



*Nebraskans for Peace*

# Nebraska Report

*There is no Peace without Justice*

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## Nebraska a 'nuclear sponge'?

### Let's move away from this Cold War thinking

*The Omaha World-Herald published the following "Midlands Voices" oped by NFP State Board member Paul Olson and Peace Action National President Kevin Martin in its June 17, 2021, edition.*

Most people probably have not heard the term "nuclear sponge" before. We hadn't until recently.

It refers to Nebraska, Wyoming, Colorado, Montana and North Dakota, where U.S. land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) sit in underground silos, serving as a "sponge" for nuclear attacks by Russia, China or another adversary armed with nuclear weapons. The idea is the missiles in these states would

*... "nuclear sponge"... refers to Nebraska, Wyoming, Colorado, Montana and North Dakota, where U.S. land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) sit in underground silos, serving as a "sponge" for nuclear attacks by Russia, China or another adversary armed with nuclear weapons.*

be targeted, since the adversary knows exactly where they are, and would seek to destroy them before they could be launched in a nuclear war. As such, these missiles would draw at least some fire away from other natural targets, such as the national capital in Washington, D.C., or other large population centers.

Nobody asked the people in the Nebraska Panhandle, or in the other states, for their consent to be a nuclear sponge, or more accurately, a target.

Largely forgotten but not gone, 400 Minuteman III ICBMS have been in their silos since 1959, despite the Cold War having ended nearly 30 years ago. Now comes a Strangelovian plan to replace those missiles with new ones, in a program dubbed the "Ground Based Strategic Deterrent" (GNSD), or more properly, the 'Money Pit Missile'.

The projected cost of our tax dollars for these new weapons of omnicide is \$264 billion, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office. The overall cost of upgrading the entire U.S. nuclear weapons complex is projected by the CBO at \$1.7 trillion over 30 years. Congress and three successive adminis-

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*Nebraskans for Peace's state office in Lincoln is located on land that formerly belonged to the Otoe Tribe.*

## Nebraska Report

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NFP is a statewide grassroots advocacy organization working nonviolently for peace with justice through community-building, education and political action.

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# On Mary Alice Park

by Paul Olson

Nebraskans for Peace members may have seen the obituary of Mary Alice Park or attended the Aldersgate memorial service for her. Both were moving and important, but neither spoke fully to her contribution to Nebraskans for Peace. She was a pillar of the organization during the period when most Vietnam era peace organizations died for lack of support but also when, as Don Reeves, the first president of the organization put it, Nebraskans for Peace was "permanitized."



After Marilyn McNabb resigned as coordinator of Nebraskans for Peace in the mid-1970s to go to work for Steve Fowler on important matters in the legislature, NFP mistakenly hired a coordinator who lacked the skills to do the job. His tenure was short-lived, and he left the organization in a fragile fiscal condition. After his departure, NFP was seemingly in the wilderness, with no money, a small membership, and no program, though there were important issues left over from Vietnam and our neocolonialist past. Marilyn McNabb, still a moving force in the organization, asked Betty, my wife, to become the head of the organization, though she had never done that sort of administration and had only worked as a volunteer for NFP and for Common Cause. She had been rearing her children and feared the responsibility of taking on leadership when all seemed to be failing. I urged her to take the job because we needed Nebraskans for Peace to speak to issues of local, national, and international reconciliation. After a couple of days of considering, she told me, "I will take it if I can get Mary Alice Park to work with me." Mary Alice accepted, and she and Betty became a team. With Mary Alice also came Loyal's skills with finances, as Betty knew.

The next ten years were important for NFP with the post-Vietnam work on reconciliation, the post-Watergate reforms, the beginnings of the Nuclear Weapons Freeze movement in Nebraska, and the removal of the MX missile from Western Nebraska. NFP generated support for the 1980 Chambers bill to divest from South Africa (the first such divestment), and a variety of other peace and civil rights efforts. Mary Alice was the office manager in that period, the communication hub that enabled NFP to work. Gentle, efficient, and selfless, she, as I recall, received half time pay from NFP—then about \$100 per month—and gave back to the organization in donated time and money far more than she received.

After leaving NFP, Mary Alice continued to work as a peace volunteer on many issues, and from 2000 through 2015, served as editor of the annual calendar, "Cat Lovers Against the Bomb" (CLAB), that promoted peace and social justice in a whimsical way and earned NFP enough extra resources so that each year it made its budget (just barely). She was an extremely kind woman, a genuine peacemaker, a valedictorian, musician and music lover; also, the parent of musicians and active in her church programs for social justice. Mary Alice embodied the quiet, diligent action that must be the center of peace if it is to create a world where human beings can live. Peace to her memory.

# Nebraska a 'nuclear sponge'?, conclusion



*1st Lt. Pamela Blanco-Coca of the 319th Missile Squadron and her deputy commander, 2nd Lt. John Anderson, simulate key turns of the Minuteman III weapons system at a launch control center in Kimball County, Nebraska, in this 2016 photo. Photo Credit: Jason Wiese, U.S. Air Force*

trations, including the current one, seem unconcerned about the opportunity cost of this folly.

Surely, were there a national referendum on priorities, people would choose addressing climate chaos and pandemics, remedying racial and economic inequality, and creating green jobs by sustainably rebuilding the country's crumbling infrastructure, over new nuclear weapons. Said weapons are supposedly only for deterrence, designed never to be used, to rust in peace.

If there were a nuclear war, all life on Earth would be at risk, as even a 'limited' nuclear war, for instance between India and Pakistan, could cause nuclear winter, threatening the global food and water supply. As noted, the ICBMs are stationary, and their locations known by other nations' militaries and by the farmers and ranchers whose land the silos abut. The other two legs of the U.S. nuclear

triad, long-range bombers and nuclear submarines, are much harder to target. Bombers can be scrambled into the air, so they are not sitting duck targets for an attack, and submarines are stealthy, hiding deep in the world's oceans. So the target and nuclear sponge element are unique to the ICBM force.

Perhaps if the people in these five states were fully aware of and consented to this arrangement, that would be copasetic. But no such consent was ever asked, nor granted, by the foreign policy elites, mostly on the East Coast, who know and care little about the everyday concerns of folks in the Heartland and Mountain West.

Joe Biden has astutely talked about building a "foreign policy for the middle class," but unfortunately it appears to be the same old foreign and military policy for the weapons contractors. His

proposed \$753 billion Pentagon budget is an increase over Trump's bloated war budgets.

