



AAPA

MISCELLANY

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Send all submissions to wolfshohl@hotmail.com by the 20th of each month.

I did not intend this issue of *AAPA Miscellany* to be focused on our encounters with Nature, but in various ways all of the contributions this time treat that theme. Gale Mueller shares one of his wood engravings that studies the texture of damaged trees. His keen observation led him to notice the various textures as the trees heal and work them into the texture of his engraving. Carl Kremer also encounters trees, but he wishes to make useful mulch of the rough debris from fallen limbs and unwanted trees. You may remember Carl's attempt to escape the attentions of Wally Bapp in the March issue of *Miscellany*. It seems he may have run into another kind of Wally as an adult.

Your editor recalls an animal he has not seen in some time—a chaparral or, for cartoon fans, a roadrunner. He includes a reproduction of a monoprint of a chaparral and a poem of a dawn sighting of a chaparral, which besides *roadrunner* is also called *paisano*. I can remember them from my childhood in Texas and as the state bird of New Mexico. While my encounter with the roadrunner is a bit mystical, Brian Warren's confrontation with a squirrel is humorously mysterious. Brian is not a member of AAPA, but he is a member of our writers' group here in Fulton, Missouri. In fact, Brian is the owner of well-read books where we have our meetings. When he read his story at a recent meeting, I immediately asked him if I could use it in this issue of *AAPA Miscellany*.

Always a poetic harbinger of the seasons, Kent Clair Chamberlain presents a way of looking at one of the early flowering shrubs of spring with his haiku to the lilac.

NEXT ISSUE (MAY'S) OF *AAPA MISCELLANY* IS DEVOTED TO THE THEME OF **GRADUATION**. You may interpret graduation however you wish, the traditional cap and gown ceremony or some less formal indication that one has passed from one phase of life to another. We welcome photos, artwork, poems, essays, fiction, memoirs, and be sure to have them to me at wolfshohl@hotmail.com by April 20.

And let these artists know they are appreciated by dropping them an e-mail or comp card.

