pack he brought back from his visit to Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee. All seemed well. Why not, when a single six-pack lasted several months?

The next four years became increasingly horrible, yet, in the end, were wonderful. Neither genetics, nor personal predilection, nor any moral weakness seems to be to blame, unless it is this: since childhood, the Wizard had repressed certain gifts that did not fit into our scientific culture. To keep those gifts at bay, he had tried, successfully he thought, to deny his spiritual being, and had done a good job of it. Well, a pretty good job of it. He cast the Runes and kept a diary of the readings, but doesn’t *everybody* have a set of silver runes handmade by an elderly Navajo silversmith in Arizona?

Magic was loose in the world, and always had been, and magic knows how to take care of itself, and those it has chosen since childhood. It took care of the Wizard. So to speak.

Back at home, the Wizard began to drink alcoholically, and in a few years, was drinking one gallon of whiskey a day, most days, and living in a dark basement with the blinds drawn. This was toxic behavior, and looking back on it, was the same thing his mother was doing (well, she wasn’t *drinking*). In Oz, things get started early so they will be done in time for when they are supposed to happen later. They had certainly started, but what was happening was larger than the Wizard. (He didn’t think so, of course.) However it may be, he drank a lot of whiskey, and then something happened to him *before* he did all those things, like working the Twelve Steps, that are suggested by the Fellowship of People Learning How to Be Human. (You can be sure that he is very grateful to the Fellowship for helping him *stay* sober.) Here is what he wrote about the darkness and his healing in an article to introduce Alquis to shamanic soul retrieval:

■ *There was only darkness*

I am a recovering alcoholic. Before entering recovery I was a captain in the U.S. Army, a Ph.D. student, a tenured university professor in the field of computer science, the inventor of a robot and co-author of a book about it, and a husband and a father. I am still some of those things. I was not religious, and had given up belief in church and any spiritual life. If you had asked me, and I would have been slightly embarrassed if you had, I would have admitted to a belief in some sort of God, but would have really believed in my heart of hearts that there was nothing science could not do. If science could not do it, I did not believe it could be done.

I did not believe that God took a hand in the world around me, even though the evidence of my own eyes, indeed, my sight itself, was evidence to the contrary. But in my view the days of miracles were long gone. If there were miracles to be seen, they could be seen on television, itself a miracle of sorts and wholly constructed using patented technologies based on science. There was no reason to believe in a door to a faith of any sort. Faith was illogical anyway. Believe in something without evidence? I didn't think so!

There were no doorways out of my alcoholic world—or so I believed.



The light under the door

On May 23, 2000, I was “struck sober” during my first good night’s rest in years. The craving to drink was removed in an event seemingly so insignificant that at the time it made little impression on me.

So, what happened? If it wasn’t the Twelve Steps (the Wizard hadn’t worked them), and it wasn’t prayer (he hadn’t said any), and it wasn’t going to meetings (he often drank after meetings because they “made him thirsty”), then *what was it?*

After over half a decade of sobriety, and three years as a shamanic practitioner, the Wizard believes that he, and others who deny similar gifts, suffer alcoholism as only one of the many ways that the Net of All Life “lands” those who have great spiritual sensitivity—and the Wizard has yet to meet a fellow Alqui who *isn’t* sensitive. Once their gifts are awakened, the Web of Light puts them to work, as the Alquis’ “Big Book” says, to be of maximum usefulness to God and the people about them. Since it is “*God as we understand God,*” there is a lot of room in the Fellowship for everybody, even rune-casting Wizards who practice shamanic healing. This is a good thing, because the Earth desperately needs everyone and their spiritual gifts, and Her need is growing.

We will see why later.

THE LAST STRAW

As the years passed, and the Wizard stayed sober, and he began to learn more about core shamanism, and reflect on his past, and consider his future, and wonder what it all meant, he grew distressed that his parents seemed trapped in some dark time warp on The Land. He called his mother often, but her only news was bad news, which she garnered from television. The only living creatures that prospered on The Land were a colony of barn cats that grew or diminished, but never went away. The cats caught and ate everything that tried to return to The Land. Birds, mice, snakes, and even a stray turtle became the object of the cats’ fancy, and it was a cruel fancy at that.

The Wizard knows about it, because the outdoor cat he had for several months caught and ate The Bluebird of Happiness and left its little blue-feathered head on the welcome mat at the front door of the Friendly House, and the Wizard, out of pity and a desire not to waste a perfectly good Bluebird head, wrapped it carefully and stored it in his freezer. He learned how to do this from his mother, who still has Victor, the Scarlet Macaw who flew downstairs and hit a door and broke his neck, in *her* freezer. He was, after all, a very pretty bird, as he would have told you himself when he was alive.

Eventually the Wizard's mother told him that they had nothing more to talk about, because the Wizard had not caught SARS on his trips overseas, had stopped eating meat and so could not catch Mad Cow Disease, refused to stop feeding the birds to avoid contracting avian flu, had not been trapped in a falling house when the Big Earthquake hit, had not been blown away by a tornado (two tornadoes, actually), refused to refinance the Friendly House because he felt that he had a pretty good rate, and still felt it important to attend meetings of the Fellowship of People Learning How to Be Human, even though that meant that her baby boy was consorting with alcoholics, and might be one himself, and that meant that he was not perfect.

She was very disappointed.

So she asked him talk to the Wizard's father, instead, but as a result she now had no human contact outside of The Land. The Wizard thought this was unhealthy, but Mother Knows Best and she *had* talked to him for years, and probably could use a rest.

The first few conversations with the Wizard's father were quite interesting, because his father is a wizard himself, and knows how to build antennas that can bring in signals from the middle of Siberia and the southernmost tip of Chile, and he has won the esteem of his fellow Radio Sorcerers for doing that. This is where the Wizard gets his professional abilities to build six-legged ant-like robots the size of a business card, and powerful supercomputers made of plastic and Jell-O® brand gelatin.

But one day, not very long ago, it seems that the Wizard's father started to watch television, and *he* decided that the world was a terrible place, which was Going to Hell in a Handbasket, and scheduled to leave for the Underworld any day now, too. The Land was barren and desolate after nine years, and the Wizard's father told him that he was getting old, and would die, and The Land was dead already, and there was nothing that could be done to help it by anyone, anywhere, because it was All Just Too Much.

And that was the last straw.

THE HEALING

The Wizard's mother and father know he is a wizard, and spends a great deal of time healing people, especially among the Alquis, who are members of the Fellowship of People Learning How to Be Human. (His mother had been very suspicious of his Fellowship, and later the Foundation for Shamanic Studies, believing that both of them were some sort of cult. They are not, and that disappointed her a bit.)