Northrop Grumman is the lead contractor on the Money Pit Missile Program, and not surprisingly, has spent millions in congressional lobbying and campaign contributions to make sure its bread is buttered and the GBSD gets built to fatten profits.

This is madness. Let's wring out the nuclear sponge. Let's take responsibility to lead in making Nebraska, the region, the country and world safer. Let's stop the GBSD, and while we're at it, why not ditch the entire ICBM leg of the nuclear triad? U.S. Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass., and U.S. Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., have introduced the "ICBM (Investing in Cures Before Missiles) Act" to cut funding for the Money Pit Missile, refurbish the existing Minuteman force as needed, and invest instead in a universal coronavirus vaccine.

Let's lead on converting the nuclear missile bases to solar energy or wind farms, or whatever other more productive, less dangerous uses the communities now hosting missile silos need.

If we can eliminate one leg of the triad, then why not the others? Stopping the Money Pit missile could be an important step toward the global elimination of nuclear weapons, as 86 countries have agreed to by joining the "Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons". Why not start here, and now, in Nebraska? This isn't a liberal or conservative issue; it's about human survival.

*Paul Olson is professor emeritus at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the former president of Nebraskans for Peace, and a 75-year opponent of the arms race. Kevin Martin is president of Peace Action, the country's largest peace and disarmament organization with 200,000 supporters nationwide, at peaceaction.org.*



# Change. It's What's for Dinner.

*The following "Local View" oped, written by NFP President Ron Todd-Meyer, originally appeared in the June 29, 2021, edition of the Lincoln Journal Star.*

The recently introduced policy plan called "America the Beautiful" focuses on mitigating climate change and protecting our land and water. In short, its purpose is to protect our ecosystem for future generations. It is important for us to be discerning in how we interpret the purpose of the proposals in this plan.

Climate scientists have been fundamentally accurate in outlining the effects on our ecosystems of increasing CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gasses. Our planet is warming, and if we are to mitigate the direst consequences, it is clear that all of us must change the way we think, act and live. Therefore, these public policy proposals deserve serious consideration.

My perspective on these proposals comes from working on the land for 40-plus years, farming and raising livestock. Over those years, I came to the realization that the unintended consequences of 'cheap food' policies include an industrialized model of farming that damages our land and water quality and contributes to the degradation of our climate.

The reliance on a corn and soybean monoculture that primarily feeds livestock—not people—needs to change. Monoculture farming leads to soil degradation in spite of minimum tillage. Every fall, farmers need to fill ditches where soil has eroded from corn and soybean fields after heavy rains.

During the 1980s, the Conservation Reserve Program was implemented to restore and renew highly erodible land by subsidizing farmers to plant perennial native grasses. These grasses

hold the soil and water and also sequester carbon.

Over the last 15 years, though, acres devoted to monoculture have actually increased because of grain-ethanol production. Former CRP acres, as well as land that grew trees used for windbreaks, was torn up to plant more corn and soybeans.

We simply cannot grow enough grain to satisfy current fuel consumption demanded by our use of internal

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unlivable.***

combustion engines. Many studies have indicated that grain ethanol production is a wash concerning the energy produced versus the energy used. The trend is now moving toward all electric vehicles, which would reduce dependence on gasoline and ethanol.

Ruminants, including cattle, goats and sheep are essential to a bio-diverse regenerative agriculture. Ruminants are designed to digest forage, not grains. Buffalo (another ruminant) were, at one time, a critical component of the Great Plains ecosystem.

Raising animals in their natural setting will result in a human diet that contains less meat, but the animals would be healthier and their meat more nutritious and healthier for human consumption. Per capita consumption

of meat in the U.S., according to a 2009 U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization report, is 122 pounds. Much of the world's people eat less than 50 pounds per year.

Confined animal feeding operations result in concentrated manure in pits and lagoons that emit methane. The effluent from feedlots is pumped on nearby fields in concentrations in excess of what the crops need, so excess nitrates leach into water supplies.

During heavy rains and hurricanes, these manure pits and lagoons further contaminate rivers and streams. A recently released study by the National Academy of Science attributes 18,000 human deaths a year to the contaminated air quality as a consequence of the way livestock is currently raised in the United States.

A better solution, which would help mitigate the negative environmental effects of livestock production, is to disperse livestock over a larger geographical area (land restored to grasslands) where ruminant animals can be raised in a more natural setting. Manure dispersed over a wider acreage becomes effective nutrient support for grassland ecosystems.

We cannot disregard how important uncontaminated water is to the continuation of humankind. The amount of irrigation water being pumped from underground aquifers to raise corn and soybeans would be better utilized to grow food for people instead of feed for animals. Underground aquifers are depleted in the Southern Plains, and the water supply needed to grow fruits and vegetables in California is threatened because of drought and diminishing snowmelt.

Our choice is clear. Either we drastically change our American lifestyle, or we leave future generations with a planet that may be unlivable.

# Nebraska Farm to School Act Opens Up Opportunities for Local Food

by Sarah Smith, *Fresh Fruit & Vegetable and Local Foods Consultant for the Nebraska Department of Education*

Backed by a broad cross-section of conservative and liberal, rural and urban legislative co-sponsors, Senator Tom Brandt of Plymouth introduced LB 396—the “Nebraska Farm to



**Senator Tom Brandt**  
**District 32**

School Act”—in the 2021 Legislative Session this past January. One of the most popular pieces of legislation in living memory, the bill was adopted by the Legislature on an unanimous vote, signed by the governor, and is now poised to significantly advance farm to school activity in the state. Strong policy facilitates strong farm to school programs, and the Nebraska Farm to School Act will prove to be a triple win for Nebraska residents: a win for our students, our farmers, and for Nebraska communities.

As defined by the National Farm

to School Network, “Farm to school enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools and early care and education sites. Federal and state policies have the greatest impact when they cross-sector all the following farm to school components: local food procurement, experiential education opportunities centered around agriculture and nutrition, and development and expansion of school gardens.”

Legislative adoption of LB 396 opens up unprecedented opportunities in Nebraska for local food production. The national School Lunch Program is the largest ‘restaurant chain’ in the United States, present in every school district in the country. Thanks to this piece of legislation, Nebraska farmers and market gardeners will be able to avail themselves of this institutional market as never before. But this milestone achievement would never have come to pass without the leadership of Sen. Brandt and the coordinated efforts of the Nebraska Department of Education and the Nebraska Food Council during the preceding 18 months.