Gale Mueller

Healing, a wood engraving
gmmillstone@aimcomm.net

Brian Warren

My Encounter with Nature
info@wellreadbookstore.net

Carl Kremer

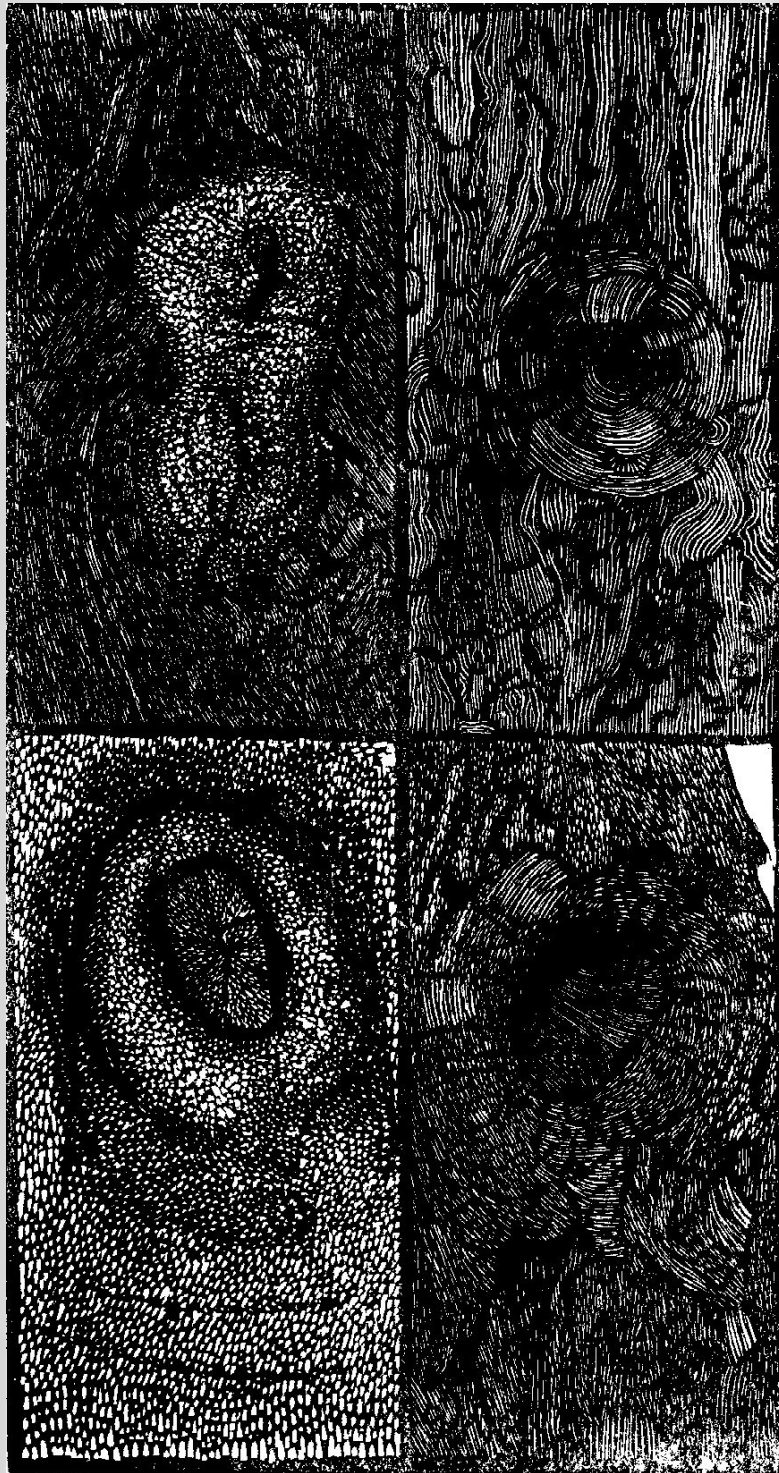
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Chaparral
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Healing
a study in textures

Gale Mueller

Editor's Note: *The wood engraving by Gale Mueller on the previous page was originally created for the Wood Engravers' Network (WEN) bundle. When I saw it, the textures so fascinated me that I asked Gale for permission to reprint it here. Of course, he was gracious enough to assent.*

The textures are of double interest. First, for what they represent, the actual textures of the bark of the trees as they recover from and absorb damage to their branches and exteriors. Second, the textures achieved by the master wood engraver demonstrate his mastery over the tools of his craft. Wood engravings are generally of small dimensions. Gale's original print image is 3" x 5 1/2".

Gale's Comments

As far as the "genesis" or "purpose" of the engraving, I was wandering around a city park one day in pursuit of song birds when I noticed some oak and maple trees with these long ago severed limb scars. Having failed to bring a camera on that day, I returned and made a specific purpose of recording the varied patterns and textures of these scars. Once I got focused on this particular subject I was mesmerized by the variety and intricacy of them on trees all around – especially in my own yard.

Another phenomena of nature is the desire to "sustain" itself. We removed a number of pine trees when we built our house here some sixty years ago. I was out raking pine needles yesterday and two pine stumps in a corner of our yard attempted to sustain themselves for quite some time after their amputation; the cambium cells of life continued to curl up over the stump, producing mounds of bark and new growth for quite some time after their tops were removed. Very interesting textures they have produced.

A Man and His Wood Chipper Carl Kremer



It was advertised as “almost like new” for \$175 cash only, and I made the call, perhaps in part to justify my fascination with Craigslist “Farm and Garden” ads, but I needed a chipper.

Okay, it is a man-toy, though that attraction is also its worst feature. It's fun pushing branches and bushes and sticks and brush in the hopper, making a furious roar; as a toy, it's damned scary.

