

News & Reviews

Fifth Estate Collective

1992

The Fifth Estate office receives a large number of anarchist and environmental newspapers and 'zines from the U.S. and the rest of the world. After we look at them, they rarely get much farther than a growing pile under a desk.

We feel this is too dismal an end for publications with so much information and creativity, so we are hoping FE readers would like to see them. We will send them out with book orders or on request if you send postage. Please indicate country of interest or language (including U.S., England, Australia, etc.). If you're in the neighborhood, the papers can be picked up at our office or the 404 W. Willis space.

We have reprinted our 1990 call for a radical Earth Day for a third time bringing the total number in print to 15,000 including the Spring 1990 *Fifth Estate* in which it appeared. [See online: FE #333-A, Earth Day Special, 1990, <https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/333-a-earth-day-special-1990/>] The special 8-page issue has essays by FE writer Lewis Cannon and former East German dissident Green, Rudolph Bahro, which define many of the central themes of the FE's radical environmentalism, anti-statism, and anti-capitalism.

Another article places the call for recycling within the context of liberal reform and finds it woefully lacking in its ability to make even the mildest dent in a waste-heavy productionist society.

Copies are 25 cents each for 1 to 99 and 20 cents for larger quantities; we pay postage.

Also available is the Spring 1989 FE Special Issue, "Return of the Son of Deep Ecology: The Ethics of Permanent Crisis and Permanent Crisis in Ethics," which is the second installment of our debate with proponents of the deep ecology philosophy and the pre-split Earth First! organization. We will send these by weight; for instance, \$2.50 will bring you 20 copies. It too contains many of the basic FE themes which emerge from the debate. Highly recommended.

Left Bank Books, 92 Pike St., Seattle WA 98101; (206) 622-0195, is a collectively owned and operated project now in its 18th year. Besides their main location which features over 15,000 new and used books, Left Bank also has a distribution system, a used book store, a books for prisoners project, and publishes texts. It's an amazing undertaking all detailed in a new 55-page catalog available for the asking although a donation for postage would be helpful.

Several of us on the Fifth Estate staff and our friends were passing around copies of Forrest Carter's charming and poignant autobiography of a Cherokee boyhood in the 1930s, *The Education of Little Tree* long before it hit the *New York Times* nonfiction best seller list last summer. Needless to say when the *Times* published charges that its author was not a native at all, but a former Klansman and anti-Semite who had changed his first name after a career of violent anti-civil rights activity, we were more than a little distressed.

The charges appeared October 4, 1991 in an op-ed piece by a respected historian who says the book is a hoax concocted by one Asa Carter, a violent white supremacist and a speech writer for former Alabama Governor George Wallace. Forrest Carter died in 1979 after writing several novels including *The Outlaw Josey Wales* which was made into a movie by Clint Eastwood.

Among the damaging evidence presented to indicate that Forrest Carter may have been the ex-Klansman is the fact that Forrest was the last name of the Confederate General who began the Ku Klux Klan after the Civil War. However, if the charges are true, a character transformation of dramatic proportions must have occurred. Whether fiction or autobiography, *Little Tree* is a gentle, lyrical tale which speaks of a people in harmony with nature and of an acceptance of the worth of others.

One of the most touching chapters concerns a Jewish peddler who is portrayed entirely sympathetically, something one cannot imagine even a reformed Klansman doing, given the place Jews occupy in the racist pantheon of villains.

Either Forrest Carter is the author of an authentic autobiography or he is a fraud who, in his transformation to another persona, not only shed his racist, right-wing ideology, but made a 180-degree switch in his beliefs. His fiction is indistinguishable from the authentic.

Personally, I think there is enough evidence to point to Forrest Carter being Asa, but even if so, there is something heartening about a person switching from cold to warm heart. Maybe Little Tree, Granpa and Granma never existed, but their portrayal is so compellingly real, it is difficult for me to deny their existence. I suppose, however, some may say the same about E.T.

We still highly recommend the book, but if you are ordering it and want your reading experience ruined a little, ask us to enclose the article about it. The Times expose gives away its liberal bias, however, when it notes what it calls a common thread between Asa Carter's Klan views and the folk wisdom of Little Tree's Granpa, including, "Government and all its agencies are corrupt. Politics is a lie." This, of course, is part of the book's charm and our attraction to it, but doesn't seem much like what would come from a Klansman's mouth.

