

Web Blog SUNwalk 2008 engl. XII

3/20 - 3/24/2008

Pampa, Texas - Sayre, Oklahoma

Again and again I am reminded of Bertold Brecht's poem "To Those Born After" - the lines at the end: "When the time will have come where human beings are each other's helpers look back on us with indulgence." Again and again I experience these moments, I experience that this time has come, here and now. My report may also be an expression of gratitude to those who fulfill Bertold Brecht's dream.

Gratitude to Jo: Before I leave Pampa I visit the Public Library. Even in small villages and towns there is usually such a book temple with friendly librarians, with the silence of many books, and with publicly accessible computers. I tell Jo about the SUNwalk. She shows me a computer in a separate room. "You can write as long as you wish." She calls the Pampa News. She asks them to come to the library and to document my visit there. But on that day an article about my walk has already appeared on the front page of the Pampa News. So they decline to come. Jo takes a picture herself. When I leave Jo expresses her enthusiasm about her work. She is responsible for the children's section of the library. "I love them, and they love me."

Gratitude to the family Devruist: The backwind is pushing me towards east. Just before Highway 152 leaves route 60 there is a huge dairy farm. I am thirsty. "A glass of cool milk would be marvellous," I think. Two young men, one about 18, the other one 15, are running towards me through the big garden, coming from the farm house. "Are you the doctor who walks across the whole country?" asks Richard, the older one of the two brothers. "We just read about you in the Pampa News." And there we are, involved in a deep conversation. Their grandfather, from Holland, and their grandmother, from Belgium, emigrated to the USA. Their father, also Richard, has already built up a huge dairy farm in South California. Some years ago, they moved to Texas - where there are practically no limits to the size of such a farm: 3000 cows, recently they bought additional 4000 acres of land in order to grow the own corn for the cattle, 35 employees. "Do you have a glass of milk?" Ryan runs to the house and brings me a big glass full of fresh, cool milk. Richard: "Are you walking towards Wheeler? We have a nice cabin some miles before Mobeetie where you can stay for the night." "How far is it?" "About 20 miles." It's 4 15 PM. "With this backwind I could be there at 10 PM." "OK, we'll take off here at 9 30 PM in order to open the house for you." Thanks to the wind and some running stretches I am making good mileage.

At a road crossing I am resting. There is a sign: "Church of the Crossroad". Soon Ray shows up, the minister of this church. He also offers me a place to stay for the night. He tells me the story of somebody who passed here too walking carrying a wooden cross. This man has carried the cross through several countries in order to remind us of Jesus. Ray asks me about my relationship to the Lord. I tell him, for me God ist not a person, a man figure, but a mysterious, universal divine creative light force I encounter in all the miracles of life and love; that this creative force suffers with us when there is violence against life; that it needs us, our involvement, and our deeds so that this unique Creation

remains inhabitable for us. We cannot deepen our conversation because I have to walk on - my hosts will be soon on their way. So I am leaving Ray and his crossroad. He gives me bottled water for my night hike.

I am still two hours away from my destination when Richard sen. and jun. are stopping in front of me. They take James with them. They tell me they will be back at the house at 11 PM. They describe precisely where I will find the house: There will be along row of trees along the road - for breaking the wind. There will be a driveway on top of a hill before the road goes down to a creek. If I see the creek I will be already too far. Richard sen. shows me a big white box. He will put it next to the driveway for better orientation should I arrive before them.

After about an hour I am on a hill. I don't see the trees, but I see a driveway and the white box nearby, on the soft shoulder of the road. Did I already arrive? It's too early; but that's the box. I start to walk towards the house when I police car stops, with its red and blue lights. A very bright light is directed towards me. I return to the police car. "Somebody called and said there is someone walking on the highway in the middle of the night. What are you doing here." "I look for the house of Richard." "Richard who?" I am embarassed. At that moment, I don't even know the last name of my generous hosts. "They have a diary farm at the junction of route 60 and highway 152. They have also a cabin before the next town where I can stay for the night. Richard has put a white box for better orientation. It's here; but I believe the house is still some miles away; maybe it's another box here. There must be a row of trees along the road, and a brook nearby. The policeman makes some phone calls: "...A hitchhiker..." - "A walker" - "...sorry, a walker looks for the house of...". After a while he says: "You're right. The house is situated on the hill, just before the creek. It's about 2 to 3 miles from here. Can I offer you a ride?" "No, it's so beautiful to walk in this fullmoon night." The wind has calmed down. All the clouds have disappeared. The moon is covereing the landscape with a silvery silky blanket. The trees appear as hard, black silhouettes in front of the smooth silver hills. Easy hiking in the cool night. Soon before I reach the hill with the house the two Richards and Ryan show up again. Richard jun. jumps out of the car and walks the last 3000 feet with me. The others drive to the house and wait for us there. Then we get to know each other better sitting at a warm fire, at the fireplace. I learn also about the big windfarm that is planned here - 5000 wind turbines will be built here within the next 2 to 3 years. They have brought a bag full of good food that is waiting for me on the kitchen table. After they have returned to their farm, I enjoy a midnight dinner and a wonderful sleep in the big bed surrounded by many soft pillows. In the morning the sun fills the bright rooms. On the wall painted plates and paintings of Paris are hanging, copies of impressionist masterpieces. The family Devruist has bought the house last year, mainly as a place where friends can stay. Often nobody lives here - the mice have left some traces in the bathroom. Before I continue my walk I clean the bathroom. I write that because the story has not yet ended completely.