Our property is inundated with trees. Eastern red cedar is pestilent and germinates readily, as it has for many decades here. The wood, sawed and smoothed, is beautiful and fragrant, but the trees' short, densely grown needles are scratchy, and the limbs keep growing from the ground up, so they are hard to prune or to take down, and leave difficult brush I have to deal with. Cedar is not favored as firewood; it burns hot and fast, and the smoke smells great, but burning, it throws out hot, flying sparks

Our several mature oak trees are prolific acorn producers, but their limbs, which tend to

bend downward, sport thorns and many tiny branches which died in their first year, broken off by the wind, leaving sharp spurs. Large individual limbs die at various stages of growth and remain for years firmly attached, bereft of bark, gnarled and gray. They eventually break off in strong winds and I have to deal with them. Entire mature trees die, a process which can take years from the first dead leaves in midsummer, through their final naked skeleton waiting for the right conditions of soggy ground and a powerful gust of wind to topple them either to the ground, or against other trees, where they might lean for decades, if I didn't deal with them. I prune and lop and dig and chop coping with this natural resource with ax, pruner, hatchet, handsaw, pole saw and chain saw, and even my pocket knife at times. Some of the detritus these efforts engender I leave in place as natural compost, but trees and brush I must haul away for burning.

I was skeptical about a chipper “almost like new” for less than \$200, but I made the call. The answering device said something about a guide service, but I left my number and the reason for the call. When Buck called me from his moving truck, he assured me, with a strong regional accent, that the chipper ran, that he “had ran it a few months earlier.” I got some complicated directions and finally a rural address, his girlfriend's place, where the chipper was located--about seven miles on unpaved county roads from a small town ten miles from home. My wife didn't want me venturing out there alone, carrying cash, so I called my neighbor and then a friend, but neither was available for a road trip into the far reaches of Callaway County, so I have no witness to the encounter but myself and Buck, the man with the chipper.

His girlfriend's house was one of the nicer, more modern homes scattered along County Road Y, about 200 yards up a curving driveway of wheel tracks worn into the ground, dead

grass between them. A few pickups and cars, some apparently not driveable, were parked randomly around a one-car garage without doors and some smaller home-made structures, among which was scattered Buck's inventory: lawn mowers (some with motors, all well-used) garden tillers, trailers of various types, none appealing, garden tractors, wheelbarrows, and implements such as snow blades, box blades, a disk, piles of bricks and scattered barrels, buckets and cans of all sizes, all showing the effects of exposure to the weather.

Buck apologized, admitting he had to "Get this shit cleaned up; I got too much goddamned shit here, and more down to my place." He was a little shorter than average, about 45 years old, bearded, stocky, wearing outdoor winter gear and a camouflage cap with a raccoon decal. I asked about his guide service and learned he had a couple of groups of people from out of state that "Come up ever' year or so to go huntin' or fishin', dependin' on the season." He described the plush amenities of their cabins and their boats in glowing, profane terms.

When we finally addressed the chipper, it did indeed look "almost like new," in that there was little rust on the orange paint, and it looked sturdy, if dated. I asked him to start it up for me. He responded, "Oh, I'm sure it'll start up all right," and repeated that he'd had it running just last summer. "Probl'y don't have no gas in it, and it'd be gone bad by now anyway, but I got some starter fluid around here somewheres that oughta work," and he left to search the largest leaky shed filled with unorganized tools, tin cans, buckets and other junk. I could hear him moving metal things around and talking, though not to me.

