

The Go-Back Club

Newsletter of the Simple-Living Brigade

October 2013

Twenty-three members in seven states, the District of Columbia and three countries.

A SAVIOR OF TREE SPECIES LIFE'S MISSION INSPIRED BY AN ANGEL

By Francis X. Donnelly

The Detroit News: September 7, 2013

COPEMISH, Michigan — David Milarch believes he died and came back to life. And the reason was God had a mission for him.

The mission was simple if grandiose: Clone the biggest trees and cover the world with them.

The north Michigan nurseryman had little money, education or experience with cloning.

Few people had ever tried to reproduce such old trees, which scientists said was improbable.

Yet, in fits and starts, he has gradually cloned 140 species of trees across the United States, including ones that were 40 stories high and existed before Jesus was born.

Several thousand trees are growing at his research facility 25 miles southwest of Traverse City. He has planted 10,000 for free in northern Michigan and California.

His goal is to eventually plant enough trees to fight climate change. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, the greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming.

After nearly two decades of spreading the gospel, he gets calls from all over the world asking him to visit.

"Isn't it about time we did something?" he asked. "Why is it so hard for people to understand that?"

Milarch, 64, has accomplished all this with charm, perseverance and a singular vision. He is Johnny Appleseed in a trucker cap, a ruddy bear of a man trying to save the world.



Photo John L. Russell/Special to *The Detroit News* David Milarch of the Archangel Ancient Tree Archive inspects cloned Sequoia trees Michigan. Milarch was inspired to start the facility after a near-death experience in 1991.

Nothing can deter him from his quest, said his son, Jared. "It's an idea he cannot rest from," the younger Milarch said. "It's a testament to how focused he is on one issue. You can't lose if you don't quit."

Milarch isn't your typical environmentalist. Unless, by "typical," you mean a chain-smoking, profanity-spewing, hard-living farmer who once was an alcoholic and street brawler.

He says he gets messages from angels who guide his work. The talkative Milarch tells you all this in a nonstop narrative about his life and work. He loves to tell stories that end with dramatic pronouncements.

"It's all hands on deck," he proclaimed. "The solutions are here. Mother Nature has the answers."

One of the stories he tells is about the beginning of his crusade.

In 1991, he gave up drinking cold turkey but the sudden withdrawal caused kidney

and liver failure.

Lying in bed, he felt his consciousness rise, leave the room and pass through brilliant white light. But an angel told him it wasn't his time to die, that he still had work to do.

Several months later, still sober, he was awakened by bright lights in his bedroom. A female voice said she had an assignment for him.

The next morning he found a 10-page manifesto describing how to reforest the world. It was in his handwriting but he didn't remember writing it.

His wife, Kerry, told him there was no way he had written it. "There are no spelling mistakes," she said, according to "The Man Who Planted Trees," a 2012 book about his work.

At the time, Milarch wasn't religious or a tree-hugger. He was just a third-generation tree nursery operator struggling to feed his family.

Spreading the Growth

The gist of his plan is to clone champion trees, which are the tallest of their species, and spread them around the country.

He believes superior genes helped the trees grow so large and last so long. Through cross-pollination, the clones could spread their DNA to other trees.

Scientists said they don't know whether genetics make some trees heartier than others. A bigger factor could be location, care or just luck.

But tree experts said they like Milarch's

Milarch continued on page 2

What on Earth is The Go-Back Club?

It's *not* social networking. It's merely a list of people who are willing to use their own lives to purposefully go backwards to using less energy, living more simply, etc. It's a Simple-Living Brigade. When new people sign up, I'll print their comments here and publish our new membership numbers. For

comments, I'll use initials and states only. No further demands, no money, just a monthly online newsletter. If you want to share your new and creative tips, I'll be happy to publish them. You can reach me at gobackclub@pa.net or <http://www.gobackclub.com> or 21431 Marlin Circle, Shade Gap, Pennsylvania 17255.



Iona Conner

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Go-Back Club Members,

It has been an interesting summer for me. Starting backwards, I changed my mind and will not be doing a syndicated column for other newspapers but publishing my stories here (see pages 5 and 6). I dedicated the month of August to writing five columns and researching over 230 newspaper editors. I sent out my column with a cover email on August 28th. Then I waited. And waited. I got an immediate request to be removed from my list and one friendly but negative editor who explained that they only use staff writers. No others.

