

**BACK**

**TO THE**

**ANCIENT**

**FUTURE!**

**TUTURE!**

**CHEWING RAW  
GRUBS WITH THE  
NUTCRACKER  
MAN**

**JOE BAGEANT**

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# I SPENT

the middle weekend in April with a group of artists and thinkers called the April Fools Group. Put together by Brad Blanton, psychotherapist and creator of “radical honesty” politics and therapy, the three-day meeting was set on a farm down the Shenandoah Valley amid the battlefields and rolling countryside of Newmarket, Virginia. Brad, a world famous redneck headshrinker, had put together old hippies, theoreticians, musicians, young anarchists, beautiful brilliant women and aging writers to yap, drink and plot against the Bush administration. So when I pulled into Brad’s driveway to find him and a fellow named Hank parked in lawn chairs up on the roof with a bottle of bourbon I knew this thing was off to a good start.

The gathering was an organizational meeting for Brad Blanton’s independent run for the Virginia seventh district U.S. House of Representatives. Blanton’s working slogan is “America needs a good psychiatrist.” And we got a lot accomplished in that direction, despite my intellectual flatulence and Brad’s flat out orneriness. Any psychotherapist who actually gets people to pay for advice such as “Fuck’em if they can’t take a joke” must be called ornery at the very least. And any politician who thinks he can get elected on the basis of extreme honesty, well...

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Anyway, I came away from the meeting deeply struck by one thing. Every person there seemed to understand and acknowledge the coming global human “die-off.” The one that has already begun in places like Africa and will grow into a global event sometime within our lifetimes and/or those of our children. The one that will kill millions of white people. That’s right, clean pink little Western World white people like you and me. Nobody in the U.S. seems to be able to deal with or even think about this near certainty, and the few who do are written off as nutcases by the media and the public. Mostly though, it goes unacknowledged. All of which drives me nuts because the now nearly visible end of civilization strikes me as worthy of at least modest discussion. You’d think so. But the mention of it causes my wife to go into, “Oh Joe, can’t we talk about something more pleasant?” And it does tend to cause weird stares and dropped jaws at the office water cooler.

Anyway, here’s the short course: Global die-off of mankind will occur when we run out of energy to support the complex technological grid sustaining modern industrial human civilization... In other words, when the electricity goes out, we are back in the Dark Age, with the Stone Age grunting at us from just around the corner. This will likely happen in 100 years or less, assuming the ecosystem does not collapse first. And you are thinking, “Well ho ho ho! Any other good news Bageant? And how the fock do you know this anyway?”

For those willing to contemplate the subject, there is a scientifically supported model of the timeline of our return to Stone Age tribal units. A roadmap to the day when we will be cutting up dog meat with a sharpened cd-rom disc in some toxic future canyon. It is called the Olduvai Theory. \*

The Olduvai Theory was first introduced in a scientific paper by petroleum geologist/engineer/anthropologist Richard C. Duncan titled *The Peak Of World Oil Production And The Road To The Olduvai Gorge*. Duncan (“Dunk”) chose the name Olduvai because, among other reasons, “...it is a good metaphor for the Stone Age way of life.” It also sounded cool, he confesses. The Olduvai Gorge is a deep cleft in the Serengeti steppe of Tanzania, where Louis and Mary Leakey found the remains of prehistoric hominids, some up to two million years old, and along with the first stone tools, other things such as the skulls of sheep big as draft horses and pigs the size of hippos. Also the skull of “Nutcracker Man, (*Australopithecus boisei*) so named because of

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a set of powerful choppers, teeth so strong they could bust the lug nuts off a truck tire, were he around today to work at the Goodyear Tire Center. As to Nutcracker's "lifestyle" (and we are using the term most generously for a style that had more than adequate pork resources but had not developed a decent pinot grigio to serve with it, or even barbecue sauce for that matter) Dunk says "the Olduvai way of life was and still is a sustainable one – local, tribal, and solar – and, for better or worse, our ancestors practiced it for millions of years."

Dunk's Olduvai theory provides a modern database support structure for the Malthusian argument. The Olduvai theory uses only a single metric, as defined by "White's Law," and deals with electricity as the most vital expression of other forms of energy such as crude oil or coal. The theory is an inductive one based on world energy and population data, so elegantly simple that any 12th grader can do it, assuming he or she can do multiplication (a risky assumption now that no child has been left behind by our great ownership society.) In the Olduvai schema permanent blackouts will occur worldwide around 2030. Industrial Civilization ends when energy availability falls to its 1930 level. Measured as energy use – energy expended or consumed – our industrial civilization can be described as a one-time phenomenon, a single pulse waveform of limited duration which flashed out from the caves to outer space, then back to the caves over approximately 100 years.

So when was the highpoint of the flash? On the average, world per capita energy-use crested around 1977. That was the same year John Travolta made "Saturday Night Fever," which few of us consider much of a highpoint. To make a long story short, there are three intervals of decline in the Olduvai schema: slope, slide and cliff – each steeper than the previous. Right now we are in the slide headed for the cliff. See <http://dieoff.org/page125.htm>. After more than a decade no scientist has been able to refute it and even given the flexibility and bias inherent in what passes for common sense in this country, it's still pretty damned hard to argue with.