But even though the Wizard had given them some of the shamanic articles he had written, and they were proud of him for writing them (as most parents would be, in fact, his mother would probably be pleased if he wrote advertising copy for an outlet mall), they did not have any interest in a healing. Everything was fine, the cats were fine, they were fine, and The Land was fine. It was perfectly normal to hole up in solitary confinement in a boarded-up room on 92 desolate acres with a colony of hungry barn cats, and complain that there was no wildlife, which probably carried disease anyway. And that included the cute little chipmunks.

Now, healings require permission. That is a Law of Oz. The Wizard's parents could live as they chose, and nothing could be done for them without permission. But, and this is important, *The Land* might want to be healed, and the Wizard's parents had complained long and loud about how they wished something could be done, but of course nothing *could* be done because The Authorities had taken Drastic Action and had killed off everything and, of course, the Drastic Action of The Authorities was final.

The Wizard refused to believe it. Saying that it was so did not make it so. That is denial. He went to look for himself. No, he did not drive a long distance to visit his parents and see The Land. Instead, he picked a very beautiful, very large crystal, bound it into his black cloth, lit a candle, smudged the Friendly House, got his drum, sat down in his chair, wrapped up his eyes and went on a journey to meet the Spirit of The Land.

The Land was unhappy. It was out of balance. The trees were unhealthy but trying hard to grow, although much of the understory had been lost. The Land wanted its birds, insects, mice, chipmunks, deer, badgers, turkeys and orchids back. But with a colony of barn cats roaming through the forest like a feline chainsaw, something had to be done. But what? Well, the Spirit of The Land suggested, the cats would make tasty tidbits for Coyote, if only Coyote was told where to find them.

Done—but not the cats that stayed next to the Cabin in The Woods.

The Spirit of The Land agreed. Next, it was suggested that balance was needed in the forest, and as it happened, Tulip Poplars had once grown there, and would do well. Why not send a thousand or more Tulip Poplar seeds to the Wizard's father?

Done—it was easy to gather a quart of them from the porch and deck of the Friendly House after the journey was over.

Next, there needed to be more weeds for Mouse and Butterfly and Goldfinch and Sparrow. Could the Wizard spare seeds from Pokeweed, Goldenrod, Milkweed, Thistle, and the many other plants in his backyard, which he had allowed to grow wild?

Of course—they would be added to the quart of seeds.

Finally, without Power Animals to mend and defend the lives of the little creatures, they would be at risk to cats, stray dogs, and each other until they had made their homes. Would the Wizard restore the Spirits of the Animals to the Spirit of Place?

Yes.

So several weeks before Christmas, the Spirit Sisters of the Friendly House and the Animals who visit or live there—Ant, Mouse, Coyote, Butterfly, Woodpecker, Frog, Snake, Squirrel and all the rest—who had been invited into the crystal, were wrapped in an old brown paper bag, packaged in a United States Postal Service priority mailing box, and sent to the Wizard's father as his Christmas present, along with a gratitude list for everything that used to live on The Land, and instructions to just throw the seeds and the crystal into the woods—or better yet, bury it—and let Nature take her course. The Wizard declined the postmaster's offer of a return receipt.

He entrusted the package to The Light.

And saved 74 cents.

THE COMMUNITY OF LIGHT

The Wizard's Community of Light had just gotten larger.

He began by learning from many excellent teachers who are experienced shamanic practitioners, and who teach core shamanism for the Foundation for Shamanic Studies. He no longer heals precisely as he was taught. Indeed, Sandra Ingerman, who taught him soul retrieval, advises her students to burn all their notes, and learn from Spirit.

The Wizard did. Well, he kept the notes, but tucked them away in a box!

After being permitted to complete a great many healings among the Alquis, he learned an important thing: *no one ever loses their soul*. He no longer performs soul "retrievals." How can he? *Our souls are not lost*, although they feel that way. What Spirit has shown instead is that we are all beautiful "origami" folded out of a rich, heavy, golden light. Our light may be bent, crumpled, crushed, unfolded, stretched, entangled with others' light, or unwillingly refolded in ways that are excruciating, *but it is never lost*. The tension of a soul forced into an agonizing configuration is the source of our pain.¹

Eventually, when he was ready (although he thought he was not, and argued with Spirit about it), the Wizard was "collected" into The Light and lost his Power Animals, too (although They are there in The Light still), and he was taught this and many other things. A thing is useful and a thing is true if it is shared experience and if it helps others and if there is independent evidence for it, and there has been— for example, think about all of the "white light" Near Death Experiences, and the many reports of angels who are often seen as Beings of Light. The Wizard watched as a soul unfolded into The Light, and it appeared to have angel's wings at one stage of the passing.

Most importantly, this knowledge helps the Wizard heal. He *becomes* The Light (he once asked to see himself, and was shown the Sun Baby from the Teletubbies, which deflated his ego nicely, thank you very much), and refolds his own essence, or a great deal of it, to match the other person's essence very closely. Then he knows some of what they are thinking, feels some of what they are feeling, sees some of what they are seeing, and in The Light, brings back not their soul, but the wisdom to restore their soul to health.

But they have to do the work.

Those that the Wizard works with heal themselves, and need only to know how to do it. We all heal ourselves—but we need the help of another to show us how to accomplish it. Why? The Wizard does not know, but he suspects that it is because we are social beings. "Where two or three are gathered, there I am," is an ancient saying of love. Light strengthens Light. One alone may fall into darkness, and become lost. Indeed, if we are lambs in a material World of Wolves, we may need a shepherd to find us and return us to our flock. Or, as Chief Frank Fools Crow said:

Curing a single individual is only important in terms of what this teaches the entire community.

¹ If we are folded out of The Light, some people wonder what happens when we lose an arm or a leg. The answer is that the limb's essence remains folded into our spiritual body for a while. Until our new *physical* form stabilizes, our body's old *spiritual* shape is still whole. As a result, many amputees feel a "ghost limb" while that part of their angelic essence slowly unfolds back into The Light.

Shamans and healers are, in the end, social beings, members of a community. This may help explain why healers find it difficult to heal themselves. Healing is not a selfish thing, although in great need, often to help loved ones who are not present, people exhibit amazing powers of self-healing. But just as doctors need a clinic or a hospital in which to work, healers need a community, and the larger the community, the better.

A healer alone is not a healer.

THE WORKSHOP

During the fall of 2005, at a workshop on Death, Dying and Beyond, the Wizard learned that his first teacher of core shamanism, Myron Eshowsky, would offer a two-part workshop called *Shamanism and the Healing of Cancer* independently of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies. Hearing about it touched something deep within him, for he had begun to encounter more and more people who were cancer survivors, one day at a time. Some lived to see remission of their disease, and others died of it.