Yesterday I learned that my unemployment will continue so that settles the money issue. Backing up further, my husband John has had two cataracts removed this summer (with five-week eye-drop protocols following each) and three bladder-cancer treatments. Between the two eye surgeries, I visited my family for a week at the Jersey Shore. Before that, I had a marvelous pilgrimage to Idaho to visit Most High. It was my tenth trip and I received so many great lessons.

Do I want to be bound to others' deadlines? Nope. Instead of trying to sell my work to newspapers to boost out numbers, I will go out to groups. If you know of any groups looking for speakers, please let me know. I will do my best to publish this newsletter every month. Please feel free to share it with your family and friends to help us grow in numbers and effectiveness. Thanks! Love, Iona

Milarch *continued from page 1*

idea of restocking the world's forests. Besides fighting climate change, trees help the environment by emitting oxygen, reducing runoff and absorbing toxic waste in the soil, they said.

Bill Libby, professor emeritus of forestry and genetics at the University of California, Berkeley, said Milarch is generating interest in trees and could develop breakthroughs in cloning. "If you gather 100 such trees, it's pretty likely that you have some trees that are better able to do that (become heartier because of superior genes)."

Financial Difficulties

Milarch has been nothing if not resilient during his quixotic campaign. Starting out in 1994, he borrowed a pickup, aluminum ladder and pruner from his dad. A bankruptcy had left him with no money.

In 2009, a black mold infected his tree warehouse, killing 16,000 cuttings in one month.

But his biggest challenge has been money. For 19 years, he has lurched from one source of funding to another. A grant here. A huge donation there. In between are the hard times. In 2011, his nonprofit group, Archangel Ancient Tree Archive, and its 17-person staff closed up shop.

A donor allowed it to reopen last year with three workers but another crisis beckons in December when funding is

due to run out.

"We've gone through financial hardships that would break most families," Milarch said. "We've eaten a lot of potatoes."

'A Walk of Faith'

Despite the obstacles, he has painstakingly expanded his work from the state to the country to the world.

His constant proselytizing has drawn support from some scientists and well-heeled supporters, whose donations allow him to keep the enterprise afloat.

He turned an abandoned potato warehouse into a bustling facility where people clone, grow and ship trees.

He remains ever hopeful that somewhere, somehow, someone will step forward to allow Archangel to keep the lights on.

It's the way of the group, he said. "Every day of my life is a walk of faith, I don't know how this all is going to end up. But nobody will be able to say we didn't give everything we could."

Note from Iona: The man who gave me permission to reprint this story said Milarch "is such an interesting fellow and a recipient of *The Detroit News' Michaganian of the Year* award in 2005."

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Dr. Seuss-Style Denunciation of Fracking a lá "Green Eggs and Ham"

By Mike Hersh

I do not like fracking on our land; I do not like it, greedy oil man
I would not like it near my home; I don't want cancer in my bones
I would not like it near my school; Sir do you take me for a fool?
I would not like the benzene spills; I truly fear how radioactivity kills
I do not like fracking on our land; I do not like it, greedy oil man
I would not like it in national parks; I do oppose it by light or by dark
Please don't dare say that it's OK; It leaks at night and spills by day
I do not like fracking on our land; I do not like it, greedy oil man
I don't trust frack fluid in a bucket; I've seen it spilling as they truck it
We know all fracking is unsafe; changing climate would erase
The largest part of the human race; As the few survivors flee to space
I do not like fracking on our land; I do not like it, greedy oil man
We only have one living planet;
weather gets wilder, we understand it
Water is subject to shortage controls;
fracking blasts water deep in holes
Frackers mix water with poison benzene;
Then it's far too toxic for cleansing
Faucet water catches fires and drips;
Kids get leukemia from chemical slips
I do not like fracking on our land; I do not like it, greedy oil man
I would not like it national parks; I do oppose it by light or by dark
I don't care about the cash you'd make
I don't want to die in new earth quakes
Don't frack me bro; don't frack my land,
Not high or low, Not by the sand
I do not like fracking on our land; I do not like it, greedy oil man
Not in the dark not in a park; Not by the light it's just not right
Not here nor there nor anywhere
We do not like your fracking plan;
We'll stop you with a fracking ban!