In the fall of 2020, as a result of a legislative interim study (LR 337) also introduced by Senator Brandt, a 23-member task force published a report examining farm to school activity in our state. The study cites three strategies that effectively push the farm to school needle at the state level: 1) development of state farm to school networks; 2) imbedding state farm to school positions within state agencies; and 3) passage of state farm to school policies. Nebraska, until now, has been missing the benchmark on all three of these strategies.

The Nebraska Farm to School

Act sets the stage for stakeholders to strategically work together to navigate a complex educational and food procurement system. A Nebraska farm to school network, serving as a collective group of stakeholders, will tackle disparities of access to the vast benefits of farm to school for all sectors including students, producers, and Nebraska communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic illustrated the critical nature of school food. Nearly all 100,000 schools across the

**The Nebraska Farm to School Act will prove to be a triple win for Nebraska residents: a win for our students, our farmers, and for Nebraska communities.**

country closed their doors last year and schools, nonprofits, restaurants, community groups, state and federal agencies stepped up to ensure that school children—nearly 75 percent of whom receive free or reduced-price meals—continued to have access to food. To bring local food procurement and agriculture education to the table means we are embracing the potential to have lifelong impact on our communities, leveraging farm to school as a pathway to advance racial and social equity.

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*Pictured from left to right at the June 8 Ribbon Cutting for Air Park Farm: Amy Gerdes, Community Crops Director of Operations; Nick Cusick, Lincoln Airport Authority Board; Nicki Behmer, Lincoln Airport Authority Board; Sandra Washington, Lincoln City Council; Lincoln Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird; Zachary James, Lincoln Airport Authority Board Chair; Megan McGuffey, Community Crops Executive Director; Ron Todd-Meyer, Lincoln-Lancaster County Food Policy Council (and NFP President); Khero Edo, Yazidi Farmer; Shahab Bashar, Community Crops Yazidi Cultural Liaison; Tammy Ward, Lincoln City Council; Bennie Shobe, Lincoln City Council.*

## *A New Chapter in Urban Farming*

*By: Dr. Megan McGuffey, Executive Director, Community Crops*

Community Crops is a nonprofit based in Lincoln, Nebraska that focuses on providing education, advocacy, and experiences to grow local food. We think a lot about food security, both for individual households and for our community as a whole. Our Farm Program focuses on community-level food security or how we are going to grow enough food in Lincoln and the surrounding region to secure our local food supply against future challenges like climate change. This program has a long history of supporting farmer entrepreneurs—folks that want to grow food to feed their communities that will

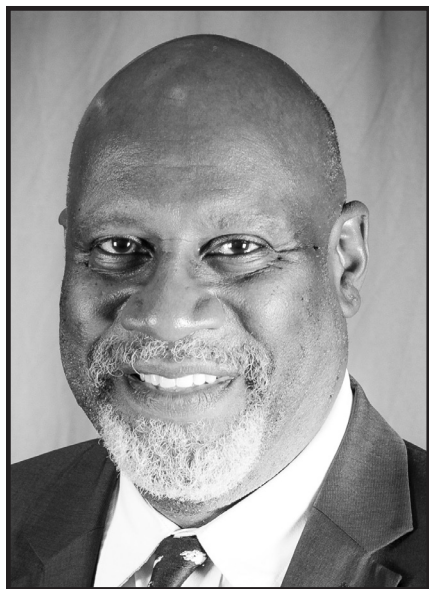
be available through commercial sales.

Land access and tenure are two of the biggest challenges facing farmers not only in Lincoln, but across the country. Our training farm program allowed farmers starting out to lease small parcels of land from us for up to five years with the hopes that they would then go out and lease or buy land of their own to continue growing their businesses. The reality is that land is expensive and hard to come by, especially for small speciality crop growers. Community Crops was sending talented farmers out into an environment where they would struggle to overcome this fundamental barrier.

One of the biggest ironies in this challenge is that we are a state rich in

land resources. We have a lot of open space and vast expanses of farmland, but most of that is growing feed for animals or crops that become fuel products. To address this challenge, Community Crops worked with partners at the Lincoln-Lancaster County Food Policy Council to tackle the land access issues facing our farmers. This group of advocates noticed that local governments are major landholders in most communities and began to believe that public lands could be a key piece of the puzzle in rebuilding local food supply. From school districts to city government, local governments steward large tracts of open land (either as grassy lots or commodity crop land) that can instead be used to grow food for

# The Critical Race Theory Controversy: Much Ado about Nothing



*A'Jamal-Rashad Byndon,  
Community Advocate for  
Real Justice*

Over the past few months, there has been a huge furor about making elementary school children feel guilty or bad over teaching simple American history. The backlash over “Critical Race Theory” is merely a subterfuge to keep from addressing the American nightmare African Americans have experienced for 400 years, and thereby further delay a long-overdue racial reckoning. We must also not ignore other groups such as First Nations (Indigenous peoples of North America), people of Latin American descent, and Asians who as well have suffered under the White supremacist ideology of “Manifest Destiny”. Our tragedies are far too often ignored or glossed over, because, if properly told or taught, could lead to the authentic transformation of communities and groups and undermine White Privilege.

Just lately, the media has been filled with reports of mass graves of babies and children at Catholic and other religious

Indian boarding schools in Canada, as well the unearthing of mass graves in Tulsa, Oklahoma, directly related to the 300 African Americans murdered during the “Tulsa Race Massacre” of 1921. Such horrific mistreatment and murderous terror have had tremendous impact upon people of color in North America for generations.

Millions of Africans were stolen from Africa and enslaved for decades without any compensation, redress, racial healing, and reparations. Only of late has society even begun discussing how to make amends to address the spiral impact of those acts. Archival documents reveal the wealth earned by churches, insurance companies, and other businesses in this country from the enslavement of Africans. This ruthless exploitation resulted in the current conditions for the descendants of those atrocities. The cold-blooded murder of George Floyd is only a tiny indicator the culture of the United States for African Americans. In August 1955, Emmett Till, a 14-year-old African American boy, was murdered by two White men found not guilty by a jury of White men in Mississippi. One of the racists later confessed to the crime, but a racist justice system did not retry J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant. They both died natural deaths years later.