When we do go off the cliff, the Big Die-off will play no favorites, and will happen everywhere more or less simultaneously. But there are some particularly lousy places to be when permanent worldwide electrical blackouts happen. In or near a big city is the worst. You can imagine the, uh, "discomfort"

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of billions when the electrical grids die and power goes out across the densely packed high-rise buildings surrounded by a million acres of asphalt. People with no work, no heat, no air conditioning, no food, no water. Put on yer Adidas, it is migration time. Wherein bankers, skinheads, little old ladies and taxi drivers swarm like insects toward whatever passes for the countryside by then. Looks like all those survivalists up in North Idaho and Oregon may be right. Personally, I wouldn't want to be in New York or Bombay, or even Toledo when the deal goes down, and in fact want to be as distant from a city as one can get without having to be too far into the woods (of which there will be damned few) to eat my daily requirement of tree bark.

Americans busily expanding their lard content to fit the contours of their air-conditioned SUVs are among the chief accelerators of the Big Die-off. However, people worldwide assume that the average American is a blind dick-head who wouldn't acknowledge the ecological price of his/her lifestyle if it were branded on their forehead. That assumption is correct. Americans for the most part don't give a shit what kind of world their own children inherit, much less about dolphins, Hottentots, Frenchmen and the approaching desertification of distant places like Kansas.

Still, it is reasonable to believe that many powerful people and organizations with all the research capability in the world at their fingertips must understand the future before us. In fact, I am sure some in industry do because even 10 years ago when I used to deal with chemical executives at Monsanto, Zeneca, Dow and other corporations, it was discussed and acknowledged a couple of times over cocktails, and even discussed how to profit from it through genetically engineered non-reproducing seeds that eliminate all the native crops around them. One might also guess that the U.S. president and his cabinet know, and that their solution is to fight for more oil and higher profits, given its increasing scarcity. Even the superficial whoring media is broaching the topic of "peak oil," though mostly for shock entertainment value.

I heard an "expert" say the other day that science will solve the peak oil problem, probably through nuclear energy, as if that did not have its own awful implications. Sure buddy. Just like the "Green Revolution" solved the world's agricultural foods problem by poisoning the earth with pesticides and

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burning two gallons of oil to produce a pint of milk. There is the myth left hanging out there from the old scientific paradigm that science and technology are somehow going to snatch us from edge of species die-off just in time. Yes, we will be saved by the very science and technology that evolved from, and is completely dependent upon, an energy source that will no longer exist. I think the pundit probably understands that, but like all media and political people, safely assumes the public has the critical thinking capability of a jar of fruit flies.

  
**WELL**

then. What does keep the American people from looking around them and seeing the obvious? That the earth is a finite thing being used up at exponential rates? Answer: The Spectacle. American capitalism's "media hologram." We no longer have a country, but the artificial spectacle of one. We have a global corporation masquerading electronically, digitally, financially, and legally and every other way as a nation called the "United States of America." The corporation now animates most of us from within through management of the need hierarchy of goods and information. We no longer have citizens. We have consumers, "purchase decision makers" whose most influential act in life consists of choosing a mortgage banker and an NFL team. And a car. The majority of modernized technical humans, *Digitus Cathodus Americanus*, cannot perceive the hologram because their self-identities were generated by it. It's "reality" to them – the only one they will know until the hologram collapses with their electrical industrial civilization.

By design or not, the hologram's primary effect has been to induce the illusion of a national "value system" through hypnotic repetition of images. Thus profit-seeking enterprises are legitimized as the animating spirit of our identities as individuals and as a nation. The end result of course is the mass replication of millions of uniform "market segmented consumer identities." Individuality is circumscribed by brand identification. The overall aggregate of brand identification groups is interpreted to be an inherently superior race or nation (worth fighting for to expand the resource base and markets.) We no

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longer have lives, just lifestyles which are defined and expressed through ever expanding (and more profitable) consumption.

Net result: The legions of humanity toil to generate the trucks and tofu, munitions, missiles, newspapers, petrochemicals and pizza and millions of tons of ground-up cattle sold to fire the furnace of an economic engine that has taken on a life of its own. One that must grow exponentially, devouring everything just to survive. Just to keep from collapsing. And people are taught that it is called “human progress.”

This mass hallucination generated by this totalist capitalist system, the state as engine of profit, is one thing. Life on a real planet made of dirt and water and flesh both warm and cold blooded is quite another. Viewed from outside the web of Western illusions, say, an Iraqi citizen or a Filipino Moro, one finds the economic engine to be driven by unseen death and war and the pillaging of the weak by the powerful. All this is set against the backdrop of explosive human disease, growing starvation, the impending failure of the environment and petroleum based civilization, resulting in the greatest mass extinction event in the history of this planet. The Big Die-off. And in your very lifetime, too. Admission is not only free, it is compulsory.