Tracking Fracking

Dear MoveOn Member,

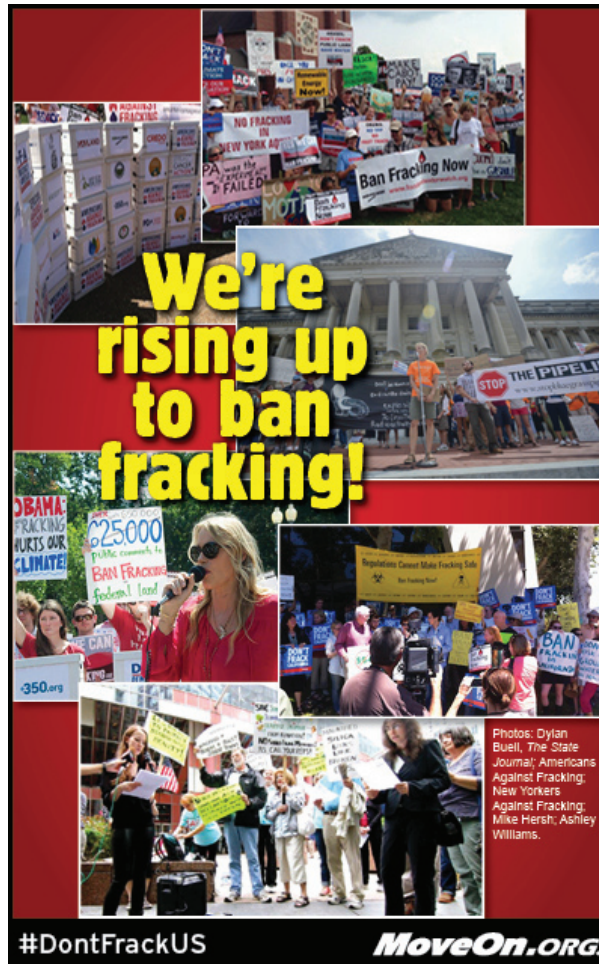
As I'm firing off this email, President Obama is being greeted in Binghamton, New York by MoveOn members and allies carrying the message: "Yes we can ban fracking!"

Yesterday, MoveOn members joined Americans Against Fracking — and actress and activist Daryl Hannah — at the White House to deliver 650,000 public comments to the Bureau of Land Management demanding a ban on fracking on public and Native American lands. All told, concerned Americans submitted more than 1 million comments — the largest unified outpouring ever from Americans calling for a change in course on fracking:

While that was going on in D.C., the president met boisterous crowds in Buffalo and Syracuse, New York, all calling on him to say No to fracking. Activists in New York have succeeded in keeping fracking out of the Empire State and they're following Governor Cuomo — who joined President Obama in Syracuse — everywhere he goes, to make sure he keeps New York crack-free. ...

President Obama says he is serious about curbing climate change. But he's also overseen the near-doubling of natural gas production using fracking, from 2010 to 2012.¹ Methane, which is released in fracking for natural gas, is at least 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas over the critical 100-year period and scientists have called fracking a "gangplank to a warm future."² That's why MoveOn members have joined our allies to take the message directly to President Obama: "Yes we can ban fracking!"

But not just President Obama! We're fighting back on multiple fronts.



Earlier this month, 22-year-old community college student and MoveOn leader Ashley Williams delivered more than 16,000 petition signatures to Illinois Governor Pat Quinn, demanding that he block a mining project near Illinois' most popular state park — Starved Rock State Park — for the special silica sand used in fracking that threatens the park, Ashley's hometown of Ottawa, Illinois and workers' health.

Last week, MoveOn members and our friends at CREDO rallied in Ventura County, California — where fracking is happening now — calling for a statewide ban on fracking and earning headlines in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Ventura County Star*. California has 15 billion barrels of heavy crude oil buried underground — that, if fracked and burned, would create nearly as much global warming pollution as the Keystone XL pipeline.³

That's not all. Also this month, Kentucky MoveOn member Corlia Logsdon made headlines and got Governor Steve Beshear's attention when she and 200 supporters delivered thousands of petition signatures to Governor Beshear, calling on him to stop the construction of the Bluegrass Pipeline that would carry fracked gas from Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia and destroy her community's land.