Over 5,000 lynchings of African Americans were documented by journalist Ida B. Wells in her books and reports over the course of her career. And not one racist was brought to justice. Fast forward to the present, and we can't get Congress to pass an anti-lynching bill. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is only a tool that helps us to examine historical records within White-controlled educational institutions. A bit of reverse engineering (as well as simple logic) illustrates that the current abysmal conditions are predicated on the past. As Malcolm X once said, “If

your opponent is constantly winning, they are continually cheating.”

Educators don't teach any semblance of CRT in Nebraska because the curriculum content for most schools and post-secondary institutions is controlled by handpicked scholars, administrators and accreditation bodies suffering from ‘White fragility’. Too many are afraid of confronting the shameless greed, treachery and genocide of America's past, so they seek to elide over the facts, thus maintaining the status quo of inequality. In colleges and departments, fewer African Americans and people of color are teaching racial courses. One can do a simple survey to see the increase of White liberals and apologists for the White supremacy systems who are given those assignments. When I was teaching in the UNO Black Studies Department, I made it known that we should not talk about the Jewish Holocaust without including the African American Holocaust (enslavement and ‘Jim Crowism’) and the Native American genocide experienced at the hands of the racist Christian gatekeepers of White supremacy.

There is an excessive number of Black-on-Black murders and crimes committed by African American youth, which, sadly, only serves to reinforce negative stereotypes. But as Malcolm X noted in a famous 1962 speech, this destructive behavior is rooted in a centuries-long history of oppression: “Who” he asked “taught you to hate yourself?” Ignoring America's grotesque history of enslavement, exploitation and discrimination, White folks are forever adopting the tactic of ‘blaming the victim’. Demonizing the teaching of Critical Race Theory is only their latest ploy to buffer their White fragility and continue the subjection of African Americans and

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# What's HOT in Global Warming?

by Professor Bruce E. Johansen

## Hitting the Hot Spot



The trademark of global warming is heat, of course. This year, around the world, we have had an abundance of that. In Seattle on June 28th, for example, the temperature hit 108. The temperature on the Olympic Trials running track in Eugene, Oregon was 140 (108 in the ambient air). The athletes were risking third-degree burns on the bottoms of their feet, so the trials were suspended until after the sun went down.

After I crack a couple of Seattle rain jokes with some eco-advice, and a pinch of meteorology, I'll try to explain the burning question: why was it 108 in Seattle, and 115 in Portland, Oregon? Why all of that on days when Omaha had highs in the low 80s with salubrious showers? Why was the grass green in Omaha and a scalded brown in what was once called "The Emerald City"?

As a long-time Northwest resident (1965-1982, before Omaha) I am the proud owner of a SEATTLE RAIN FES-

TIVAL JANUARY 1 – DECEMBER 31 T-shirt, wrapped around a line of silly-looking gnomes under dripping umbrellas. In the spirit of summer-less seasons: "The warmest winter I ever spent was a summer in Seattle." Many say Mark Twain said this, but he may have said it about San Francisco. In Bellingham, Washington, which is just south of Vancouver, British Columbia, it has been said that, in Seattle, when the sun comes out, schools close for a 'sun day'. This is probably not true, but you get the point.

That was then. Just over the border, Lytton, B.C., population 300, northeast of Vancouver, hit the heat-wave jackpot with a high of 121 June 28th. That was the highest recorded temperature in the history of weather recordkeeping in Canada. This scalding high was accompanied by a wind-whipped wildfire that razed about

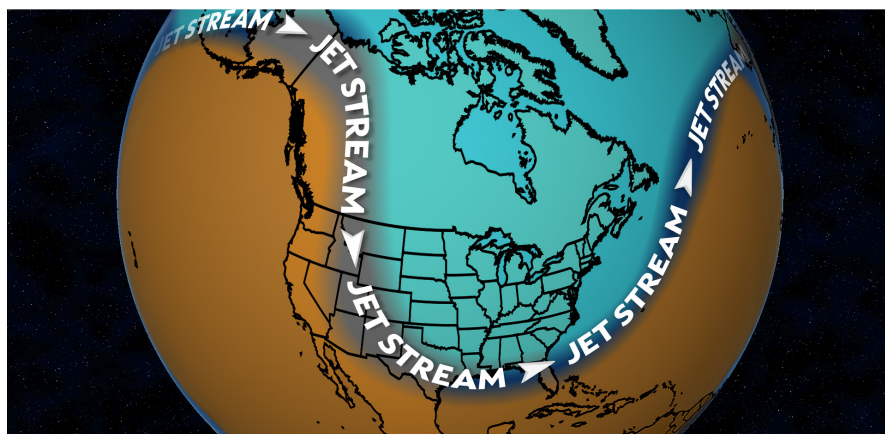
90 percent of the town.

Speaking of getting to the point, Dr. "What's Hot?", cut the rain jokes and tell us why it has been so damned hot.

### Jet Stream Tales

The western half of North America has been under a 'heat dome' which has been the usual atmospheric pattern for much of the last two decades. The jet stream swings northeastward over the northeastern Pacific Ocean to Alaska, then arches south-southeastward to the Gulf of Mexico, then, after another severe turn to the northeast, rolls northeast up the U.S. East Coast toward the Arctic. This pattern can wiggle east/west or north/south, but the basic pattern is 'anchored' (instead of moving west to east, as in the old days), giving everyone a mixture of sun and showers.

## MERIDIONAL JET STREAM FLOW





The jet stream is a river of air 30,000 to 40,000 feet above the Earth's surface (at the altitude of jet aircraft), which steers weather systems. During the last week of June 2021, the U.S. Pacific Northwest, which back in the day was accustomed to mild summers, found itself 'under' an arm of the jet stream with a suffocating heat dome overhead.

This anchored jet stream pattern favors warmth or heat, with generally dry weather to its south, cool or cold and stormy to its north. The area in which the jet stream makes its turn (movement southeastward to northeastward) favors climate chaos. Watch the number and intensity of tornadoes. Thus, we see enduring drought and heat from California inland to roughly the Missouri River valley. "The Southwest is getting hammered by climate change harder than almost any

other part of the country," said Jonathan Overpeck, a climate scientist at the University of Michigan. "And as bad as it might seem today, this is about as good as it's going to get if we don't get global warming under control."