—E.B. Maple

P.S. Interestingly, the *Times* recently moved *Little Tree* from the No. 1 position on its best-selling non-fiction list, to the No. 7 position in its fiction category!

Living at the End of Time, John Hanson Mitchell, 1990, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, \$19.95

As we try to escape the technological tyranny of the modern world, it is rare to have the joy of relaxing with a book which asks us to smell the few flowers we have left. John Hanson Mitchell retraces and relives the profoundly simple experiences of one of America's most revered naturalists (and rebels), Henry David Thoreau, with a quietly fascinating update on a unique back-to-nature journey.

Mitchell embarks on the "simple life" of Thoreau with a twist: his woodland hideaway is encircled by a busy Massachusetts freeway system. To learn what is still attainable and preferable to the surrounding pavementland, he decides to build a primitive cabin with no running water or electricity in a strangely undeveloped forest not far from the setting of Thoreau's Walden Pond. Here, Mitchell's daily discoveries magically unfold under a green canopy rustling with migrating birds and wandering mammals, as if he's time traveling to an era when there were no roadway intrusions.

But this idyllic retreat cannot escape an ugly invasion Thoreau never had to confront: the construction of the modern glass and steel headquarters of Digital, Incorporated in the valley directly opposite Mitchell's humble dwelling. It is this stark contrast which tugs at his transcendental observations of a shrinking natural world, and his story slowly builds towards an odd conclusion inside the Digital monstrosity.

To me, his reflections often evoked Tor Heyerdahl's *Kon-Tiki* which also described people living in a pre-industrial era. But while Heyerdahl had the exciting challenges of a raging ocean and exotic South Sea islands, Mitchell's more modest vision doesn't make it less interesting. He shares his visions on an intensely personal level, unlike scientists temporarily "investigating" some detached "field of study." This allows Mitchell to explore the folklore and the enigmas of the surviving wildlife. Bear tracks or a roaming Indian might still exist in the shadows of a thicket.

There are a few disappointing tendencies wandering through *Living at the End of Time*. These are due mainly to the author's constant passivity toward the wide variety of human life he encounters. While his broken marriage (his original motivation for heading to the hills) persists as an annoying mystery, his tolerance of the encroaching pollution of "progress" (like Digital) is even more frustrating. If he wasn't such a gifted writer, some might dismiss this book as a Zen-like journal destined for gift shops along the highway. But *Living at the End...* becomes a plea to

hang on to the cliff of nature, as Mitchell details his interaction with the hidden, often ghost-like beauty of a dreamy forest whose leaves make “a lace work of the morning sky.”

By comparing himself with his eccentric neighbors (who run the extremes of an ultra-nomadic outcast nicknamed “The Green Man,” to the robotic employees of Digital), and through haunting parallels to Thoreau’s life, we see how time is unified with nature. It is a sadly moving lesson, but it is bound to make the reader take a second look at whatever nature remains in technology’s wake. For Mitchell’s remarkably personal tone, filled with lingering echoes from the life cycles of a previous century, will warn and yet warm anyone who hopes to rescue nature from its cliffhanging existence.

—Bill Blank

Wind Chill Factor is a bold, new anti-authoritarian zine featuring imaginative graphics and writing by a posse of Chicago anarchist youth. They’re off to an amazing start with three packed issues in the past few months which include news, reviews, creative rants, and many suggestions for fucking shit up for the rulers of the world. Send them a donation for postage so you can check out this hot new project. Write them at PO Box 81961, Chicago IL 60681

We’ve been operating the FE Bookstore for fifteen years and we just figured out that Frederick Turner’s *Beyond Geography: The Western Spirit Against the Wilderness* is far and away our best seller. Since 1986 we’ve sold 135 copies.

fifth Estate

Fifth Estate Collective
News & Reviews
1992

<https://www.fiftheastate.org/archive/338-winter-1992/news-reviews>
Fifth Estate #338, Winter, 1992

fiftheastate.anarchistlibraries.net