I could go on and on. MoveOn members in 37 states have launched local campaigns to protect our climate and our communities from fracking and hundreds of thousands from across every state submitted comments to President Obama. I wanted to make sure you got a glimpse of the amazing leadership among our ranks.

Thanks for all you do.

The team at MoveOn.org.

Sources:

1. "As Obama Visits Upstate New York, the Fracking Debate Takes Center Stage," *Time*, August 22, 2013.
2. "Gangplank to a Warm Future," *The New York Times*, July 28, 2013.
3. "California's Fracked Up Oil: Nearly As Bad as Keystone XL?" *Daily Kos*, February 18, 2013.

Here Comes the Sun

Solar Panel Is Next Granite Countertop for Homebuilders

By Justin Doom;
Bloomberg.com: September 11, 2013

Solar panels are the next granite countertops: an amenity for new homes that's becoming a standard option for buyers in

U.S. markets.

At least six of 10 largest U.S. homebuilders led by KB Home include the photovoltaic devices in new construction, according to supplier Sun Power Corp. Two California towns are mandating installations and demand for the systems that generate electricity at home will jump 56 percent nationwide this year, according to the Solar Energy Industries Association.

"In the next six months, homebuilders in California and the expensive-energy states will be going solar as a standard, and just incorporating it into the cost of the house like any other feature," Jim Petersen, chief executive officer of the PetersenDean Inc., the largest closely-held U.S. roofing and solar contractor, said in an interview. ...

Read full story at <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-09-10/solar-panel-is-next-granite-countertop-for-homebuilders.html>.



Photo courtesy Summit County Voice

Just a few years after logging projects, forests are making a comeback in areas around Pine Cove campground, near Frisco, Colorado.

Forests Make Comeback After Beetle Epidemic

**Forest Service replanting key areas,
monitoring regeneration**

By Bob Berwyn

Summit County Voice: September 10, 2013

FRISCO, Colorado — With mountain pine beetle populations at their lowest level in 30 years, it's safe to say that the forest health crisis actually turned out to be a much-needed catharsis for Summit County's overgrown lodgepole pine forests.

U.S. Forest Service researchers are finding that most of the area hit by the bugs are showing encouraging signs of regrowth. Logged areas are primarily seeing dense lodgepole regeneration, along with some aspens. Non-logged areas are also growing back and some early data suggests that subalpine fir may replace lodgepole pines as the dominant species.

Along with continued logging operations in red zone areas, the U.S. Forest Service has been busy replanting

some key areas, notably around campgrounds. Altogether, the agency has planted about a quarter of a million seedlings across the White River National Forest in the last three to four years, according to silviculturist Jan Burke, who has tracked the arc of the beetle infestation. Just this past summer, the Forest Service, with help from volunteer partners, planted about 90,000 trees.

Overall the regrowth on national forest lands in Summit County is in line with expectations, Burke said in a recent email interview with Summit Voice.

"We have policy mandating minimum stocking standards within five years of harvest. We are seeing good natural regeneration ... and in order to provide greater species diversity in the future, we have been planting a mix of ponderosa and lodgepole pine, Englemann spruce and Douglas fir where appropriate.

"Most of the planting in Summit County has been around local campgrounds, which were heavily logged during the height of the beetle infestation. Some

other logged areas, including the Straight Creek drainage, near Dillon, have already met minimum stocking standards, Burke said.

"The regeneration is tracked by required post-harvest surveys one, three and five years after logging projects.

"Monitoring will continue to capture regeneration response to the losses of the mountain pine beetle infestation ... and to keep abreast of any new revegetation trends that might be correlated to climate change," she said.

In some areas, aspens are making a big comeback in the absence of the shady lodgepole over-story. Burke said there's significant aspen growth. ...

Forest diversity was also encouraged during logging operations. ...

Read complete article at <http://summitcountyvoice.com/2013/09/10/colorado-summit-county-forests-make-big-comeback-after-pine-beetle-epidemic/#more-60321>.LeL

Letters and Emails to the Editor



Dear Iona,

Beautiful newsletter — and very well done! I am forwarding it to all our libraries and will place a paper copy in some, as well. Thank you very much for putting out these messages. S. C., Newfoundland, Canada

Hi, Iona.