One woman he worked with, and formed a close link to, did not, despite extensive chemotherapy, lose her hair, which was one of the things she feared. The Wizard had done the crystal healing thing, the aromatherapy thing, and even the Tibetan Singing Bowl CD recording thing, but the woman eventually died as the cancer metastasized.

He had done everything he could, and he had tried everything he knew about, but...

Could he have done more? Could he have done better?

This is what wizards think about at 3:00 AM in the morning when they cannot sleep. They are often hard on themselves. This is *not* a Law of Oz. Sometimes it is pride, and other times it is how wizards learn compassion. So instead of beating up on himself, the Wizard sent in his registration fee for the workshop, made a hotel reservation, and opened his Spirit to learn more about the shamanic healing of cancer from a teacher he greatly admires and respects, who has 30 years of experience healing many aspects of disease, the planet, and making peace.

And, once again, the Wizard would be changed.

The crowd of participants was as warm and comfortable a group of people to be with as all of the others that the Wizard has joined. Whoever they are, whenever they gather, they are the most loving group of eclectic spiritual practitioners that the Wizard has ever met. Each time the sacred space in the center of the room—OK, it is an altar—may have everything from crystals to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, eagle feathers to Tibetan singing bowls, pentacles, six-pointed stars, or statues of Mother Mary and the Saints.

The Light loves everybody.

Sometimes there are Alquis present, but it doesn't matter if there are many or none at all. The Wizard has become a Human Being again, which is what his Fellowship is all about. Once restored to sanity, a whole world of Love, Light and Healing opened up, and everyone, whether they were Alquis or those other people, Ozonians who enjoy drinking alcohol and know when to stop, mingled and shared their joy of life, learning and journeying. No one drank anything except juice, herbal tea and water. Or cared.



The workshop began when everyone had laid their blankies on the floor, and picked up their drums and joined in with Myron as he called the Spirits to teach the group. The Power began to flow as the group began to become One instead of Many.

Welcome home!

During the two days, much was taught, but this memoir is not intended to instruct anyone who is reading it in specific techniques. Myron does that. But what *is* important is that cancer bears many similarities to alcoholism, and techniques similar to those used to help Alquis heal can be brought to bear by a shamanic practitioner. Thus, the Wizard left the workshop with a lot of knowledge, and a lot of questions, and hoped that they could be summed up with experience to equal wisdom. How? Just as Sandra Ingerman asks that notes be burned, and that the Spirits be asked for help, and just as Myron almost always suggested, the Wizard began to *“Journey on it!”*

THE QUESTIONS

The Wizard recognized that many of the healing techniques taught in the workshop were based on the principles of the Twelve Steps of the Fellowship of People Learning How to Be Human, although it would typically take an Alqui to see it.

Universal wisdom runs like a Golden Thread through all healing practices. If cancer is a spiritual disease caused in part by repressed anger—resentment—and there were a multitude of ways to name and let go of resentments, which are “the number one killer” according to the Alquis’ “Big Book,” and they worked for cancer patients as well as for alcoholics, then what does that say about the role of the healer (or the alcoholic’s sponsor)? If listening to a Fourth Step works as well as planting a seed for every resentment, *then what is the healer doing? What is the survivor of alcoholism or cancer doing?*

If cancer cells are present in all of us, but are quiescent in some of us, but not in others, and if both cancer and alcoholism do not seem to be respecters of genetics, or stress, or anything else (although they are predispositions), and these diseases crop up when a person’s spiritual life is neglected, *then what does that say about the presence and toxicity of substances in our bodies? Could there be some sort of natural immunity that we carry in our genes or within our spirits that is linked to our activity in a spiritual practice?*

At that point the Wizard began to review his own exposure to toxins, thinking that he might be a somewhat contaminated person, or perhaps a very contaminated one, or maybe even a toxic waste dump. So he did what his Fellowship has taught him to do. He made a list.

THE TOXINS

The Wizard realized that he was a toxic waste dump.

He had played with, eaten, breathed, walked through, drunk, even smeared himself with a huge number of toxins. His list is presented here, because it was the next step he took in wondering what might keep people's cancer from becoming active. Yet he found some good things on the list. In at least two cases his contamination led to profound spiritual experiences. You have read of the one due to alcohol. A second experience that was even more ecstatic is described (see the *University chemistry lab*).

Those who read this list are encouraged not to judge the Wizard (or others) for their casual, sometimes ignorant, and sometimes foolhardy behavior, but to focus on the degree to which human beings can easily buy, find or even be administered dangerous toxins in a technological society, and then ask themselves one question:

"What have I been exposed to?"

Here is the Wizard's list. It is probably incomplete:

1950s	Atomic fallout	The child Wizard lived in an area of moderate fallout from open-air atomic bomb testing.
1957	"Radium Everlasting" clock	Played with it; slept with it as a night light; watched it scintillate; scraped off glowing material to play with
1960	Gilbert chemistry set	Mixed various toxic chemicals (for example, cobalt chloride); several times when angry at parents mixed "poisons" and drank them to "show them;" no apparent ill effects from a green potion with brown froth on top
1960s	Homemade gunpowder	Sulfur, saltpeter and powdered charcoal purchased at local drugstore; mixed to form gunpowder; no explosion but once had a "flame like a Saturn V rocket" which scorched the garage and took some explaining
1960s	Insecticide powder	Dusted grandparents' flower and vegetable garden with Chlordane, Sevin and other insecticides
1960s	Insecticide aerosol	On family camping trips, park authorities fogged campgrounds with DDT aerosols from trucks to keep mosquitoes under control
1960-1975	Cyanide, carbon tetrachloride and naphthalene	Used killing bottles containing cyanide or the less immediately lethal "carbon tet" to kill specimens of moths and butterflies; preserved in cases with mothballs; enjoyed the smell of all of them!
1960-present	Poison ivy	Two spry elderly ladies taught a nature photographer and the boy Wizard who worked for him during several summers to eat a small piece of poison ivy in a salad to