"Now g*****t, where the f*** is that s***? G*****t! I hate lookin' for s*** in this m*****-f*****, g*****d, f****d *p mess of a m*****-f***** place. I just gotta get rid of all this s***pretty damned soon. Oh, yeah, here it is, and it

sounds like there's some still left in it." He appeared with a slightly rusted aerosol can of starter fluid, but it had long since lost its propellant, and he threw it into a patch of weeds, swore some more, and set off, still ranting, though conscious of my proximity. "I swear I had a can of that shit around here someplace, #&*#@#/?!" A few minutes later he came back, still looking around, and kicking some oil cans and other containers loose from the dead grass. He spotted something and picked it up. "Oh yeah, here it is. I think there's enough in here to start it up." I helped him remove the air cleaner from the carburetor, and he squirted a generous cloud of the ether-smelling mist into the carb, adjusted the choke and began yanking on the starter rope, punctuating his efforts with more profanity. After he removed another piece of the carburetor and wiggled the butterfly valve, the motor coughed once, but it never started. He determined that the axle of the butterfly valve was rusty and didn't move freely enough to draw fuel to the cylinder. "Carb prob'ly needs rebuildin', but it'll run, I swear. I want rid of it, so maybe I'd let it go for a little less."

"How much less?" I asked. "You wanted \$175 and said it would run. What'll you take for it, bottom line?"

"Oh, I don't know, make me an offer for it."

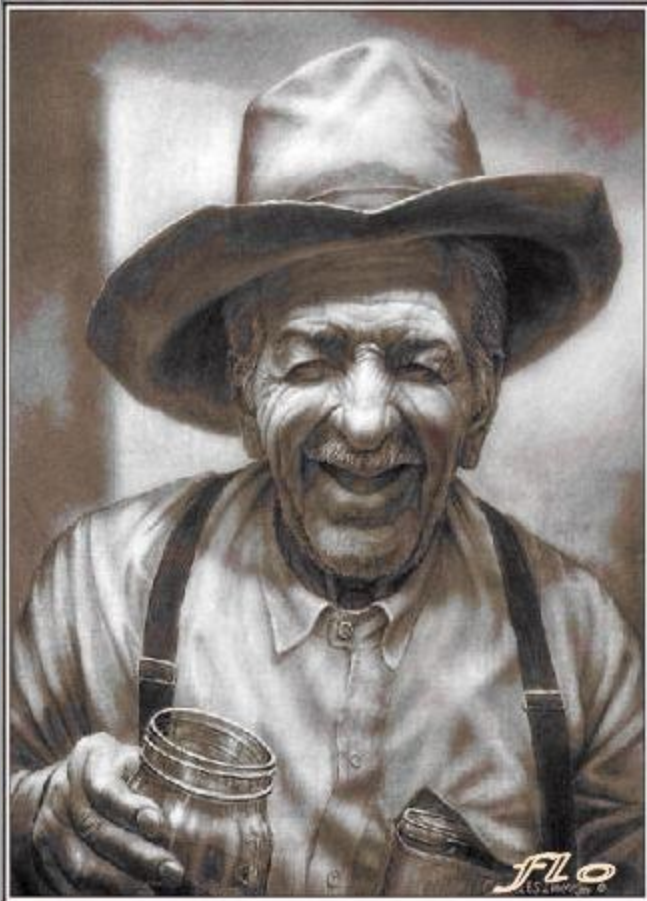
I thought for a moment then said, "How about \$100?"

"How about we split the difference?" he responded. "Tell you what, I'll let it go for one twenty five; that okay?"

"I can make it one ten, but that's all."

After a short pause, he said, "Okay. I might be able to get more if I could get it started, but I just want shet of it, so I'll let it go. I'll come out on this okay anyway."

He directed me to back my pickup closer to the machine, and we hefted it into the bed, and he offered to find something to wedge under it so it wouldn't move on the trip home, but I had nylon straps to tie it in place.



"I got another one I'd like to get rid of if you're interested in getting two of them. I could make you a pretty good price on it too." I declined, but while I was tying up the chipper, he moved the conversation along by asking if I was a hunter. I replied modestly that I had done some hunting as a kid, but no longer practiced it. "You like venison?" he asked next. I affirmed that I did, and had a little of it in the freezer from a friend who loved hunting. "Well, you know what's even better'n deer? Moose! Moose is some of the best meats there is; I like it more than beef, 'specially the beef you get down at the store."