In Eastern North America, this pattern favors storminess by dragging warm, humid air out of the Gulf of Mexico, with frequent floods during late spring to mid-fall. In winter, it favors ice and snow, sometimes in record amounts. West of the Jet Stream, this pattern favors warmth or heat, along with withering, crop-killing drought.

Some human beings' sense of denial can be severe enough to be frightening. Bill McKibben visited Arizona in the midst of the same heat wave that gave Portland that 115 F. afternoon. With Phoenix carving out highs in the 113 to

118 range for almost a week, McKibben's amazing sense of climatic irony found a group organizing to pursue its self-supposed right to burn up water on golf courses: "AZCentral reports that some golf-course managers near Phoenix are 'pushing back' against a plan that would cut their water use by just three percent. Never mind that reservoirs across the West are falling to record-low levels (with insufficient snowpack to replenish them, and with that constant evaporation); representatives of the golf industry have formed the Arizona Alliance for Golf, which has met with state officials and launched a website urging residents to 'speak up for Arizona golf' and 'protect our game'."

McKibben, Bill. "The Climate Crisis." *The New Yorker* [website]. July 1, 2021. [Newyorker.Newsletter.com](https://www.newyorker.com/news/newsletter)

I couldn't help but wonder whether these golfers have air-conditioned carts. Just how hot and dry does it have to get before some people worry about more than their golf scores?

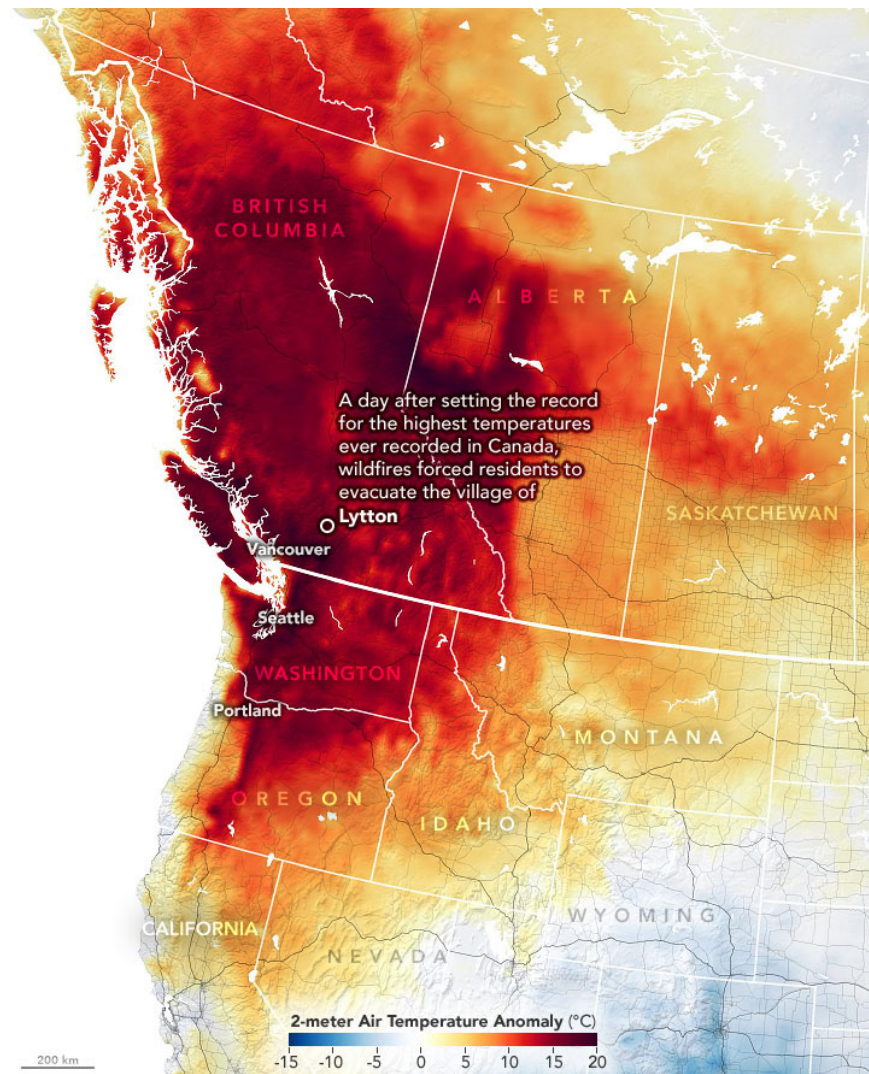
A few days after the heat wave from hell broke, hundreds were believed to have died in it—20 in Washington; 50 in Portland, 70 in Oregon; hundreds in British Columbia. What's more, salmon (a cold-water fish) were dying en masse, and many beaches in and near Puget Sound were inundated with bacteria—not a pleasant place to spend a sizzling afternoon.

## Too Hot to Grow Food?

The travails of a heating climate may be as personal and intimate as one person's suffering heat illness during one afternoon, or as universal as tens of millions sharing misery. Witness June of 2021 (not yet even summer on the calendar) when record high temperatures reached 118 F. in Phoenix, Arizona, and 124 F. in Baghdad, Iraq. One can only guess how long ago such places lost their suitability for practicing the business of agriculture.

Yet, all of us must think of certain things because survival requires food,

*conclusion on page 14*





by Tyler Mainquist

After the recent decision by the University of Nebraska to consider “factors other than making money” in how it invests, along with earlier action by Creighton University, you may be wondering how to do the same with your own funds.

Why stop investing in fossil fuel companies? It aligns financial values with personal or corporate values. The activity influences public perception and public policy. It may reduce future financial risk as the economy moves towards alternate energy sources. And that money may instead be allocated to more sustainable industries.

A first step would be to verify whether you currently own companies

that you want to get rid of. If you own shares of stock of individual firms, review the Carbon Underground 200 list of worst offenders and <https://www.spglobal.com/esg/scores/>. If you own mutual funds or ETFs, research them using Morningstar.com or As You Sow’s FossilFreeFunds.org. Financial professionals have access to more detailed information, including Calvert’s Transparency Tool.