One of the hologram’s great illusions is that Industrial Civilization is evolutionary – that it advances forever. Industrial civilization does not evolve. In the overall history of man it is extremely short and completely unsustainable. It is a one-time small biological drama that rapidly consumes the necessary physical prerequisites for its own existence, the ecology and resources of the planetary gravity well in which it is trapped.

Any good news, for Chrissake?

Sort of. We may not become completely extinct. It would look like the earth’s immune system is beginning to shake off its infection by the human virus through what appears – to us at least – as environmental collapse. But for the sake of discussion, let’s assume that extinction through nuclear war and ecological collapse is somehow avoided (nowadays, we’re allowed to assume anything we want, regardless of the evidence around us. Just ask any U.S. capitalist free market economist.) If what is left after the Big Die-off can still be called a human society, it will be bottomed out at the subsistence level of energy-use. Now that is one ugly booger of a notion to contemplate. What



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is subsistence level energy-use? In all likelihood it has to do with shitting in the winter darkness at a sustainable 45 indoor degrees. Meanwhile, a cockroach watches, thinking to himself, “What a shame, because at the height of their culture these guys made a damned good peanut butter sandwich.”

**YOUR** attention please. This is your pilot. We have crested in our evolutionary journey and are beginning our descent. Please lock your folding trays, put you seats in an upright position and enjoy the landing. (Captain! Why are there no lights down there at the airport?) It was a helluva crest, that spurt of technological jism by the industrial state toward outer space and impregnation of the moon. What with Neil Armstrong bouncing around in the lunar dust in his high tech Pillsbury doughboy outfit and all, it added up to about one week of attention by the masses and a lot of dough for government contractors. But as one who within my lifetime witnessed the entire evolution of the space program, and its accompanying nationalistic hoopla about beating the Russians at being to first to fart in the vacuum of space, I am somehow unconvinced it was worth it. I dunno. Maybe my wife is right, Maybe I'm just a goddam crab. Maybe I'm a little resentful because, thanks to the big American suckdown of the planet, I will never have grandchildren. My kids are among that portion of their generation who understand what their lifetimes hold and are not remotely interested in adding to the problem.

We weren't always like that. Right after World War II and the advent of the atomic bomb a majority of Americans (67% of those surveyed by Gallup) wanted a cooperative one world government with all nuclear weapons put under the control of the United Nations. Now you cannot get an American to turn of a lightswitch to save human civilization. As a friend from Cape Verde once remarked, “Just watching Americans consume things gives me a headache.”

As for the weak ploy I used to slip into this screed – Brad Blanton's April Fools Group meeting – that too left me with a headache. After nearly a fifth of Maker's Mark bourbon on the third night I was hugging everybody in sight and had entered into an agreement with a jazz piano player and an inventor

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from Wisconsin to start a free love commune together right there in that beautiful valley. (Honest to god, I am not joking. I wish I were.) When I woke up next morning and looked into the mirror at eyes like two bloody pissholes in a snowbank ... and wondering who let that dog crap in my mouth ... well ... let's just say I wasn't experiencing the same sense of brotherly love as the night before. Rather than go into the wretchedness of the next day's grisly recovery, or contemplate what we might possibly find to drink while living in shipping containers during the next Olduvai period, let me share my favorite hangover remedy as a way out of this little box I've written myself into. OK?

Bye!



### **UNCLE JOE'S BIG DIE-OFF HANGOVER CURE:**

Empty two cans of sardines (skinless packed in water) into a bowl.

Add two medium size habanera peppers.

One squirt of mustard.

One dash of Tabasco.

Blend coarsely in a blender. (Cover the blender with six bath towels to keep the noise from cracking your brain and teeth.).

Spread on toast or crackers and eat.

Your lungs may or may not collapse briefly and there may be temporary blindness. Not to worry. After your eyes quit watering enough to see, either endorphins associated with hot peppers will kick in, or subsequent fiery bites of the cure will be enough to distract your from the headache until they do. –

JB

*Joe Bageant is a writer and magazine editor living in Winchester Virginia. He may be contacted at [bageantjb@netscape.net](mailto:bageantjb@netscape.net). Free downloadable pdf files of his works are archived at [www.coldtype.net](http://www.coldtype.net). Copyright 2005 by Joe Bageant.*



**FOOTNOTE**

\*The Olduvai theory postulates that electricity is the essence of Industrial Civilization. World energy production per capita increased strongly from 1945 to its all-time peak in 1979. Then from 1979 to 1999 – for the first time in history – it decreased from 1979-1999 at a rate of 0.33 % a year (called the Olduvai ‘slope’). Next from 2000 to 2011, according to the Olduvai schema, world energy production per capita will decrease by about 0.70 %/year (the Olduvai ‘slide’). Then around year 2012 there will be a rash of permanent electrical blackouts – worldwide. These blackouts, along with other factors, will cause energy production per capita by 2030 to fall to 3.32 b/year, the same value it had in 1930. The rate of decline from 2012 to 2030 is 5.44 %/year (the Olduvai ‘cliff’). Thus, by definition, the duration of Industrial Civilization is less than or equal to 100 years.

– Richard Duncan at <http://dieoff.org/page125.htm>.



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