		avoid getting the rash; the Wizard includes a poison ivy leaf in his Gaia Springtime Oil; no rash...so far
1965	Mercury	Stole small amounts from junior high school science laboratory to play with; lost most of it in cracks in hardwood floor under bed in bedroom
1965-1973	Paper mill sludge	As a day camper and counselor took six to eight trips each summer to a river contaminated with paper mill sludge; later learned it was contaminated with PCBs; waded in it; had "sludge fights" with other campers and counselors leaving all covered with this toxic waste
1972-1973	University chemistry lab (spiritual experience)	Prepared a variety of potentially anti-carcinogenic compounds for research by pharmaceutical companies, most based on highly toxic and easily absorbed cyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (such as pyridine); this led to a three-day unexpected illness that terminated with an amazing sense of re-birth and light, similar to a near-death experience; the sense of clarity and freedom that it left has been unforgettable, as if the world changed from black-and-white to color, with a sense of boundless love merging with the gratitude simply to be alive
1969-1973	ROTC rifle team	Frequent target practice in an indoor unventilated shooting range with unclad lead bullets
1974-1978	U.S. Army chemical officer	Conducted training in chemical warfare using CS gas (tear gas); conducted limited training with nuclear isotopes; conducted various range exercises using large munitions; special duty to study decontamination of chemical agents using toxic hydrocarbon solvents, bleach and other substances
1980-1985	Fish from polluted lakes	Ate "safe" levels of fish containing various toxins such as PCBs and organic mercury
1996-2000	Insecticide/radon	Lived in a basement heavily permeated by chemicals used in termite treatment; limestone substrate posed a radon threat which was ignored: too "expensive"
1996-2000	Alcohol abuse (spiritual experience)	For the last two years drank one gallon of whiskey daily five days a week, and "only" a fifth on other two days; this terminated with a spiritual awakening which included a release from the craving to drink and a sense of calm, pervasive well-being and serenity
1996-2002	Indoor shooting at home	Frequent target practice and reloading in the basement of home with first lead, then "environmentally safe" copper-plated bullets; chemical gasses and unburned toxic propellants from smokeless powder
2004-present	Essential oils	Frequent blending of numerous essential oils, which, while generally regarded as safe in small quantities, were used so often that sensitization to skin occurred (red patches), suggesting overexposure

This list caused the Wizard to reflect on what limits there were to toxicity; whether the effects of toxins varied based on—of all things!—one’s spiritual condition; and whether there might be natural forces at work in the human species, as the Industrial Revolution had been underway for quite a long time. *Could it be that humans had evolved to live in "toxic" environments? Could a toxic excess be relieved during a spiritual experience?*

THE AWAKENING

The list, and the spiritual experiences on it, made it clear (at least to the Wizard) that exposure to toxins and spiritual experiences are not mutually exclusive. For millennia human tribes have initiated their shamans with drugs, dangerous quests or deadly rites. In our modern technological society, Wizards are also initiated, except that they often do not realize it until something happens to put them in touch with their spiritual gifts.

“Toxic” is a state of mind. It creates a belief in some “maximum” result—like death, or cancer. But these do not always happen. Statistically, toxins are known to have different effects on different individuals. This is why toxicity is defined in terms of an LD₅₀, the dose of a substance that is lethal to 50% of the subjects to whom it is administered. Half die, and half live. Why? Here are some ideas for you to journey on. What will *you* learn?

We may be “hardwired” in our genes to survive some toxins.

We may be “hardwired” in our genes to *be* an exponentially growing toxin to the Earth.

We may also, because of our “hardwired” intellect and memory, have the chance to *change our behavior* as no other creature before us has ever been able to change *because we have tribal wisdom*.

And, we may be on the brink of learning to live harmoniously with the Earth as never before...

...or not.

We have choices, and they start every day, one day at a time, for each of us. The many possibilities are staggering. And the Wizard is by no means at all, even a tiny bit, the first one to realize them. His teachers, Myron Eshowsky and Sandra Ingerman, reached this understanding, each in their own way, many years ago. Myron began to teach *peacemaking* as a healing practice for the Earth. Sandra began to teach *transmutation* as Medicine for the Earth. The Wizard? He is learning how to use the principles of the Fellowship of People Learning How to Be Human to heal the Earth. He will heal in a local way, for he is just another person with a limited “reach” living on this Beautiful Blue-Green Jewel In The Cosmos, although his “reach” may be wider than others’. After all, the Friendly House sits on almost five acres. But there is enough to do there.

He is sharing what he has found with you, for truth is shared experience—and isn’t all myth magic, so doesn’t all shamanic story-telling lead to the truth? You will decide.

THE FOSSILS

If Man evolved in the presence of toxins, do we carry some kind of immunity in our genes?

About 1.7 billion years ago, in what is now the country of Gabon in Africa, near the town of Oklo, seams of ore that were rich in uranium began to spontaneously undergo nuclear fission. For the next 150,000 years, these natural nuclear reactors generated energy, heat and nuclear waste. And after they exhausted their “fuel,” most of their radioactive heavy-metal byproducts, such as plutonium, remained buried in the Earth. *Fourteen of these fossil nuclear reactors have been found!*

Some scientists have wondered why these reactors did not experience a catastrophic meltdown. The reason, strongly indicated by analyzing the half-lives of the trace

elements in the spent ore, is that there were constant cycles during which fission occurred as the ore “went critical,” and then was damped. The cycles resumed every few hours. The only natural cause that could explain this is a geyser. Thus, for 150,000 years near the west coast of Africa, radioactive geysers spouted hot toxic water, and sprayed volatile and particulate wastes into the air, contaminating the land for hundreds or even thousands of miles around them. Why is this significant?

Most of the fossil record of early Man can be traced backwards in time and westwards in space across Africa. The oldest fossils come from Massénya in Chad—about 800 miles away from the Oklo fossil reactors and their radioactive geyser cooling systems.



Did the creatures, not yet primates, who would become early humans begin to mutate over 50 million years ago due to that nuclear waste? Does the vast amount of “useless” DNA in our genes have a purpose, conferring immunity to the same radioactivity that might have given rise to Man? Do our thyroid glands scavenge iodine and strontium, common radioactive wastes, because we evolved in a contaminated environment?

Studies of Chernobyl suggest that we have some immunity—and the real toxin is Man.

THE WORMWOOD FOREST

For life on the planet to survive, must the Earth be partly or wholly decontaminated of Man?

In the book *Wormwood Forest*, from which the following excerpts were taken, Chernobyl appears to have become a nature sanctuary rather than a grim warning of the state of

the planet in a post-apocalyptic world. Even more surprising has been the apparent immunity to many cancers of the residents who were exposed to radiation. The types and numbers of cancers do not match those predicted by observations of the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. What went wrong, or, what do we not understand?

Chernobyl is also the first example of the toxicity of Man, illustrating how the human presence damages the Earth. Substantial ecological harm was done by the nuclear power plant disaster, yet, as surprising as it may seem, in a brief span of years it has been the absence of Man that has been most important to heal the hurt.

[Many science fiction writers] once gloomily predicted a post-apocalyptic world: "There may be a few [human] survivors in very deep, very well-stocked shelters, but there will be nothing for them to do when they come out. They'll mostly serve as food for cockroaches and rats that are likely to survive the war much better than human beings."