Next, create a plan for what you will sell and what you will buy. It is not as simple as substituting just anything in its place. Portfolios should be constructed with a balance of holdings to complement each other, or to further a specific goal. But it also need not be overly complex: If selling a fund

in Morningstar’s “large cap growth” category, there are many choices within that style. If the current holding is there to provide dividends, look for similar. You can use Morningstar and Fossil-FreeFunds to research replacements. Another good source is <https://charts.ussif.org/mfpc/>. If you want to upgrade your fixed income there are now sustainability, transition, and green bonds. The criteria for selecting a sustainable and responsible option should be the same as with any investing: Look for a history of competitive returns, with reasonable expenses and consistent management style.

Your plan should factor the embedded cost of trading, including transac-

*conclusion on page 12*



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# 2021 Legislative Session Wrap-up

*By NFP State Board Members  
Tessa Foreman & Maggie Ballard*

This year's session of the Nebraska Legislature adjourned on May 27, 2021. Despite a number of restrictions and adjustments that had to be made due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the session functioned successfully. We thank Speaker Mike Hilgers and his team for thinking outside the box to allow the legislative branch to do its work for the people of Nebraska during this challenging session.

Due to the pandemic, we did not ask any members or volunteers to testify in person at committee hearings, but we did send 16 testimony letters to various committees in support or in opposition to bills dealing with social justice and voting rights. We monitored legislative hearings and floor debate and tried to keep our members and friends updated through our social media accounts.

Nebraskans For Peace also organized a protest at the Capitol along with several other organizations to show opposition to building a new \$230 million state prison. The Unicameral Appropriations Committee did not approve such an outrageous proposal, but the fight to reform prison sentencing and criminal justice in Nebraska remains in its infant stages.

We were pleased that a number of bills were passed that will truly benefit Nebraska residents in a wide range of areas including:

- A package bill that combined several tenants' rights provisions, including

allowing a victim of domestic violence to break a lease in order get away from an abuser.

- Workers will be protected from discrimination on the basis of how they wear their hair.
- Workers who have to leave the work force temporarily to care for a sick family member can now apply for unemployment benefits
- Child care assistance has been extended to more Nebraska families
- Nebraska high school students will now be required to take a Financial Literacy class in order to graduate.

The Legislature's Judiciary Committee passed a police reform package that makes a number of important changes, such as increasing the amount of required training for law enforcement officers, training in de-escalation techniques for mental health and substance abuse situations, banning the use of choke-holds and requiring a psychological evaluation for new law enforcement applicants.

We were pleased to see Nebraska senators of both parties stand by their original support of two bills to help low-income Nebraska families by overriding the Governor's vetoes of LB 108 and LB 306. Senator McCollister's LB 108 expands SNAP benefits to more families. Senator Brandt's LB 306 bill extends qualifications for low-income energy

and weatherization assistance to more households.

Naturally, there were a number of disappointments, such as the failure of a bill to protect student journalists' First Amendment rights, the failure a bill that would have required businesses to provide employees with paid sick leave, and a bill that would have protected meat-packing plant workers from COVID-19. These bills were debated on the floor but were unable to gather enough support to advance from the first round of debate.

None of the proposed bills that would have infringed on voting rights, like the ones we have seen pass in states across the country, were advanced from the Government Committee this year. However, as with all bills introduced this session, these voter restriction bills could still be advanced next year. We will continue to advocate against these bills.

Next up in the Legislature is a Special Session that will occur probably in the early fall to address redistricting. As redistricting can have a profound impact on Nebraskans' representation in the government, we will be keeping a close eye on what happens before and during this Special Session. The next regular session of the legislature will begin in January 2022.

For questions or to volunteer to help with our legislative advocacy work, please contact me at [nfp.tessa@gmail.com](mailto:nfp.tessa@gmail.com).

# Farm to School Act, conclusion



**Sarah Smith**

Since 2017, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) has provided leadership on farm to school activities in the state. The task force determined that the NDE is best equipped to administer an ongoing Nebraska Farm to School network charged with building

a more robust, comprehensive farm to school education program statewide; and to evaluate the impact of various implemented efforts. LB 396 creates a position at the NDE to focus on these coordination efforts.

Task force members identified several limitations related specifically to two areas: education and farm to school, and local food procurement at schools. As to the latter, the interim study shares several perspectives from farmers and school food service directors that clearly indicate a desire to expand local farm and school connections, and where the biggest gaps exist. Gary Fehr of Green School Farms in Lancaster County believes in instilling lifelong habits of health in Nebraska youth and states, “This means we need structures in place to increase interaction between local farms and schools. We need local distribution networks to

match up supply and demand of local foods, incentivizing both farms and schools to participate.”

And to address the former, surveys and anecdotal evidence suggest a significant lack of readily accessible curricula for educators that want to bring farm to school to the classroom. Surveys of Nebraska educators utilizing school gardens report that lack of curriculum and lesson plans impedes efforts to further engage farm to school. Our next generations must carry knowledge about the reciprocity of health, food, soil and community to make positive environmental and social change.

LB 396 pulls together coordination of these efforts and increases the capacity of our state with collective action. Nebraska can lead the nation in community health and wellbeing, celebrating our agricultural heritage and cultural diversity with farm to school as the vehicle.

# Divesting from Fossil Fuels, conclusion

tion fees. If your holdings are within a tax-advantaged account such as an IRA, 401(k) or 403(b), you should not experience a taxable event when selling assets. However, if your investments are not tax-protected, be aware that you may owe capital gains tax on any increase in value since the initial purchase, which may or may not present a challenge depending on other income that year. If you have investments with large taxable gains, consider a donation via direct transfer to the nonprofit of your choice—including the Nebraska Peace Foundation—who would then sell the asset themselves. That would allow the organization to receive the full value, while the donor might receive a deduction but at worse no taxable gain.

Most employer plans such as 401(k)s and 403(b)s have limited choices because they want to avoid overwhelming employees with too many options. If no longer employed by that entity, consider a direct rollover to an IRA which would allow you to choose your own investments while avoiding a taxable event. If still employed, some plans allow in-service rollovers. Or contact those who oversee the plan to convey your desire for options that align with your investment goals.

Finally, do not hesitate to reach out for additional guidance about these decisions. If you are working with a CPA for your taxes, ask them how to structure your trading activity; it may make sense to spread the sales over the course of 2 or 3 years. If you already have a financial professional to manage

your investments, explain your priorities and encourage them to review returns of fossil fuel-free portfolios. There are also guides for the DIY-er, including “Extracting Fossil fuels from Your Portfolio” and “The Economic Case for Divesting from Fossil Fuels”—use your favorite search engine to find them.