I allowed that I had tasted moose, and found it palatable enough.

"The very best meat of all though," he claimed, with a reminiscent smile, "is mountain lion or bobcat. You ever had any of that?"

"No." I was pretty sure I hadn't eaten either, though I had been in some ethnic restaurants that served meat I didn't recognize; the menus usually called it chicken.

"Ohh," almost purred, "Mountain lion is just about the best stuff I ever tasted, bobcat too. It's all white meat and just as tender and tasty as anything you ever had."

A friendly cat had been following me around when he was looking for fuel, so I said, smiling, "Well, if you ever get hungry enough I guess you could find a meal right here then," nodding at the cat, who was sitting on one of the rusting lawn mowers.

"Oh, that's my girlfriend's cat, but I'll tell you, I never saw a cat so good at trackin' as he is. I been out lookin' for deer over two miles from here, and I'll turn around and the damned cat has tracked me the whole way. I never know when I'm scoutin' out the woods here when he might turn up.

"I don't know if you believe in that spiritual stuff or not, but I swear this cat is the reincarnation of my girlfriend's husband. I mean, she and I both think he's got the same personality; he's just so much like Jake that there has to be something to it. You ever been to Alaska?"

"I took a tour of part of it a few years ago, along with the Yukon Territories, and I loved it."

"You know anybody up there?"

"Not that I can think of, though I know a few people who have lived up there."

"Well, I want to get back up there. Canada, too, there are some beautiful places up there, just as wild as before white people got

there."

"We saw a little bit of one of the provincial parks, and it made me want to spend more time up there, but it's not likely I'll ever get back."

By this time I had the chipper secured in the bed of the truck and had my hand on the door handle when he asked, "What do you think the government ought to do with all them criminals we got locked up for murderin' and child molestin' and rape and all that stuff?"

"Well, I'm not sure, but it seems like a problem we haven't really got a handle on yet."

"Well, I'll tell you what I think. I think we should just shoot 'em. I mean, you have any idea how much it costs to keep those guys locked up their whole lives? Millions! What's the use of that? They can't let 'em out because they almost always wind up back in there anyway, so I say just shoot 'em. Hell, I'd step up and volunteer if they needed a firing squad or something without hesitating. Why not? I mean, I ain't prejudiced or anything, but what about

that nigger they just caught for murderin' his former girlfriend or something?"

I shook my head and replied, "Well, that would surely be one way to deal with the problem all right," opening the door of the truck to climb in. "It's been nice talking and good luck with getting back to Alaska."

"You sure you can't use another chipper, maybe as a backup, or you might know somebody who's lookin' for one."

"Not at the moment," I responded, firing up the truck. "But if I hear of one, I'll give them your phone number."

He nodded and thanked me and I eased out of the yard and back on to County Road Y. I drove straight to a small engine repair shop and dropped off the "almost like new" chipper.

When I picked it up two weeks later for about \$150, the mechanic fired it up with just two pulls, but the weather has been too cold and wet for me to make any mulch yet.





Clarence Wolfshohl

The Chapparal

Dawn's sun glory encircles the cock
Held in vigilant pose
With tail thrust up to the bare scrub oak limbs,
Head lowered in sharp-eyed stare:
A statue of feathery gray
Cast by primitive hands
In new day rapture. In his slow rhythm — morning breaking
From the stars of night —
The roadrunner gazes in familiar bewilderment
At crawling shapes around him,
Knows I am near.
I halt transfixed by his dark pit eyes
Pellets of ebony
That seem to drop away —
A silent moment of no breathing
Death for one second —

Then he lifts his head,
Preens his neck in a serpentine dance,
Fluffs his wings in the morning air;
Dew mist flashes in the sun
A halo of silver dawn stars
That settles to quivering grass tips.