As if to confirm all of the darkest scenarios, rodents actually did have a population boom after Chernobyl. In 1987 and 1988, house and field mice seemed poised to overrun the evacuated zone when their numbers exploded from about 20 to 30 per hectare to as many as 2,500! Evidently attracted by plentiful food in the unharvested fields left behind after the evacuation, the rodent problem became so acute that some zone authorities wanted to poison them. But biologists stepped in and predicted that the population would soon stabilize on its own. And that is exactly what happened.

First the population explosion attracted predators: foxes, weasels, and especially raptors. In just one square mile of meadow near the buried village of Kopachi in the 10-kilometer zone, there were enough rodents to support marsh harriers and short-eared owls, kestrels, and falcons.

Still, there were too many mice and there wasn't enough in the fields for all of them to eat. But these critters have small ranges and couldn't go on long treks in search of food. Nor could they escape into the neighboring forest to which they are not adapted. So, in the autumn of 1988, most of the mice starved. This, in turn, caused another temporary boom in the number of meat-eating scavengers that descended on the bonanza of dead. But once the fields were cleansed of rodent corpses, nature's sanitation workers also left.

It was one of the first examples of how, in the absence of human intervention, nature in the zone could recover its balance. [But many other animals came to stay.]

"It's a white-tailed eagle nest," Igor explained. Large raptors with eight-foot wingspans, white-tailed eagles are very rare in most of Europe. In Ukraine and Belarus, they are listed as endangered. In the zone, though, with its rich supplies of favorite foods such as fish and hares, there are as many as 50 white-tailed eagles. This may not seem like very many, but before Chernobyl, there weren't any. They probably discovered the inviting habitat during their migrations to and from their nesting grounds in Finland.

[Igor, a nature conservator at Chernobyl,] also had a series of dusky photos taken with automatic cameras: a badger, three wolves, a beaver, some red deer, moose, boars, and a polecat. A raccoon dog stuck its nose towards the lens, distorting its face like a funhouse mirror.

Originally from East Asia, raccoon dogs look just like what their name suggests—very furry dogs with raccoon-like masks. They are unusual amid canids in being able to climb well, and they are the only canids to hibernate in winter. They swim well, too, and often like to hunt in wetlands, near shores, and in thick reeds. The Soviet Union introduced them in the 1950s as fur animals. Some were deliberately released into the wild, and their descendants became a serious pest in Eastern Europe before their populations stabilized.

Since the health of an animal population is measured by its size rather than the health of all of its individual members (which is practically impossible to measure), then—however counterintuitive it may seem—the huge populations of large Chernobyl mammals are healthy indeed. The same is true of smaller mammals, including rodents.

[But what about humans?]

The main sources of these statistical predictions [of the number of cancer cases] are the studies of 87,000 Japanese atomic bomb survivors. Among them, an increase in leukemia was observed only a few years after A-bomb exposure. Decades later, excess cases of solid cancers were seen in lungs, breast, and thyroid, although radiation evidently does not increase the risk of cancer of the prostate, pancreas, uterus, or kidney. More recently, non-cancerous illnesses such as heart disease have also been linked to radiation exposure.

From the atomic bomb survivors, scientists developed risk factors that were supposed to predict the number of “extra” cancer cases that would occur when a large population was exposed to a certain total amount of radiation, which is known as the “collective dose.” The formulas estimating from 1.25 to 2.3 extra cancers for every 10,000 rem were behind the confusing and alarming predictions of thousands of “extra” Chernobyl cancers that scientists banded about soon after the disaster. While the Soviets predicted 6,500 extra cancers among the 75 million people who lived in the European part of the Soviet Union most affected by radiation, and other experts predicted twice that number, all agreed that those “extra” cancers would be impossible to detect against the background noise of 9.5 million non-Chernobyl cancers in that same population. With the exception of thyroid cancer, as we shall see, proving that any particular cancer was related to Chernobyl is practically impossible.

But many of the initial predictions turned out to be simply wrong. Despite virtually universal expert expectations based on A-bomb research, there has not been any statistically detectable increase in leukemia—even among the 800,000 cleanup workers, or “liquidators,” who were exposed to the highest radiation levels and whose health has been followed closely since the disaster.

This may be in part because many people who were granted liquidator status, and the perks that come with it, never actually worked at Chernobyl. Indeed, poverty led many people to claim Chernobyl benefits with no factual reason for doing so because official recognition as a victim meant access to income and health care. Moreover, it seems impossible to tease the health effects of radiation out of the tangle of poverty, alcoholism, smoking, poor diet, and other factors that plague public health in places in the former Soviet Union that were unaffected by Chernobyl and that have made life expectancy—especially among men—the lowest in Europe.

The implications of this report are that Nature does better without Man, even after Man leaves nuclear garbage behind him. It is Man that is the toxin. And for Man, it is the other problems that he creates for himself due to the injury to people’s souls, that pose the larger problems for shamanic practice. This is not intended to downplay the need to heal cancer. But many of the poor suffer from hunger, and spend their meager income on vodka and cigarettes because their spirits are injured. Can we help shamanically?

There are many other places where the absence of Man has been healing to the Earth, even in the presence of his toxic wastes, some of them explosive. They are much nearer to home for many of the readers of this story—and may be even more unbelievable.

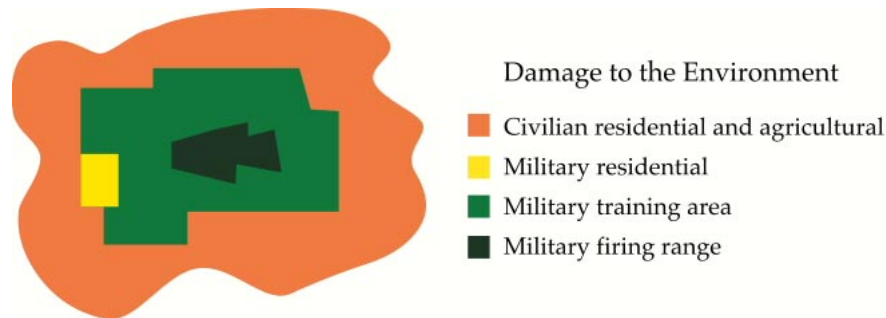
THE BEATEN ZONE

At the numerous U.S. military bases across the country, there are a wealth of plants and animals, often endangered, that thrive there—and they thrive on the dangerous firing ranges where small arms fire, mortar rounds, anti-tank missiles, artillery shells, bombs, and napalm are fired, dropped, and exploded. This place is called *the beaten zone*.

In Dugway Proving Ground there is a wealth of desert life amid old radiological and chemical weapon test sites. Eventually even the military recognized that outdoor testing

was unhealthy, and changed its policies. Today the chemical testing is done indoors, in a carefully sealed, decontaminated and monitored building. But before that happened, nerve gas, radioactive isotopes and other toxic substances were tested in the open air (and caused the famous sheep killings). We know that in some of the driest deserts on Earth motorcycle tracks will persist for centuries. Why is life so rich on military bases?