Looks good. I read some but it's heart wrenching. I just don't understand how some people can think fracking is good, how they can make millions...billions...and that's not enough. Thanks for doing this newsletter! G. D., Vermont

Dear Iona, sister in the Universe,

Congratulations! What a great work! You are a real hidden leader for changing our

life style. This club is small but the influence is enormous, I believe. I turned off the television for almost two years. And still stick to a vegetarian diet. Of course I take a walk every and each day. One more thing — meditation in the morning.

It is hot enough over here at Daegu every and each day. But the beauty of a heat wave is that we can appreciate the cool autumn which is coming soon.

I read a special report of pollution in China. According to the report the problem is very serious. Air pollution in Beijing is very bad. When I was in Beijing 10 years ago, air pollution and micro dusts from Mongolia were really serious but the situation has not been improved. How about water pollution? It is also a serious problem in China. Since

China became industrialized, the factories poured pollutants into rivers and lakes. The international community worked hard to clean the pollutants from the origin. We need good watch dogs to monitor the pollution all over the world because we have only one Earth. P. R., Korea

Heilo, Iona

Please add my name to your list of "members." And thanks for forming the group. D.K., Pennsylvania

Hi, Iona,

Sorry I missed this sooner! Sign me up!!! R. M., Pennsylvania:

The Go-Back Club: Let's Start Today

September 2013 Column

By Iona Conner

For those of us who are concerned about global warming and all its ramifications (extreme fires, droughts, storms, rising sea levels ...), this is our chance to deliberately step away from some of our habits and actions which lead to disaster.

When levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) reached 400 parts per million (ppm), the highest level in millions of years, international journalist George Monbiot wrote, "The only way forward now is back: to retrace our steps and seek to return to atmospheric concentrations around 350 ppm."*

This column intends to find and enlist people who are willing to step back and simplify their lives while experiencing the joy and satisfaction of outsmarting and outmaneuvering this culture's obsessive passion for "more, bigger, faster..."

I have lived long enough to speak of "the good ol' days" with fondness combined with regret that we have moved so far ahead of ourselves and the ability of our planet to manage so many humans who have learned over the years how to be extremely destructive.

In our home, we live a fairly old-fashioned life with no TV, no microwave, no dishwasher, no dryer and very old furniture. (Actually, the house we bought eight years ago came with a microwave and dishwasher but I use them for storage.) We are not the

least bit fussy about how things look, even ourselves. Long ago I decided that I may have been more suited to life before the invention of television, which I abhor. Then it occurred to me that I might have even liked the challenges of living before the invention of the automobile.

Personally, I love figuring out tricks and short-cuts to make life easier, better for Earth and more enjoyable. When my children were born, I began thinking about safer ways to raise them and I've been at it ever since. The logic and fun of it all reinforces what is in my heart.

Those efforts intensified when I became an air-pollution inspector in New Jersey. My job was to protect public health so I was shocked when I entered factories which were violating the law and saw so many toxic chemicals and worker exposures. I wrote 90 violations in the 11 months that I worked there before finding a job which would be more preventative at the state level.

Next, I worked at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and started doing educational programs about alternatives to hazardous products. Then along came climate change reports and my efforts ramped up until the day I decided to reach out to others by publishing my own newspaper. But it's going to take a lot more people than I can reach that way to change things.

It's time for all of us to give serious thought to times that were simpler, calmer,

less cluttered and less crazy.

What is possible? Answer: a simple-living brigade of ordinary folks who feel as I do, reassessing their own lives and helping others to do likewise; and thus, The Go-Back Club was born. At this point, there are 23 members in seven states, the District of Columbia and three countries. Membership is free and open to all.

Wanna' join? Just send an email to gobackclub@pa.net or write to Iona at 21431 Marlin Circle, Shade Gap PA 17255 and you're in! If you discover ways to make your own life more peaceful and less polluting, and you'd like to share them through this newsletter, please let me know. I'll be posting a running tally of our membership numbers each month to let readers know how we're doing.

Let's start today.

* "Climate Milestone is a Moment of Symbolic Significance on the Road of Idiocy," first published by *The Guardian* at www.guardian.co.uk and www.monbiot.com.

Iona Conner is a former nurse, teacher and air-pollution inspector who settled in rural Pennsylvania with her husband, watching those CO₂ numbers climb. Since 1990, they have been running the non-profit Grassroots Coalition for Environmental and Economic Justice. Iona published a newspaper for four years, which you may read at iLoveEarth-News.com.