While NU will not (yet) exclude all energy companies, and Creighton may take a decade to divest, both were positive results of requests from students and other stakeholders. Similar action from individual investors will help even more.

As advised previously, potential investors should “Know What You [want to] Own,” and why. Feel free to contact me with questions. I can be reached at [tmainquist@aicinvest.com](mailto:tmainquist@aicinvest.com) (preferred) or call 402-423-4022.



# Urban Farming, conclusion

the community. By getting local governments onboard, we could potentially create stable pockets of land access in the most desirable spaces for new growers: on urban or peri-urban lands closest to their customer bases.

For many years, this group of advocates engaged in one-on-one and group conversations across the community on how best to get more public lands into

***We hope the Air Park Farm will be the first of many new food production spaces in our community in the coming years. It shows how a small group of persistent advocates can bring an issue to light and that it takes a community to turn that vision into reality.***

food production. During the six-plus years we worked on this issue, the general public became more aware of local food issues and our elected officials began to place greater emphasis on climate change solutions. The Mayor's "Climate Action Plan", adopted by city and county government as part of the Comprehensive Plan, marked a major milestone in this growing emphasis. "Building a Resilient Local Food System" was one of eight key areas of action identified in this plan. The COVID-19 pandemic served as a further wake-up call. Many people, perhaps for the first time in their lives, saw how fragile our globalized and industrialized food system could be as supply chain disruptions from a global pandemic dras-

tically impacted the quantity and variety of foods and other staple items found on our grocery store shelves.

After many years of exploration and advocacy, Councilwoman Tammy Ward representing the Northwest District of Lincoln's City Council, agreed to champion the cause of local food. She helped connect the chairman of the Lincoln Airport Authority board, Nick Cusick, with our local food advocates. While the Lincoln-Lancaster County Food Policy Council helped explain the importance of a strong local food supply, Community Crops was able to offer our expertise as a land manager for multiple small farmers co-located at single agricultural sites.

The final ingredient was financial. A generous private donor, a retiring farmer who had come to believe in the importance of local food supply in the face of climate change, provided the initial donation to turn a twelve-acre stretch of dryland farm into an irrigated farm for food production.

The lease was approved by the Airport Authority Board on Earth Day this year and we held a ribbon-cutting ceremony July 8th to bring together the many contributors to celebrate this exciting next chapter in local food for Lincoln. Our first farmer, a graduate of the Yazidi Farmers Project at Community Crops, is growing on a quarter-acre of the new Air Park Farm this season. The rest of the twelve acres is undergoing soil testing ahead of beginning a cover cropping planting this fall to help build soil health after years of conventional agricultural production. This will make the land more productive for future farmers while sequestering carbon and creating habitat for the beneficial critters that build our ecosystem.

We hope the Air Park Farm will be the first of many new food production spaces in our community in the coming years. It shows how a small group of persistent advocates can bring an issue to light and that it takes a community to turn that vision into reality.

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# What's HOT, conclusion

and since all of us need food, we must engage in commercial transactions to get it. This is absurdly simple and profoundly complex at the same time. For most of the Earth's more affluent citizens, access to a varied, tasty diet is so easy that we forget life on a planet where the basic business of acquiring enough to eat may become impossible because most of the planet is simply too hot and dry to allow the growing, commercial distribution, and preparation of food for a majority of people at any price. In the past, entire civilizations have grown and then nearly starved to death due to changes in temperature and precipitation patterns.

## The Old (and New) Normal

Witness, please, the Maya, in Central America, where civilization thousands of years old was crushed by a four-century-long drought and series of heat waves

about a thousand years ago. Before these conditions set in, food was grown, people were born, received educations, matured, held occupations as diverse as farmers, priests, and sports stars, and with their surplus energy, built pyramids, then died. All of them spent their entire lives engaged in many complex commercial transactions, many of which involved the growth, sale and preparation of food, without buying, selling, or otherwise using the energy of fossil fuels—no oil, no coal, no natural gas. All of this occurred without producing a single whiff of what we take to be the commercial transactions that are at the root of today's climate crisis.

According to the June 10, 2021 report from the U.S. Drought Monitor, 88.5 percent of the land area in the West—defined as California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Idaho,

Montana, Oregon, and Washington—was experiencing some level of drought, with 55 percent being classified as “extreme”. An estimated 90 percent of Utah is under extreme drought conditions, with 64 percent rated “exceptional” (the worst classification). Similar conditions were reported across Arizona (87 percent extreme), California (85 percent), and Nevada (76 percent). More than 58 million people are living with the dry conditions in the region.

These days, the evening news often looks like one very dangerous weather report. The dismal fear is that it may be just the first course.

*Bruce E. Johansen, Frederick W. Kayser Professor at the University of Nebraska—Omaha, is author of Climate Change: An Encyclopedia of Science, Society, and Solutions (2017).*

# Critical Race Theory Controversy, conclusion

other people of color. They have no interest in addressing the traumas that African Americans have experienced, which to this day is manifested most visibly in the violence of poor urban neighborhoods.

Millions of dollars have been spent on so-called ‘experts’ whose ‘top-down’ approaches can’t ever seem to reverse these problem behaviors. But invariably that’s due to the fact we are not dealing with them from perspectives of the affected families and the communities. If they were to offer real engagement of communities (that is real jobs, real education, real opportunity and a less racially hostile environment), we could work on our problems and address the trauma that has affected many for generations. However, denial of inequitable conditions or banning words and truth-teaching only makes matters worst. Racism is a social cancer that has affected this country for

centuries. Failing to face this ill will destroy us as surely as those who refuse to accept the scientific advice about COVID-19 are bound to face the damages of that disease.

South Africa’s movement to a multiracial society has been slowed by an unwillingness to transfer the massive wealth unjustly accumulated under Apartheid to the majority Black population. African Americans and Whites in our country would do well to note the similarities between South Africa’s experience with desegregation and our own. Vital as the “Truth and Reconciliation” process is, ‘Truth’ alone does not lead to ‘Reconciliation’. Assets have to change hands. Critical Race Theory can help frame the discussion so we do not end up mindlessly taking *Fox News*’ opinions for our own. Quality education requires scholars and educators to go both up and

downstream to see what is arriving on their doorsteps in the classroom so that we can best meet the students’ needs. In Nebraska, one of the most precise indicators of our inferior education system is our jail and prison population. There are more African Americans under the tutelage of the courts and criminal justice system than there are in post-secondary education institutions.