Surprisingly, the answer seems to be due to the absence of Man.



In this illustration, typical of a military base surrounded by a civilian population, there are four clear zones. They are especially obvious from the air, as someone flying overhead in a helicopter (such as the Wizard as a young officer) would see.

In the civilian zone (orange), Man dominates the landscape. Houses, junk cars, trash piles, gardens, farms, shopping centers, roads, subdivisions, power lines, telephone lines and pipeline right-of-way cuts cover most of the ground. Wooded areas are few and isolated from each other. But when the boundary of the military reservation is crossed (green), a forested area appears. It is sparsely covered, by comparison to the civilian zone, with rutted tracks becoming overgrown and a few unpaved roads where the armored vehicles travel to and from their exercises.

Somewhere on the reservation is a residential area (yellow), but it is compact, and often filled with barracks for the unmarried soldiers, apartments for the married enlisted men and low-ranking officers, and only a few homes for the higher ranks. There is a PX (post exchange), a few other small stores and a hospital, but the civilian urban sprawl is missing. The trashy spread of a property owner with acreage is absent. Military housing is kept spic-and-span by those who commit small violations of military regulations.

Finally, usually in the center of the post far from the residential housing, is an area that even from the air is conspicuously intact. What could it be? It is the firing range (dark green)—the place where our military goes to train on the use of its weapons, the place where things explode, the beaten zone. And it is in this zone where small mammals, deer, even bear, rare plants, and uncommon butterflies (like the rare Regal Fritillary, *Speyeria idalia*, found at Fort Riley, Kansas) make their homes. How do they survive?

First, it costs money to train with live rounds, and that limits the frequency of their use. Next, the Wizard has seen that even modern weapons, designed to “kill” modern vehicles, do a surprisingly poor job against agile animals. For example, a Vulcan mini-gun, the modern version of the Civil War’s Gatling gun, was unable to hit a twelve-point buck that was flushed out of the woods near a firing range. Although the gun crew tried frantically to hit the deer, it bounded along just yards ahead of and just fast enough to avoid the stream of bullets sprayed at it as if from a fire hose—and escaped.

No wonder the Viet Cong and the Afghan rebels defeated the technological military might of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. But what is unhealthy for politics may be very healthy for the planet!

Finally, that twelve-point buck may have been more than just lucky to live that long. Many animals, even the butterflies that the boy Wizard chased, seem to have a sixth sense. They know when it is time to freeze, hide, or “make for bush.” This makes sense, for animals are very closely attuned to The Light and the Earth. It is only ourselves, and our overpoweringly loud minds, that make it so difficult to hear that still, small voice. The Voice of the Universe speaks as gently as a peaceful child—and as quietly.

THE LIMITS OF GROWTH

Bacteria double their population every generation, if given enough resources. So do lemmings. And so does Man. But the resources do not multiply.

This observation led a group of scientists to form a global think tank called the Club of Rome. In 1972 they developed a simple model for the interactions of Man with the Earth, and programmed it into a very large computer, for that time. When run, the model showed, over and over again, that in the absence of a change in human behavior, Man’s population would explode exponentially and then crash, just as did the population of the rodents in 1987 and 1988 at Chernobyl. If this model is correct, and it is grimly possible, the Club of Rome predicted that we have at most until 2100 A.D. to change our ways, and learn to live harmoniously and sustainably on the Earth.

The sigh of relief was loud and global—whew! No need to do anything yet. Except that by the time the need is obvious, it will probably be too late. And who wants to live in some dull, boring sustainable society? It would be a pretty grim place, right?

Wrong.

The Club of Rome pointed out that in a world in equilibrium—in balance!—growth could still be satisfying, and even luxurious, but not as we are accustomed to thinking of it. They quoted John Stuart Mill, a hardheaded economist, to show that their vision for a hopeful future has been around for over a century. Will we reconsider it today?

In 1857 John Stuart Mill wrote:

It is scarcely necessary to remark that a stationary condition of capital and population implies no stationary state of human improvement. There would be as much scope as ever for all kinds of mental culture, and moral and social progress; as much room for improving the Art of Living and much more likelihood of its being improved.

Population and capital are the only quantities that need be constant in the equilibrium state. Any human activity that does not require a large flow of irreplaceable resources or produce severe environmental degradation might continue to grow indefinitely [in ways other than size—tW]. In particular, those pursuits that many people would list as the most desirable and satisfying activities of man—education, art, music, religion, basic scientific research, athletics and social interactions—could flourish.

The Wizard has always marveled that many humans in the Western Age of Discovery navigated the globe in sailing vessels, and lived full lives doing so, using only the wind. Rather different than a Carnival Cruise, but what is to prevent it? Or how about Arthur

C. Clarke's vision of modern cruise dirigibles in *A Meeting with Medusa*? (He crashed it for literary reasons.) Or telecommuting to work over the Internet, while living in small neighborhood communities close to our families, where we can walk to the market to buy necessities (like the Europeans), with precious fuel used only to truck in supplies? Or even the Wizard's supercomputers built out of cheap plastic foam? High technology need not be complex or expensive. A sustainable society might rely upon just such an oddball mix of high and low-technology. People might stay closer to home—and like it! Man would have to change his habits, though, and learn to be happy with “enough.”

Which is what the Fellowship of People Learning How to Be Human is teaching millions, practically, showing them how to put the principles of balanced living into action every day. But the wisdom is ancient. Societies before ours knew how to live this way. Tribal wisdom strongly suggests that we *can* heal the Earth. *But how?*

THE WISDOM

Can Man change to become tonic instead of toxic, healing instead of harmful, good for the Earth?

In his book, *Gaia*, J. E. Lovelock wrote:

“There is only one pollution...People.”

We have seen that this is true—but only part of the truth. The rest of the truth is this:

There is only one solution...People.

If we are not a part of the problem, then we cannot be a part of the solution. We have seen the scope of the problem. Now, as intelligent two-legged toxins-desiring-to-be-tonic, *how do we become the solution?*

First of all, there is no single solution. There are many. Each of us has the power to find one. Each of us is part of the problem, and it is a big problem. It has as many parts as grains of sand on the beach of an ocean's shore. Each grain of wet sand is part of the burden of the Earth's memories. It is wet sand, the Wet Sands of Sorrow. It is too heavy a burden for any one of us to heal. So, then, how do we heal the Earth?

