

Go East Young Man (But Never Leave Home)

William O. Douglas (1898-1980)

January 10, 2003, U.S. Bank Room, Central Library, Portland

Featuring James M. O'Fallon, editor, *Nature's Justice – Writings of William O. Douglas*

Coming of Age in Yakima

My love of the mountains, my interest in conservation, my longing for the wilderness – all these were lifetime concerns that were established in my boyhood in the hills around Yakima and in the mountains to the west of it.

Of course, it was not only the natural surroundings of Yakima which influenced me, although my fellow townsmen sometimes denied responsibility for me. When I was named to the Supreme Court by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1939, the *Yakima Daily Republic* wrote an editorial entitled “Yakima Not to Blame.” The editorial first praised the local schools and their superintendent, A. C. Davis, a very superior man. Next it listed the roll of teachers one by one under whom I had studied, and said good things about each. Finally it stated that if I were judged solely by the education I had received in Yakima, I would have in me nothing but pure strains of Americanism. But alas, noted the writer, I had developed symptoms of strange isms that were not compatible with Americanism. Where I got infected with these isms was not known; perhaps in Washington, D.C. The conclusion was, “We want to go on record as saying that Yakima is not to blame.”



Douglas at 16

William O. Douglas, *Go East, Young Man: The Early Years (The Autobiography of WOD)*. Random House, NY, 1974

The Chinook

I think it was that night that I got my first sense of Time. I began to appreciate some of the lessons that geology taught. In the great parade of events that this region unfolded, man was indeed insignificant. He appeared under this firmament only briefly and then disappeared. His transit was too short for geological time to measure.

As I walked the ridge that evening, I could hear the Chinook on distant ridges before it reached me. Then it touched the sage at my feet and made it sing. It brushed my cheek, warm and soft. It ran its fingers through my hair and rippled away in the darkness. It was a friendly wind, friendly to man throughout time. It was beneficent, carrying rain to the desert. It was soft, bringing warmth to the body. It had almost magical qualities, for it need touch the snow only lightly to melt it.

It became for me that night a measure of the kindliness of the universe to man, a token of the hospitality that awaits man when he puts foot on this earth. It became for me a promise of the fullness of life to him who, instead of shaking his fist at the sky, looks to it for health and strength and courage.

That night I felt at peace. I felt that I was a part of the universe, a companion to the friendly Chinook that brought the promise of life and adventure. That night, I think, there first came to me the germ of a philosophy of life: that man's best measure of the universe is in his hopes and his dreams, not his fears, that man is a part of a plan, only a fraction of which he, perhaps, can ever comprehend.

William O. Douglas, *Go East Young Man*, Random House, New York, 1974



Cross, Star, and Crescent

Mohammed is a name borne by more boys and men in the world than any other, including John and Bill. The most famous person who bore it was born in A.D. 571 at Mecca. To him was revealed the word of Allah; and he reduced that word to the Koran. He died in A.D. 632, leaving behind a militant religion and a group of fanatic followers who used the Book and the Sword to conquer the earth.

Mohammed taught a new brotherhood – the Brotherhood of Islam. “Know ye that every Moslem is a brother to every other Moslem, and that ye are now one brotherhood. It is not legitimate for any of you, therefore, to appropriate unto himself anything that belongs to his brother unless it is willingly given him by that brother.” Through this creed he fashioned a Pax Islamica that united the faithful and inspired them to mighty conquests.

In the decade or so after his death the little nation of Arabia conquered most of the then civilized world. . . On the first centennial of Mohammed’s death Islam had reached the zenith of its temporal power.

While that political empire lasted, a great civilization prospered under Islamic influence. Science, art and literature flowered. The political empire, however, lost its cohesiveness and unity after five centuries. The dynasties it established crumbled from within. Mongol hordes attacked the empire on the east; Crusaders attacked it on the west. The world of Islam shrank. Yet even so it left millions of converts behind. Today one-eighth of the peoples of the earth believe that the Koran is the embodiment of wisdom and truth. . .

The brotherhood of Islam still persists. It is a brotherhood that draws no line at color, race, or nationality. In that sense it is universal. Islam draws only one line – the line between the faithful and the rest of mankind.

William O. Douglas, Strange Lands and Friendly People, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1951



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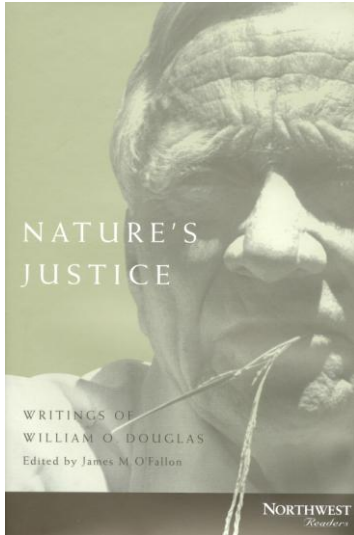
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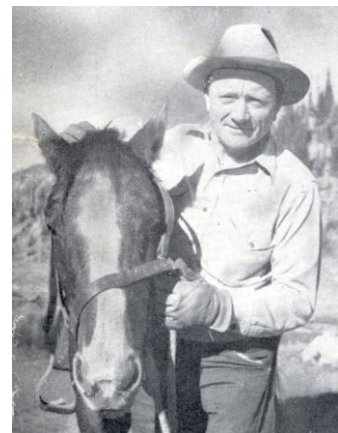
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