



SCINTILLAS
FROM
WORLD'S END

by Redd Boggs

"Amoto quaeramus serio ludo." -- Horace

"I am writing to you from the end of
the world." -- Henri Michaux

I

WAS a male chauvinist long before
the term was invented. I like women too much to
change now.

2. I never wanted to be Good, but it's so
difficult to be Bad.

3. I retain my doubts about the existence of
ESP, just as I always doubted that the moon was
made of green cheese.

4. To obtain an alien view of the world, you
don't have to read science fiction stories about
planets at the far edge of the galaxy or, closer
to home, study textbooks about the culture of the

[Continued on page 3]

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INTRODUCTION

MAYBE YOU TOO carry a pocket notebook -- a receptacle book, as I sometimes call it, after Whitman -- in which to jot down the brilliant thoughts that occur to you during the day. If you don't, I would like to recommend the practice. The only other person besides myself that I know of, or at least can think of offhand, who carries such a notebook regularly is Dean A. Grennell. I remember him riffling the pages of a notebook on the memorable occasion when Dick Eney and I first visited the Grennells in Fond du Lac in March 1956. Probably DAG had carried such a notebook for years before that.

I know that I have carried a pocket notebook at least since 1943 or thereabouts because I remember purloining one (worth all of a nickel, I suppose) for my use from the headquarters supply room at Alamogordo Air Base. Ever since, I have kept a notebook in my shirt or jacket pocket as a repository for the profundities that cross my mind when I am somewhere away from my desk.

Unfortunately, during the early years, I destroyed the notebooks piecemeal as I used them, tearing out pages as the jottings thereon were tossed into an article or letter, or whenever on second thought I decided that the remark wasn't worth salvaging. Soon the notebooks were only tattered remnants that were finally thrown away.

I do have pocket notebooks dating back to the 1950s, when I finally stopped destroying them page by page. The earliest extant notebook in my possession dates from the mid-1950s, although the exact date is uncertain. A notation on the first page says, "June 1955 Mod. Man has the Tom Mix item." This may refer to a back issue magazine, but other entries show that the notebook dates from sometime around that year. Even after a quarter century and more, this Champion #1370 notebook contains some interesting jottings that have probably (although not certainly) remained unmined all this time. Of course many of the entries are outdated, and many others long ago were made into interlineations.

I still carry a notebook daily, although I use it less frequently than I once did. That's partly because I have transferred elsewhere some of the functions the notebook once served: listing books to look up in the library, for example. But it's mostly because there are fewer brilliant and profound thoughts loose in the universe than there were when we lived joyously in the golden dawn. Thus, in the recent past I have carried a given notebook many months longer than I once did. After a while, from long wear, the covers fell off the notebook, and then some of the interior pages started to wither and separate. There isn't much you can do to rehabilitate a deciduous notebook. These days I pack a Woolworth's notebook with a vinyl cover and a refillable insert with its own paper covers that can be removed and filed away when full.

Perhaps 25 years from now I will let you read some of the profound thoughts that I am storing away day by day in my current notebook. Till then you will have to be content with these secret gleanings from my old notebooks of the far and recent past: silly, pompous, naive, stupid, as they may be. "This hour I tell things in confidence, I might not tell everybody, but I will tell you."

-- BOGGS

Bastille day 1982

[Continued from front cover] Hottentots or the Outer Mongolians. Go to the kitchen and ask the lady of the house what she thinks.

5. You are living in the Golden Age, but you won't realize it till you look back from A.D. 2007.

6. Don't bother me with your debates about the relative merits of Christianity and the eastern religions. I haven't yet decided whether blondes or brunettes.

7. Go ahead, tell her that you love her. She may not love you for saying so, but you may be sure that she won't hate you for it.

8. I have never detected much indication, in this perilous universe of ours -- immeasurably vast, implacable, pitiless, full of intense cold and all-consuming fire, frozen moons, supernovae, quasars, pulsars, black holes -- that life is very important in the grand totality of things, or that nature is constantly at work to preserve such life as exists. But if it is, I set myself against all the supernovae and the black holes of the universe when I look with lust rather than gentle affection and respect upon the pretty woman beside me.

9. A woman's joie de vivre is easy for drag queens to mimic and parody, but impossible for any man to duplicate exactly. Women are happier than we are.

10. I have an absolute genius for choosing wrong. If you're in a hurry, don't stand in the same line with me at the supermarket.

11. One reason for encouraging a woman to wear her hair long is her marvelously graceful gestures as she pushes it out of her eyes or sweeps it back over her shoulders.

12. If most people weren't so awful the other people wouldn't seem so nice. Women might not seem so wonderful if there weren't men to contrast them with.

13. We have done all we could. Leave something for the gods.

14. It's a rare woman who won't lead you, ten minutes after you meet her at a party, knee deep in gore through a description of her latest miscarriage, abortion, or childbirth, told with the greatest gusto and an eye for harrowing detail.

15. Truly times are changing. I saw a man riding a women's bike.

16. Affluent people are often so charming. It will grieve me to see them all hanging from lamp posts.

17. Poor people are often so intolerable. I will hate to see them take control of the world.

18. I suppose it's as perverse to love only the opposite sex as it is to love only your own, but how fortunate I am to be able to love over half the human race!