It may first be necessary for our enchantment with material things to burn itself out. The end stage of this spiritual burnout is hopelessness. If we stop there, we can see only one solution to the Wet Sands of Sorrow—killing ourselves. The Wizard saw that solution when he fell into darkness. So have many others. Some have acted on it, some have not. Here is an extract from *Pannies Inna Wad*, a self-published zine from an Alqui who has since found a purpose in life. But at one time they felt despairing, and wrote this short piece, in which they described the nadir of our solution to heal the Earth:

HERE ARE A FEW WAYS ONE CAN TRULY SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT....

- * don't eat anything
- * don't drink anything
- * don't breathe
- * don't buy anything

This is short and to the point, but if we can find a reason to escape despondency, we can do better. First, we might look to the Instructions given to all people by the Peacemaker,

as told by Tadodaho Chief Leon Shenandoah of the Iroquois, and recorded by Steven Wall in *To Become a Human Being*, which have been distilled into the slogan-like brevity that the Alquis love so dearly:

Laugh.

Enjoy being here on the earth, and being part of creation.

Listen.

Work for the good of all.

Watch what you say.

Never say anything in a harmful way.

Never call on the Creator for anything; the Creator gives us all we need.

Make the changes necessary to stop certain things from happening. You can do that. You can prevent things from taking place if enough people will take action. Be one of them.

Be thankful.

Don't worry.

Sayings such as these are common to all spiritual traditions. Here, for example, are two excerpts from *The Essence of Wisdom* by His Holiness The Dalai Lama. They are already distilled! Perhaps the Tibetan Buddhists anticipated the spread of the Alquis?

We humans are the only species with the power to destroy the earth as we know it. The birds have no such power, nor do the insects, nor does any other mammal. Yet if we have the capacity to destroy the earth, so, too, do we have the capacity to protect it.

The world will change when each individual makes the attempt to counter their negative thought and emotions and when we practice compassion for its inhabitants irrespective of whether or not we have direct relationships with them.

Healing the Earth is preceded by being compassionate and considerate to all of its inhabitants, which in turn is preceded by healing ourselves. There are innumerable elastic cords of healing in the Web of Life, and each of us holds many in our hands and hearts. If we are not healed, we cannot carry our weight, let alone help others with our shared burden. We must be whole to be strong! Lynn Andrews, trained in the Medicine Way, explains it this way in her article "Mirroring the Life Force" from the book *Healers on Healing*:

I think that world healing begins with the individual. I think that people are opening like they have never opened in their lives. I see a great hunger for openness. I think people are not only looking for new answers, they're also looking for new questions.

The direction of healing is back to the earth. We are beginning to remember and understand that living in harmony with Mother Earth is more important than almost anything else.

It is worth noting that the Twelve Steps of the Fellowship of People Learning How to Be Human are a course in self-healing. But, in the end, it is the last step, the Twelfth Step, that opens a door outward, letting Alquis gather up those elastic cords and carry their share of the burden of the Wet Sands—and even do more:

Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

It is so simple! Become a Human Being. Help others who suffer in darkness become Human Beings, too. Then live a spiritual life. Turn it over, turn it outwards. And the fantastic proliferation of Twelve Step Fellowships—there are reportedly over 168 of them today—suggests that individual healing, and healing others in turn, is spreading rapidly, under the noses of The Authorities Who Took Drastic Action. Perhaps healing

the Earth, certainly a drastic necessity, is *not* within the scope of thought or action of The Authorities—yet. Eventually they may notice, for healing the Earth will be noticeable. After all, as small as it is, the Earth contains an awful lot of space.

How, specifically, can it be done?

Chief Frank Fools Crow told us that the way has been forgotten:

Is it possible to heal the world? [asked Thomas E. Mails. Fools Crow replied...]

With *Wakan-Tanka*, everything is possible. Without Him, it is not. It begins with self-healing. People must let *Wakan-Tanka* and the Helpers heal them first so they will know how healing works. Then this understanding can be sent out from them to the rest of creation. Long ago, people knew how to do it, but they have forgotten the way.

But what has been forgotten can be remembered.

All memories of every living thing, even the stones, are in The Light—everything.

The Light is sending us the knowledge, letting it seep into our hearts from many places. From indigenous peoples. From the Foundation for Shamanic Studies and Pathways Foundation for Peace and Healing. From local Circles of Light. The memories are there, even if we forget them to buy fast food on the way home—because even fast food is becoming healthier. Franchisers feel the irresistible tug of the Elastic Cords of Healing.

If we take the words of the Alquis' Twelfth Step literally, then we may combine their principles with shamanic healing to dry up the Wet Sands of Sorrow, and free the Web of All Things from a heavy weight. For example, after getting sober, and journeying for the Spirit of the Friendly House, the Wizard was told by the Spirits to do certain things. They were actions to help clean up his place in the Community of Light. What were they?

Small things, like planting Luna moth cocoons (instead of keeping them in a plastic box inside his barbecue grill). Cleaning the two old tires out of the pond and throwing his best (well, second best) crystal in to help purify it so that the frogs and turtles would have cleaner water. And, as you have read, sending a healing to The Land his parents live on. The Alquis call this “cleaning up my side of the street.” These are amends, and we can each make amends to the Earth we live on, right now, right where we live, for we usually can reach no farther.

We can heal what we can see. We can touch what is within our reach. We can act as examples for those around us. And we will heal the Earth, one memory, one place, one day at a time.

We will dry the Wet Sands of Sorrow, and they will sift away through the Web of Life.

1,000 BREATHS

If you have read this far then you have taken about 1,000 breaths, inhaling in each one the same poison that caused the greatest environmental disaster in the history of the Earth. It left few survivors, none of them your direct ancestors except for the very few that mutated afterwards. This disaster was even worse than the Killer Asteroid that is believed to have exterminated the dinosaurs, leaving them all extinct except for a few

small ones that evolved to become birds. This disaster was worse than any brief—in Gaia’s scheme of things—nuclear plant meltdown or toxic chemical spill. In the end, this disaster gave rise to intelligence, to an opportunity for Gaia to grow and maybe even reach the stars, joining the other life in the universe in harmony, for, after all, if there is no other life out there, it is an awful waste of space.

What was this ancient disaster?

About two billion years ago a tiny one-celled organism discovered that it could harness sunlight and the rich atmosphere of methane, ammonia and carbon dioxide in which it lived to grow at a phenomenal rate. Of course, it also pooped—everything does. This organism, which today we would call *algae*, swept through the seas of an Earth that was warmer than it is now, and in a few hundred thousand years—again, a short time in Gaia’s existence—had polluted the air and killed almost every organism that depended on Her rich atmosphere of complex hydrocarbons. The organisms that could not tolerate living on the poopy surface were forced to live underground, far from the atmosphere that was now polluted with this *algae*’s toxic byproduct.