The Go-Back Club: Humility Amidst Wealth

By Iona Conner

A stranger patted the chair next to her as a silent invitation for me to join her. We were in the waiting room at the Johns Hopkins' eye surgery center as our husbands signed in.

"That's a pretty outfit," I said brightly as I took the chair adjacent to hers on a hot day in July. She told me she had bought it in the Bahamas, where she and her doctor husband had been attending a medical convention.

I noticed that her simple summer skirt and blouse were cotton with a soothing floral pattern. It sort of looked "Bahamas" although I've never been there, only in my imagination.

The woman went on, grinning, telling me how she used her time on some of these international trips. With a gleam in her eye, she described how "the wives" went on shopping sprees.

On one trip, the other women flocked to high-fashion stores but my friend went to a pawn shop. When they regrouped a few hours later, her companions showed off their new clothes. But this wife showed them a small piece of jewelry. Not only was that easier to pack for the trip home but she had found something used instead of commandeering natural resources for her souvenir.

She appeared not to be hoity-toity rich but humbly comfortable. And she was clever, too. I'm not sure she was even aware of the environmental benefits of her decision. Do you have any idea what happens when companies mine for gold?

An article at CNN.com by Paul Begala on July 29th was called "Alaska's Salmon, More Precious than Gold." Here's what's going on in the U.S.:

"... this magnificent, abundant, nutritious, valuable resource is threatened. A partnership between two companies ... wants to build one of the world's largest mines to extract copper,



Photo by Iona

The "really old and really pretty" necklace Iona bought at a thrift store recently.

gold and molybdenum at the headwaters of two of the most significant rivers in Bristol Bay. ... But the mammoth Pebble Mine would, according to an exhaustive review conducted by the EPA, destroy up to 90 miles of streams and as much as nearly 5,000 acres of wetlands right smack-dab in the middle of one of the largest, most productive and most valuable sockeye fisheries on Earth.

*The Wild Salmon Center and Trout Unlimited [SaveBristolBay.org] have looked at this proposal as well. The destruction they foresee is biblical: up to 10.8 billion tons of rock waste. If you were to load all that waste onto train cars, the train would stretch to the moon...five times. The mine would require nine miles of dams, some of them taller than the Washington Monument. God forbid one of them failed in earthquake-prone Alaska. **

Back in 1903, Teddy Roosevelt urged 50,000 people in Seattle to conserve their salmon and forests. ** One hundred and ten years later, in a letter from the Natural Resources Defense Council,

Robert Redford continues this effort by describing the Pebble Mine as follows:

A 2,000-foot-deep, open-pit gold and copper mine stretching over two miles long. Colossal earthen dams up to 50 stories high — built in a known earthquake zone — are supposed to hold back some ten billion tons of mining waste mixed with cyanide, sulfuric acid, arsenic and other toxic chemicals. That's 3,000 pounds of waste for every man, woman and child on Earth!

Personally, I have seen blood-chilling pictures of people in South Africa, South Sudan, Mozambique, Indonesia and Peru mining gold. Not only is it hot, dirty, back-breaking, low-paying work but many workers are poisoned by the cyanide used to separate out the gold from the debris. When doing a little research, I learned that it now seems possible that corn starch could be substituted for cyanide.

How long will it be until all the mining companies worldwide switch? Who knows but I'll bet it will be years or even decades. Maybe never.

In the meantime, if each of us minimizes the jewelry we buy for ourselves or as gifts, and shop for used pieces, there will be global repercussions. Personally, I don't wear much jewelry but I recently bought two pairs of earrings from friend who makes them without using gold and a used necklace from a thrift store. The necklace is really old and really pretty.

What do you say? Let's start today to change our jewelry-buying practices.

* "A magnitude 7.0 earthquake rocked Alaska's Aleutian Islands with a jet-like rumble August 30, 2013 that shook homes and sent residents scrambling for cover..." AP article by Rachel D'Oro.

** Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher: The Epic Life and Immortal Photographs of Edward Curtis by Timothy Egan (2012).

Apache Blessing

May the sun bring you energy by day,
May the moon softly restore you by night,
May the rain wash away your worries,
May the breeze blow new strength into your being,
May you walk gently through the world and know its beauty all the days of your life.

Submitted by Pyong Roh, Korea