19. We have had to handicap women with high heels, flimsy stockings, slippery undergarments, dangling purses, and long flying hair else we could never keep up.

20. "What's the good word?" "Love."

21. Sometimes I feel rather like the stars in the old John McCormack song "Molly Bawn," which are "brightly shining because they've nothing else to do."

22. Everything else in the world is on the decline from the Golden Age of the mythical past, but not women. Every new crop of women is smarter, stronger, braver, and prettier than the last. Oh to be alive two hundred years from now!

23. If Charles Manson escaped from prison, and I found him at my door bleeding, famished, weary and worn, I would keep a weapon handy, but I would give him something to eat and a place to sleep. He may be an inhuman monster, but I shan't be. It's better to be a fool.

24. The only thing I detest more than people who won't tell me what they think is people who do.

25. There are days when one feels in his sadness, not misery, but a melancholy pricked with little scintills of happiness: the blues, truly, but only the blue of a bluebird eating blueberries.

26. A mere woman? Then the God of the Old Testament was a mere god.

27. I see nothing very sexy about toes, but the recollection from years ago of a woman, otherwise fully clothed, reclining on a sofa and wriggling her bare toes meditatively has haunted me ever since.

28. Homosexual fashion designers do their best to make women look ridiculous, but how seldom they succeed.

29. Keep looking. Sooner or later you'll find a parking space directly in front of the place you're going, and with 30 minutes left on the meter.

30. How sad are the lives of many women I know, and yet they walk by with secret smiles on their faces. What is it they know?

31. Virgins are precious, not because they possess a greater hoard (never having squandered any of it), but because they have put a higher value on it from the start, and you'll have to meet their terms.

32. It's wonderful to have been born, but it would have been even more wonderful never to have been.

33. Fifty million Frenchmen can be wrong.

34. When you see a beautiful mountain, lake, or tree, you see a mountain, lake, or tree. When you see a beautiful woman, you see Beauty.

35. Cut off his sexual organs, equip him with plastic breasts, and call him a woman. Add a dead fish to a desert mirage of water and call it an ocean.

36. Kids are naturalborn rebels, and I've never grown up.

37. If the universe had a purpose, we could only surmise that from the first Big Bang to the present little bang it was exactly to bring forth better and lovelier women. This is another example of great oaks from little acorns.

38. Women are the best and the worst of creatures, best because they could change the world, worst because they don't.

39. I love to hear myself talk. I'm working on trying to find something to say.

40. The woman with the face of an angel has the thoughts of an angel.

41. This evening the yellow sunset richly painted the heavens and the urban skyline a glorious saffron, and poured a flood of golden light into the street along which people drove or walked as if it were only a matter of everyday. Must the sun go nova before we look up in wonder and amazement?

42. I hate to criticize. There's always a chance he or she may mend the fault and outshine me even more brightly.

43. Men who tell me that half-nude women are more alluring than nude women don't like women very much.

44. Women often confide in me. As a result I know what brand of detergent gets your wash cleanest, what toothpaste gives the whitest teeth, which decaffeinated coffee has the richest taste, and a thousand other trade secrets.

45. The severed head quirks a faint peaceful smile as the world crashes blindly on.

46. Most women are embarrassed by four-letter words, even those who are unembarrassed by four-letter acts.

47. After you've gone to the trouble to fetch a ladder and shinny up at risk to life and limb you discover that by god the grapes are sour after all.



48. At times I have resolved to spend an hour in philosophical reflection, not thinking even once about women, and I intend to achieve this ambition sooner or later.

49. In college long ago I sat fascinated and enthralled all semester long at the lectures on economics delivered by a pretty woman who had the most lilting of voices. A death sentence spoken from such an exquisite larynx would have sounded as lyrical as "Bei Männern." I wish I remembered what the course was all about.

50. The best conversations in the world are those conducted in whispers.

51. There's many a slip between skirt and pantyhose.

52. We all have in us a little of that twisted, glowering dark dwarf scuttling down the noisy street loathing and being loathed.

53. Only a woman could endure wearing women's clothing.

54. All women aren't sexy, but most women are maternal. Even little girls display this instinct. Some of the most attentive mothers you will ever meet are five years old.

55. Show me the most glorious woman you know, and I'll show you a woman who worries that her breasts sag.

56. Go to bed with a virgin at your own risk. She may have a lot of catching up to do.

57. Nothing ventured, nothing lost.

58. One hundred of the most interesting men in the world, and me, gathered in one large room. Enter one woman. I forget all about the hundred men.

59. When I'm left alone in someone's house, I sometimes peek indiscreetly into their bedroom closets and desk drawers, but I soon tire of it. All of their treasures of a lifetime are commonplace and trivial: a stack of Reader's Digest Condensed Books, weebegone umbrellas, moth-eaten sweaters, a heap of rusty paperclips, forgotten sticks of chewing gum amid a litter of unpaid dentist's bills and cancelled checks from five years ago. There's never a skeleton to be found.

