



The International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors (ISWNE) gave Editor Carl Conley formal recognition for editorial excellence, naming him one of the twelve finalists, from a field of 93 entrants, to be presented the 2005 Golden Dozen award at ISWNE's annual conference at the Gaylord School of Journalism (University of Oklahoma). According to ISWNE, the group is dedicated to encouraging and promoting high standards in editorial writing, and to that end, the Golden Quill contest and award, established in 1961, draws 'the best of the best' weekly newspaper editorial writers from around the world. Here follows the award winning Editorial:

While Sunday is Father's Day and dad certainly deserves recognition for his contributions to the family life of America, a startling new discovery has kept me focused on Mother Earth this past week.

The venom of an obscure marine cone snail found in tropical waters off the coast of Australia holds the promise to relieve the most difficult forms of pain to treat. The venom has shown potential for treating pain generated inside the body, associated with damage to nerves in conditions including surgery, cancer, AIDS, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, shingles and sciatica.

Why is this so important you may well ask? If for no other reason than to remind us all that the mysteries of our planet are far from exhausted. The answers to many of humanities most pressing problems lie outside of man in the wonders of our nature. That is why the preservation of habitat for creatures other than man must start taking on an even greater role in man's plans for Earth.

We focus so well on short - term goals like building housing projects or constructing new oil fields that we forget the only real wealth is our health. Without that nothing else matters. And if we really take a hard inventory it's readily apparent that everything that generates health comes from the natural life of our planet. From the combined movement of the skies and oceans comes purified air fit to breath. And from the percolation of ground water through clean soil comes the life sustaining waters. From the actions of sunlight upon the seeds in fertile ground springs forth the food that nurtures our bodies.

Building another shopping mall only covers up this fertility. Another chemical plant destroys the filters of good earth and global warming coupled with ozone depletion threaten the very lungs of the planet.

Right now, in Washington and Oregon, a battle is being fought that illustrates without reservation how our twisted concept of caregiver reads. The wild salmon of the Pacific Northwest are dying at an unprecedented rate. Many believe they will be gone in a decade. Know why? Because we are depriving the fish of water! By constructing dams and rerouting the water flow of the rivers, we have practically ended a cycle that has fed people for thousands of years. And what's our answer? We build an ever-increasing number of "fish farms" to replace the wild

sources. But already there's trouble with this approach. Salmon raised in contained areas develop diseases and sometimes mutate into inedible versions of their free running cousins. Once again, a classic example of our inability to duplicate the working of nature on a grand scale.

We are brilliant at engineering immediate solutions to problems but fail miserably when asked to do nothing but protect what has already been given to us. As innovators we appear invincible; as stewards pitiful.

Why do we do it? Is it because we think we can rebuild the earth better than the way she already is? If asked, nobody would agree with this statement yet by our actions it is being proved truer as the years pass by.

If we continue our pell-mell methods, one day we may wake up to a world that is as bleak as what our science fiction writers would have us accept. Where the only thing we see is an endless row of machines working in nightmarish fashion to extract air, water and nutrients for our survival. Where the very elements that flowed so bountifully in our natural world are reduced to so many pieces in an erector set. A world where the pain easing cone snail long ago passed into extinction.

If you believe Our Father created the heaven and the earth, then here is a more profound reason to celebrate Father's Day. A tip of the hat, a pause for reflection and a moment of reverence for the Creator who thought so much of us that he placed on this frail and fragile globe the solutions to every problem we'll ever have. This meditation should aim to develop a spiritual nature that is greater than our current, all consuming materialism. That is, if we want to survive long enough to harvest the abundance before we destroy it with our presumptive arrogance. Perhaps our Native Americans expressed it best:

Will you ever begin to understand the meaning of the soil beneath your very feet? From a grain of sand to a great mountain, all is sacred. Yesterday and tomorrow exist eternally upon this continent. We are the guardians of this sacred place and in our choices lie the future of all coming generations.

Carl Conley, Ed