An Encounter With Nature

Brian Warren

Once while leaving the house for work, I noticed a brownish turd shape clinging stubbornly to the patio screen door. I approached with puzzlement. Up closer, I recognized the brown blot to be squirrel, eyes wide and fixed. It clung to the screen, motionless, as if awaiting further instruction from some unseen being. I tapped the glass between us hoping the sudden noise would jolt it out of its stupor, but it didn't budge. Intrigued, I opened the glass door to get a better look. The rodent appeared stiff as a board, and I wondered if it was dead. But if dead, why were its eyes open? Maybe it died of surprise? I didn't know what to make of it, it's tiny sharp claws firmly hooked into the weave of the screen.

In an attempt to startle it into moving on with its day, I flicked my finger on the inside of the screen just to the right of the squirrel's body—nothing. It held its pose, stiff and as unflinching as a statue. At that point, I decided to leave the mysterious stowaway and head off to work. As strange as the incident was, I hardly gave it another thought the rest of the day. I guess I figured hunger would eventually force it into motion, to reawaken from its stupor and go back to foraging or whatever squirrels do for food and fun.

I returned home that evening, a full ten hours after I'd left and cycled through my routine, turning on lights and closing blinds when I noticed my catatonic

friend still holding fast to the screen in what, unbelievably, appeared to be the same spot. Once again I approached to take a better look and was dumbstruck to find that the little bugger appeared to have not moved a scant millimeter during the course of the day.



Surely the thing was dead, I reasoned. It had succumbed to a tiny heart attack or a stroke while scaling my screen door looking for God knows what. Just then a thought occurred to me: unless I could think of another plan, I was going to have to deal with the dead thing's corpse. The idea of touching a cold, stiff, and dead creature was unsettling, to say the least. I was the kid that refused to participate in the frog dissection lab

in 9th grade biology. This stance, by the way, had nothing to do with animal cruelty or the sanctity of life. I just have a weak stomach for such things. Always have. Anyway, I thought about leaving the squirrel there, but wasn't crazy about it lingering over my shoulder all night as I sat on the couch watching T.V. What I did next is an embarrassing reminder of my lack of discernable manliness.

I had once heard that squirrels carry rabies, so on the off chance the little thing was not dead, I put on just about every stitch of clothing I owned, covering every square inch of my body. Over my shirt, went a sweater. Over my pants went a pair of sweats. Over all that, I shimmied into ski pants. Over my sweater went a heavy jacket. On my head, I put a thick beanie. To prevent an oral attack, I put a neoprene vented mask over my face. On my hands went a pair of heavy Gore-Tex gloves. I must have looked like an overstuffed burglar or the Michelin Man's vagrant cousin.

I made my way out the front door and around to the patio, a space that was littered with the kind of underused junk most condo residents fill their patios with. The patio was actually one of the chief selling points when my roommate and I took the place. While woefully lacking in modern esthetic, the unit was a good size and sported a large fenced patio. The patio, which ran the

length of the unit with a high fence, offered privacy if not seclusion. That high fence was going to witness all manner of bacchanalian affairs— endless booze, roasting meats over open flame, beautiful young women of loose morals. We had plans for that patio.

We never had one of those parties.

Standing in front of the moribund beast, I took a deep breath and gently maneuvered my hand into position, hovering over its back. Expecting I would need a firm grip to wriggle its claws from their hold on the screen, I planned to grab at it gently, but firmly. With what can be best described as limp hesitancy I grabbed for its tiny body too gingerly and with the abruptness of a fart in church, the heretofore dearly departed rodent leapt from the screen and plunged to a sickening thud on the hard pavement. The shock of the moment produced from me a rather unmanly squeal and sent my body into a violent episode of spasmodic hopping and shuddering. The now very much alive squirrel scurried off into the night, and I retreated back into my own brand of shame.

Not one of my finer moments to be sure and a cautionary tale for those suburbanites tempted to "get in touch" with nature.





Lilac,

Haystack,

Purple dervishes!

Kent Clair Chamberlain