3/21/2008

Mobeetie - Wheeler, Texas

Gratitude to Amy Lucie Taylor. I unbuckle the harness of James, my cart, in order to enter the restaurant in Mobeetie when Amy Lucie Taylor and her grandchildren Jonathan, Ashley, and Abigail get out of their car. "My husband has spoken with you when you arrived in Pampa. Now I have read about your walk in the Pampa News. May I invite you

for lunch?" The Taylors have a ranch with 60 to 80 cows - relatively small for a Texas ranch. Their children live also in the region with their families. One son works in the gas industry - Texas and Oklahoma are still harvesting some natural gas. Amy, the amiable lady with blond hair and blue eyes, tells me about another granddaughter who died early because of a tumor. In the three years of her disease she developed deep wisdom and trust in God that helped her beloved ones to accept the deep loss. Good Friday today.

Gratitude for Steve Ferguson. The small truck stops. The door window opens. A tall, handsome man asks whether he can give me a ride. "Walking all the way? Wow!" "Do you live in Wheeler?" "Yes, Sir." "Are you a rancher?" "No, Sir. I am cowboy?" "With hat and cattle?" "Yes, Sir. By the way, how do you manage during your walk?" I don't know exactly what he means. "Just walking. Camping. Sometimes motels, hotels." He passes me a 100 \$-bill. "For me?" "Yes, Sir. Be careful!"

Gratitude for the unknown beauty in the Bed & Breakfast Hotel in Wheeler. I arrive in the late afternoon. The main building in this small town is a mighty Court House - brick building, huge white columns, surrounded by old trees and lawn. In a corner of the square there is the City Drug Bed & Breakfast Hotel, an unpretentious brown-greyish building, like a shoe box. The door is closed. A piece of paper with a phone number is sticking at the glass door. I go to the next store and call this number. A lady tells me there is a key in an envelope for the room 101 under the door mat. Breakfast will be served tomorrow at 8 30 AM. In the lobby there are many antiques, furniture, paintings, photos, stuff. I have to be careful with James. Room 101 doesn't have a window. A fan on the ceiling brings some movement into the sticky air. Some teenagers have chosen this place for a party. There is a lot of noise and laughter during a big part of the night. I don't get much sleep; but the morning heals everything. At 8 30 AM the phone rings - I have just finished packing my cart. The lobby is clean and in order again. On a round table there is a big plate with scrambled eggs, fried bacon, fresh muffins, orange slices, grapes, and a pitcher with fresh orange juice. When I enter the small kitchen in order to get rid of the bacon I see her: A wonderful young lady, soft, dark almond eyes, a beautiful smile that brings pretty dimples into her cheeks, full shining dark hair, perfect, soft movements, her whole appearance an awesome glow of life, a princess hidden in a servant's role. "I am so sorry", she says when I bring her the bacon back. She reminds me of Gottfried Benn's poem "Menschen getroffen":

Menschen getroffen

Ich habe Menschen getroffen, die,
wenn man sie nach ihrem Namen fragte,
schuechtern - als ob sie gar nicht beanspruchen koennten,
auch noch eine Bennung zu haben -
"Fraeulein Christiane" antworteten und dann:
"wie der Vorname", sie wollten einem die Erfassung erleichtern,
kein schwieriger Name wie "Popiol" oder "Babendererde" -
"wie der Vorname - bitte, belasten Sie Ihr Erinnerungsvermoegen nicht!"

Ich habe Menschen getroffen, die
mit Eltern und vier Geschwistern in einer Stube
aufwachsen, nachts, die Finger in den Ohren,
am Kuechenherde lernten,
hochkamen, aeusserlich schoen und ladylike wie Graefinnen -

und innerlich sanft und fleissig wie Nausikaa,
die reine Stirn der Engel trugen.