What was the toxin? A simple element. We need it to live. We die without it in a few minutes. What’s in a name? You may remember the subtitle of this story about Oz: *The Environmental Awakening of a Somewhat Contaminated Wizard of Oz*.

Oz. O₂. Oxygen. And now you know...

...the *rest* of the story.

Well, almost. What happened to the Wizard’s parents and The Land?

DAWN

It takes time for the healing of the spirit of a place to seep gently into the hearts and souls of the people who live there.

But it may not take as long as our pessimistic minds believe. On Christmas Day the Wizard called his father. His father had been delighted to get the crystal, and wanted to know if he could keep it in his Radio Sorcerer’s Shack, and not throw it into the woods, or bury it. Yes! (The Wizard had hoped for that, but you never know.) The gratitude list had helped his father see that they *did* have power, and that they *could* do something to heal The Land. Victims do not plant trees. Empowered people plant trees.

The Wizard’s mother had ordered a book for her Christmas present. The book? *Wormwood Forest*, from which you have already read some excerpts. Maybe you believe that a book about a nuclear disaster and evacuating people from their homes is a depressing book to read during the holidays, but the Wizard saw it as the dawn of new hope for his mother. If Chernobyl can regain its balance after only a few years in the absence of Man, then The Land ought to regain its balance within his parents’ lifetimes. After all, his mother and father come from long-lived families. Most of the Wizard’s ancestors on both sides lived to be 95, and some even lived to be older than 100.

The week after Christmas, when the Wizard and his father talked again, his father mentioned something that was unusual. There had been a few warm days in the woods,

and The Land, formerly empty of butterflies, had suddenly blossomed with two Mourning Cloak butterflies (which is not surprising, as they hibernate in cracks in trees and under bark, and their amazing butterfly blood contains natural antifreeze—another example of a toxin that promotes survival). But the wonderful thing was that there were three or four common Cabbage Butterflies fluttering around the Cabin in The Woods. These little white butterflies (which were the first butterflies in his life that the boy Wizard caught and kept in a jar with a metal screw-on lid that had holes punched in it for air) only come out in the springtime, and never, ever come out in the winter. If they do, they will die—usually. But sometimes the indicators of change from the Web of All Life flicker in and out of the Mundane World as The Light gives Its Gifts, and when It gives gifts, they always are given lovingly, and the Gifts *always* have a Meaning.

Jamie Sams' book, *Medicine Cards*, tells us the meaning of Butterfly:

The power that Butterfly brings to us is akin to the air. It is the mind, and the ability to know the mind or to change it. It is the art of *transformation*.

A change is in the air. The Land will be a paradise again, even in the presence of Man. What about cancer, and the workshop that served as a catalyst for the Wizard to see how contamination is not necessarily harmful? Well, Myron remarked that cancer (and many other "modern" diseases) are a result of our lack of harmony with the Earth. No wonder there were so many cancers after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, compared to Chernobyl. As bad as the Chernobyl disaster was, it was not due to hatred, or Man's soulless, dispassionate, cold intellectual curiosity that led him to drop two atomic weapons on fellow human beings. Man was not in harmony with Man. War is not living in harmony with the Earth. Cancer was a result of that lack of harmony.

When we begin to heal the Earth, we will begin to heal ourselves in ways that are hard to imagine. Uncontrollable things that we believe we are powerless over, such as crime, the incidence of disease, addictions, poverty, the economy, the weather and even natural disasters will change, and they will change for the better.

But it is not Toxic Man, but Spiritual Man that will bring about the change. Man that is composed of people, women and men, whose contact with The Light gives them one of the most important Gifts of all, without which apathy drains away all action. The Gift?

Hope.

It is enough to begin with. The Earth is waiting for us. Our Mother is calling.

Come, it is time to go home.

In love, Light and healing,

The Wizard

THE BOOKS, ARTICLES & WEBSITES

Here are some books, articles (and one zine, if you can find it) that you can read. Then you can decide for yourself how you will choose to live with Gaia, our Mother. Many of you are probably doing much better than the Wizard! After all, he just “woke up!”

Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition, —, 2001. (Available on-line at www.aa.org)

Earth Abides, George R. Stewart, 1949 (Fawcett Crest paperback 1971). (Fiction, but surprisingly relevant over 50 years later. The disaster is biological, but the events are plausible, including the outbreaks of ants, mice and predators, which are nearly identical to those experienced at Chernobyl. Science fiction proves a good predictor.)

The Essence of Wisdom, Tenzin Gyatso (His Holiness the Dalai Lama), Abacus (an imprint of Time/Warner Books), London, UK, 2002.

Fools Crow: Wisdom and Power, as recorded by Thomas E. Mails, Council Oaks Books, San Francisco/Tulsa, 1991. (One of the best books the Wizard has ever found to learn how to “be healing” and live in harmony on the Earth. But don’t take his word for it!)

The Foundation for Shamanic Studies, <http://www.shamanism.org>

Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth, J. E. Lovelock, Oxford University Press, 1979 (1987).

Healers on Healing, edited by Richard Carlson and Benjamin Shield, Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1989.

The Limits of Growth, Donella H. Meadows et. al., Universe Books, New York, 1972.

Medicine Cards, (revised, expanded edition), Jamie Sams & David Carson, St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1999.

Medicine for the Earth, <http://www.shamanicvisions.com/ingerman.html>

Oklo: Natural Nuclear Reactors, U.S. Department of Energy, Yucca Mountain Project, www.ymp.gov (This is the site for a controversial project to bury nuclear waste on tribal lands. The Wizard does not condone the project, but found the information helpful.)

O-Zone, Paul Theroux, Ivy Books (paperback) 1987. (Fiction of a possible near-future with a radioactively contaminated zone somewhere in the Midwest—which is “the sticks” from the point of view of most New Yorkers! Fascinating, nevertheless, and darkly reminiscent of Chernobyl—science fiction, even artsy sci-fi, scores again.)

Pannies Inna Wad, Jen F., self-published, undated but circa 2001.

Pathways Foundation for Peace and Healing, <http://www.peacehealing.org>

Record of Cycling Operation in the Natural Nuclear Reactor in the Oklo/Okelobondo Area of Gabon, A.P. Meshik et. al., *Physical Review Letters*, Vol. 93, Number 8, 29 October 2004.

To Become a Human Being: The Message of Tadodaho Chief Leon Shenandoah, as recorded by Steve Wall, Hampton Roads Publishing Company, 2001.

What insight has Toumaï brought? [article on fossil humans in Chad], which can be found at <http://www.sciencein africa.co.za/2003/july/toumai.htm>

Wormwood Forest: A Natural History of Chernobyl, Mary Mycio, Joseph Henry Press, 2005. (A searchable, free e-book version is available from National Academies Press on-line at <http://www.nap.edu/books/0309094305/html>)