

## Web Blog SUNwalk 2008 engl. XVII

4/26 – 5/13/2008

Memphis – Nashville, TN

I leave the noisy traffic on Poplar Avenue behind and enter the morning silence of the Memphis Memorial Parks, a big cemetery. Low gravestones are loosely distributed between old trees. A young lady is speaking with two gardeners; one of the two cars nearby is idling. “You must be very rich”, I joke to them. “Why?” “You are burning fuel without driving – in spite of the high gasoline price.” Donna Ammons has been born in Naples. She grew up in Germany. At the end of our short conversation she offers me: “Call me if you need any help – hopefully not from my business.” She is the director of a funeral home.

It’s for me much easier to get out of Memphis than to arrive here. Soon I come into an amiable, rural area, and I find a fantastic camping spot: There is a big pond. I can put my tent onto a platform with a roof that stands in the water. I am well protected from the rain that the weather forecast has announced. During the whole night there are again and again splashing sounds – turtles and frogs that jump into the water.

What a green pleasure to walk through Tennessee in spring! There are big forests and lush pastures. Many houses and villages are hidden in the shadow of old, gigantic trees. It’s amazing how the plants are growing here. Once, in a thunderstorm, I find shelter on a balcony of a deserted house. Many young trees grow through the cracks of the porch floor beams and form a pretty balcony forest. Once I also see an old rusty truck. Trees are growing out of all holes – the truck looks like a big, sad face, part of a big green curly head.

The small cemetery next to the highway is also surrounded by trees, a half circle of cypresses. The rays of the afternoon sun draw dark, hard shadows into the old gravestones: “Martha E. C. born Nov. 26, 1845, died Sept. 22, 1855”. And: “Thomas J. born Nov. 10, 1841, died Dec. 25, 1843, Children

of Moore & E. M. Drake”. Two lambs are carved into the stone, their mouths touching each other. It was a sad Christmas for the Drakes in 1843. There are several child graves – some of them couldn’t make it to the first birthday. And the country doctor who didn’t have many medications at that time to save the children’s lives is also buried here: “Dr. W. J. Drake, Died June 25, 1877, Aged 45 yrs. 6 ms. 7 days”. On a small tombstone it’s written in a laconic way: “FATHER”.

Not far away from Jackson, at the Fork Deer River, there is a sign:  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile from here was the Little River Port of Jackson, called “Alexandria” in early times. During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century cotton was shipped from here on flat boats and small steamboats to Memphis and from there to New Orleans. “Uncle Tom's Cabin” by Harriet Beecher Stowe comes to my mind. There is so much suffering hidden behind these few words concerning Alexandria.

After Jackson, just before sunset, I am looking for a place where I can put my tent. I find a nice, idyllic clearing in the woods, but also a pile of herbicide plastic bottles. I leave the clearing behind. Next to a house with a nice even backyard I see two men loading a truck with the remains of a tree that has been uprooted by a storm. That would be a nice camping spot. I approach the two men and ask them; but they only work here; and they don’t encourage me to ask the owners; and I am on the road again. It’s almost dark when I come to the next house. A man just comes home. I ask him whether I can camp behind their house. He enters the house and discusses the matter with his wife. She comes out and shows me a corner in their backyard where their two dogs won’t see me: “They would bark during the whole night if they see your tent.” John, their 11 year old son, helps me to put up the tent. He brings me drinking water. He asks questions about Switzerland: “I want to go there some day. I love mountains.” In the morning, before boarding the school bus, he brings me his snack that his mother has prepared for him: “Hiking must make you very hungry.”

I meet two cheerful elder men. In one hand they carry a trash pincer, in the other one a big plastic bag. They pick up litter. “We do that every day. First of all it cleans the environment; secondly we always find some money or other things. During the last few days we found 17 \$ altogether. Look for it too, in the grass next to the road!” Again and again I find some coins flashing in the backlighting. I often wonder how these coins find their way to the road, in the middle of nowhere.

It's getting warmer and warmer. More and more butterflies can be seen – often swallowtail butterflies with their lemon yellow wings, the dark network pattern, and the four light blue pearls above the swallowtails on their wings. There are also many different dragonflies whizzing around. There is the azure twinkle of the “forget-me-nots”, the elfish innocence of the daisies. In the gardens the roses are singing in red, yellow, and white.

My phone has disappeared mysteriously. I just don't find it anymore in the hotel in Huntingdon. In the morning I go back, three miles, to the place where I used it for the last time; but I don't find it. Initially I experience the loss as liberation – less electromagnetic smog; but I buy a new one all the same - because of all the contacts I expect during the next months, for emergencies, and for short messages I want to exchange with my friends at home. My new number: (001) 615 33 55 642.

Michelle Obama teaches me a lesson. In an interview the reporter asks her what of Barack she likes best. She answers: That he tries to be true to himself; that he does everything to be a good father; and that he tries to live up to his own values, also in the shadow when nobody sees him. That confronts me with the hot baths I had quite often during the last weeks after a long hiking day. I am aware how much energy and water is wasted with a hot bath; and that I am as clean after a short shower. I realize: In the shadow of the bathtub I don't live up to my principles if nobody sees me. Since then I take showers again except...