Ich habe mich oft gefragt und keine Antwort gefunden,
woher das Sanfte und das Gute kommt,
weiss es auch heute nicht und muss nun gehn.

3/22/2008

Wheeler, Texas - Sweetwater, Oklahoma

Yes, and I had to go as well, and I not even know her first name. Her glow will follow me,
until the last journey.

In the next store I buy some food for the day. Kandi at the counter says: "I saw you yesterday on the road, even twice." "Where?" "Between Mobeetie and here. I live in Mobeetie." "Yes, I stayed near Mobeetie during the night from Thursday to Friday, in the cabin of the family Devruist. Do you know them?" "Where is that?" I describe her the house on the hill next to the creek. "A green house? That belonged to Bee Hunter Humphrey. Last year it was bought by a farmer at an auction. I have cleaned the house several times." "I cleaned it also, once, mouse shit :)" "Oh yeah, once I discovered there a mouse nest in the bed"...

Before Sweetwater I cross the border from Texas to Oklahoma. In the convenience store of a gasoline station I buy milk and juices. "Am I already in Oklahoma?" I ask. "You are, but your cart outside is still standing in Texas; and the gasoline pumps too."

Sweetwater - a store, some houses, some house ruins. One ruin still shows a sign: "100th Meridian Cafe". About one mile after Sweetwater I see a deserted farmhouse with old trees, stables, and a cattle shelter with a tin roof. The weather forecast has announced a thunderstorm and rain. Therefore I am looking for a dry place for my tent. The cow manure in the shelter is old and dusty. It hasn't been used for a long time. I put my tent there. Then I place some trellis work fences around the shelter - I don't want to be surprised by tent chewing cows. With joy I realize: After one week of no phone service there is connection here again. Therefore I can send some Eastern messages across the country and the Atlantic - and I get heart warming messages back. The wind is roaring during the night. Once a rain flurry is lashing down over the tin roof. In the morning it's very cold, but there is sunshine again.

3/23/2008

Sweetwater - Sayre, Oklahoma

During this walk I experience the beginning of spring very intensely: Every day a new kind of flower showing up, a new bird song, more green leaves in the crowns of the trees. After the scant plains of Texas I enjoy very much the varied landscape of Oklahoma - rolling hills, old trees, group of trees, hedges, creeks, sedgy riverbanks, swamps with big brown tufts of grass, fields with golden grass wigs, wild turkeys that behave often first in an unconcerned way before they flock together and run away. And again and again herds of

cows and horses who are responding to the solitary walker in a curious way - often they walk some steps with me along the fence towards east.

A small truck stops, once again. The driver, a middle-aged man with a red-brownish moustache and a cowboy hat offers me a ride. I thank him and explain to him my walk for climate protection. He says: "Good for you. You are the first one who talks about that and also walks. God bless you."

On Eastern morning I eat up all the food I still have. After 15 miles of walking I feel hungry and weak. I ask the universe to provide some food for me. When I approach the next creek there is a green sign saying "Starvation Creek". I understand it as an answer from the universe that is making fun of me: "What a lack of independence. Take charge, take care for yourself in these things." Soon I see a house next to the road. A tall man is working in the garage. I approach him. I introduce myself. I explain to him, that I ran out of food and need some "fuel" for the last stretch to Sayre. I ask him whether I can buy some bread and cheese from them. Curtis invites me to the house. His wife Jo shuts the barking dogs out. She has relatives in Switzerland, called Mory. She offers me a fantastic meal. She works as a registered nurse, Curtis as a guard in a correction center. They don't accept my money. I hope I can spoil them once in Switzerland.

In the hotel in Sayre I find a lot of e-mails. Some quotes I want to share with you:

Manfred Hussock from Steffisburg sends a quote by Edward Abbey:

"It's an honor to be a visitor in the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River, as it is an honor and a privilege to be alive, however briefly on this marvellous planet we call Earth."

And Brad Earlewine from Estancia writes me that the antilopes I saw there and I described in my report are Pronghorn Antilopes. I am adding one of his poems:

"Everytime Martin takes a breath he becomes the universe,
The very moment of creation he passes on to rocks and trees, animals and fish.
The ancients say the essence of life is in water and wind, earth and breath, fire and bone,
But most of all in breath, our first connection.
Without breath, there is no connection,
Without connection, no creation,
Without creation, no breath,
This is the sacred circle of life, unbroken."

Today I read in the newspaper "USA Today": The Alliance for Climate Protection wants to launch the most ambitious US marketing campaign ever on climate change, at a cost of more than \$ 100 million a year for three years to focus on the urgency of the problem and solutions. "The missing ingredient is the force of public opinion," Al Gore said when he urged Cathy Zoi to become the CEO of the ACP. This campaign will try to close this gap.