America is at a crossroads. We will never have racial healing in this country until we forthrightly face the facts about our past and narrow the wealth and income racial divide. Rather than dividing our nation further, teaching tools like Critical Race Theory offer the best opportunity we’ve yet had for everyone in society to come to the table as a full participant. At the crisis point we’re at now, our only hope for going forward is if we all, for the first time, go together.



# HARD TRUTH, conclusion

yet another husband and slit my throat.

For four months in 2009, I was effectively paralyzed from the waist down, locked in fear of pain and unable to move. A cotton topsheet was too heavy to bear. Every four hours, pain meds gave me some small relief for forty-five minutes, enough that I could catch a little sleep. I wore TWO fentanyl patches and turned yellow. It was clear to friends and family that I was circling the drain.

My son, some women on staff at the nursing home and two gal pals, one nurse, one attorney, staged a daring daylight abduction and brought me to a Lincoln hospital where my spinal infection was diagnosed and treated. Septic arthritis had ravaged my joints—hips, shoulders, ankles and fingers. I was staring down the barrel of a life of chronic pain. Then a pain doctor asked if I would do a methadone trial. And so my life was saved.

Without crushing pain I was able to pursue physical therapy, I became mobile, more and more independent over the years, and I now have lived on my own for the better part of the past decade.

My doctors tell me that methadone is up to twenty times more effective against pain than the most-prescribed opiates—the kind many law-abiding people get hooked on. Why isn't methadone prescribed more frequently for pain relief? The answer is complicated.

Methadone was developed in the 1940s as an analgesic but was quickly discovered to be effective in the treatment of heroin addiction, relieving the physical pain of withdrawal though methadone itself is not addictive. While often described as synthetic heroin, methadone's psychoactive effects (the high or buzz, so to speak) are negligible. No high, no addiction, no crash. (Note: I was originally prescribed 30 mg. daily but voluntarily stepped down to 20 mg., then 10 mg. daily. All opioids are constipating; enough said.)

The association of methadone with heroin addiction has sadly stigmatized the drug, which the federal government regulates as a Schedule II narcotic. Over the last twenty years methadone has been studied for treating pain in cancer patients, and its use has grown by 70 percent. My family doctor and others have represented methadone to me

## Your Foundation Speaks

by Loyal Park, Nebraska Peace Foundation President

Donations to Nebraska Peace Foundation may be directed into two different accounts depending on the wishes of the donor. These are an unrestricted account and a restricted account. The unrestricted account goes to pay the day-to-day educational expenses of Nebraskans for Peace.

Donations into the restricted account add to the investments in the permanent endowment of Nebraska Peace Foundation. These investments bring in a yearly yield of 4 to 5% in dividends and interest. These dividends and interest then go into the unrestricted account to support Nebraskans for Peace as listed above.

Please indicate on your check whether you want your donation to go directly to the unrestricted account or to the restricted account where it will be invested in socially-responsible, fossil-free and mainly renewable energy stocks and bonds.



as an old, safe, cheap, well-understood drug, and agree that it could safely be prescribed much more often, that patients and society would benefit, and that obsolete attitudes and ignorance prevent the benefits methadone could be providing, with tragic, even epidemic, consequences.

The first sentence of this essay is the warning that constitutes the standard for the vast majority of U.S. physicians. It OUGHT to say, "Doctors not experienced with methadone should educate themselves, and consult pain specialists when in doubt."

Methadone education for practitioners has been sadly neglected in this country. And then there is the fact that too many physicians get their drug education from sales reps. I do not accuse pharmaceutical promoters of misleading practitioners—I only point out that folks selling oxycodone and fentanyl have little incentive to sing the praises of an old, safe and (heads up) CHEAP drug, the patents to which their employers do not hold. With insurance, the 10 milligram dose of methadone that keeps me pain-tolerant costs me out-of-pocket just 33 cents a day.

Every opioid addiction is different. Some people are captured by predator dealers (the

first high is famously free, etc.), but many addicts are just people who fall sick or are injured and suffering, who take their medication as prescribed—then one day the script runs out, the doctor can't in good conscience order a refill, but the pain—THE PAIN—isn't going away.

WAY too many of the ordinary people/opioid addicts in the U.S. are in fact our veterans—people who fell ill or were injured in service to our country. We can't let inaction on methadone mean indifference or worse—send a message that these veterans, ill or injured and now addicted through no fault of their own, are somehow lacking character or at fault and should just tough it out, suck it up and live with their pain—grinding, intolerable pain that without intervention is NEVER going away until they die.

What's to be done? Resources must be directed to research into methadone for pain relief beyond cancer, with methadone education for medical professionals to follow. One would think health insurers would surely feel the love. A resolution by the Legislature and supported by the Governor would be a first step for Nebraska.

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# HARD TRUTH

*by Sally Herrin*

## A Methadone Testimonial

"Methadone should only be initiated by healthcare professionals familiar with its use." At Thanksgiving dinner in 2008, I ate two pieces of a dreadful yellow cake I had brought to the party, tricked out with a layer of chopped candy bars and holes poked in the cake to disseminate the can of sweetened condensed milk poured over it, then baked again to produce a vile sticky pudding. My gall bladder said, "You know better," and kicked me down the stairs.

I know very little about gall bladders, except mine is gone now and I don't miss

it at all. In the weeks after Thanksgiving, my gall bladder simmered like a nuclear reactor getting ready to melt down. I was teaching English in a community college, in small rooms all day with students, handling hundreds of papers, in late fall. I contracted strep throat, and in my fifty-seven-year-old body, a marriage from hell was born.

Between my gut and my congestion, I concluded I had the flu. I did not see a doctor, just soldiered on, finished the quarter, turned in my grades and collapsed. When the floors started moving like snakes, it was time for the

emergency room, where I went into shock and earned admission to the ICU. Details won't bear repeating, but in February 2009 I was in a nursing home with a still-undiagnosed spinal infection and chronic pain (between 4 and 9) for which my doctor prescribed opiates, including oxycodone and fentanyl.

Whatever bliss many opioids provide for others is chemically inaccessible to me. I find opioids profoundly depressing. In 1994, I broke my ankle badly. After the surgeon installed nine pins and a plate, I was sent home with a painkiller that made me want to divorce