60. Women are all so alike in their glorious perfection that I wonder why I don't find most of them boring.

61. I never feel less like Superman than when I realize that on a short stroll along Telegraph Avenue I see more alluring women than even Don Juan could bed in a dozen lifetimes.

62. "An interesting woman" is redundant.

63. I like a woman who forthrightly speaks her mind, even in bed when you're doing it all wrong.

64. When I think of all the women I have tried to seduce I am thankful that I haven't often succeeded.

65. A connecticut truth is better than a texas lie.

66. The greatest discovery of my life was that women, whom from afar I had supposed to be frail, delicate, languishing creatures, are really sturdy, durable, well-built creatures with big feet.

67. Pretty women look good from behind, and this is fortunate because that's the aspect we often see them in, hurrying away from us.

68. It's easy to criticize women. First, we need only set them apart, in a separate category of humanity, as we do blacks, Latinos, Poles, welfare recipients. Then we examine the examples in that category and discover that we have much to say about their faults, for women, alas, are human beings too.

69. Cherchez la femme. Yes, gladly.

70. Why travel to Hawaii, Jamaica, or Alaska to see beautiful scenery when the only scenery worth looking at can be seen on any street parading past on two legs.

71. She's sweet, and deserves to be caramelized.

72. When I urged Gretchen to get up, she said disconsolately, "There's no up to get up to."

73. Every time I am convinced that I have seen the most beautiful woman in the world I turn around and behold a woman who is even more beautiful.

74. I am heartily ashamed of myself. I was lusting after her, and to my consternation realized that she was regarding me touchingly with a look of affection and trust. Is the world a poem after all: lust, trust? And is this the whole paradigm of the male-female relationship?

75. I thought her goggly eyeglasses were ridiculous, her frizzly hair impossible, her clothes utterly insane. And I fell in love with her instantly.

76. Can you imagine a woman with an evil face?

77. I find nothing quite so restful as contemplating an olive grove on a summer afternoon and seeing the green olives on the swaying branches with their ruddy little tails glowing in the sunshine like a vast cloud of red traffic signals.

78. For a moment, at least, she is The Woman, epitomizing in herself a little over half the human race.

79. I'm not conscious of my cold hands till I start to fondle a woman.

80. Human beings have one great advantage over the lower animals. They can produce bullshit, horseshit, and chickenshit with equal facility.

81. Women and ice cream are twin passions of mine. They always offer a pleasing contrast. I have known a few occasions where ice cream was incomparably the colder.

82. This will have to stop! Half the young, rangy, golden-skinned women I see on campus are taller than I am!

83. As I would not follow the crowd, neither would I lead it.

84. I always feel the impulse to be the man who will "now speak or else hereafter for ever hold his peace" at weddings, but it's only my natural perversity, and I never say a word. Imagine all the trouble and torment I might have prevented if I had.

85. Women always aim to weather the storm.

86. What's the longest distance to be found in nature? The distance between her hand and yours. I figure it as exactly 30 billion times the distance between here and the far end of the universe.

87. The trouble with women is that they're so biological.

88. We were born in an age where we write our words on paper instead of stone because paper perishes so easily, the longer to preserve the world.

89. God must have been bored in Eden for the first five days, for on the sixth day he created woman.

90. I pride myself on never having exaggerated in all my life.

91. The only wonder of the world that exceeds a woman's body is a woman's mind.

92. She dances round and round in her delight at dancing round and round.

93. I have only a small circle of friends -- a very small circle, comprising only 200° instead of 360°.

94. Keep looking back: something might be gaining on you.

95. All women are beautiful. The most beautiful woman I know is 89 years old.

96. She was the distant lofty eminence against which, as I traveled along my road, all others moved rapidly across my line of sight and disappeared.

97. Since Gretchen died, I have felt like the car keys dangling in the ignition of an abandoned vehicle.

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RED MOONLIGHT

My overcoat felt uncomfortable. Warmth radiated from the bare humid earth and in the glittering sky the red moon dragged the southern horizon. It was deep summer in a strange land. I shucked my coat and threw it across my shoulder, though I was cold within. For what era was this where no vegetation grew from the soil? As far as I could see under the red moonlight there were no trees, no grass, no flowers, no shrubbery.

Someone moved in the thick light. I could see their outlines against the moon -- a man and a woman, walking arm in arm. I called to them and they stopped, puzzled, I thought. The woman whispered something and the man answered her sharply.

"Who is it?" the man called to me. His accent was normal enough.

"A traveler," I said calmly. "Where am I?"

"Why..." the man said, surprised. The woman hissed something and he spoke sternly. "A time traveler?"

"Yes. Where -- when -- am I?"

The woman gave a sharp, ringing laugh. "I'll answer that, time traveler, if you'll strike a bargain. An answer in exchange for the loan of your coat -- for half an hour!"

"My coat? Of course. I don't need it here. It was midwinter 1950 when I left. Now it's midsummer -- somewhere and somewhen. You may have my coat for half an hour if you'll tell me. But why do you want my coat?"

"Why do you think, stupid?" -- and the woman laughed under the midsummer moon.

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