Before I arrive in Camden I meet Wayne and Brenda. They are loading their pick up truck with water bottles and offer me one of them – it's water from an Artesian well nearby that is known as to be very pure and healthy. In any case it helped to stabilize the diabetes of Brenda's mother. They are excited about my walk and inform the reporter of the local newspaper. Shortly after we say good-bye Jane Higdon of “The Benton Countian” arrives and makes an interview with me. At the end she recommends the Best Western Hotel in Camden to me – she describes the owner, Ben J. Thompson, as a great believer. She thinks he would be interested in my walk. When I arrive in the hotel, the receptionist calls Ben and connects him with me. I inform him about my walk and my motivation. I tell him that I walk for the preservation of Creation. “In that case you deserve a special treatment so that you can relax a little.” Ben offers me a room with a big bath tub and whirlpool at half the price. And soon I sit in this big hot whirlpool and enjoy something that I

have seen so far only in films, bathroom leaflets, and exhibitions for modern living.

Between Camden and Waverly the large Tennessee River flows towards the south. We know the TVA – Tennessee Valley Authority – from David Freeman. Between 1977 and 1984 David, as the CEO of TVA, has realized an exemplary energy efficiency project. It saved 1100 Megawatts. David canceled several nuclear power plant projects at that time. He employed 450 engineers. They went to every household and enterprise and offered more than 30 options for energy conservation. TVA organized the workers, made the quality control, and offered loans with low interest rates. The consumers paid less afterwards in spite of the new installations – thanks to the energy savings. I remember all that and David's visit and speaking tour in Switzerland in the 80ies when I walk across the long bridge across the Tennessee River, when I also see a big thermal power plant and many power lines.

In the hills west of Nashville there are fancy neighborhoods with big gardens and beautiful mansions. There is also a farm – a big, green pasture, a farmhouse, and wooden fences – they stand there like big toys. On the meadow there are three brown cows with white faces, two black cows, three white goats, one white kiddy, and a donkey – motionless, also like toys. I make a note about this large size toy farm and look up again: An invisible giant child's hand has turned all the animals around. They are facing me and stare at me – motionless again.

Before I fall asleep I often look with deep awe to the evening sky, to the stars. The last days are similar – the stars a chain of unique encounters:

- With David Shepherd – he stops his car and wants to know where I walk. His pick up truck is stuffed with bicycle wheels and parts of solar installations. David is starting solar business. One of his friends is an enthusiastic hiker and biker. He admires him – he himself is not yet there.
- With Angie: She enters the convenience store of a gasoline station where I look for something healthy to eat, with no success. Her skin is almost black, shining, and taut. Her movements are soft, round, like those of a black panther. Her back has a trapezoid male shape. She gives me a broad smile; and when I leave the store she beckons to me before her old purple Cadillac takes off.

- With John and Mary who are sitting in their tiny store some miles before Brownsville, waiting for customers. I have walked in the rain for hours. I am wet, and I am delighted to find a dry oasis that I didn't expect at all. There is a refrigerator with beer and soft drinks. On the shelves there are some sweets and nuts. John and Mary tell me how they returned here, to their home town, after years of living in other parts of the country. They refurbished the store. Now they enjoy their eventide. The store is not very busy. Without selling beer they could close it; but once in a while somebody drops in, all the same, for a change – and tells his or her story.
- With Pravin, the motel manager in Brownsville. He comes from India. He is very curious about my walk. I must tell him many details about it before he gives me the key to a wonderful wedding room: The walls are covered with elaborate woodwork and big mirrors. Above the king size bed there is an oriental canopy with bullions that surround another mirror at the ceiling. There are posies on the table, artificial flowers that look surprisingly real and fresh – red roses, yellow lilies, and blue delphinium. There is also a festoon around the room – artificial peonies, little pink roses, and pale-blue hydrangeas. In all that I really miss a playful partner... And Pravin gives a rebate to the walker and charges me only 30 \$ for this little night paradise.
- With Robert in the gloomy store in Union. Also Robert has his roots in India – his grandmother came from there. Robert is tall, wiry, hunchbacked, and bald; his left eye is bigger than the right one, protruding. His face is showing a wise smile. “Oh, yes, business is pretty good, an old country store, you know.”
- With Donna and Bob in Huntersville, unincorporated. They park their car and wait for me: “Where are you heading?” Huntersville has been almost completely destroyed by a tornado. Donna and Bob tell me how it was, how fast it came and raged and unroofed houses, uprooted and split trees, tossed cars through the air. The houses look ghostlike – some don't have roofs. The sky looks through the naked holes of the windows. Split-up trunks, uprooted trees. “It was so beautiful here before. Now it looks like a war zone.” I also ask what “unincorporated” means. “Well, it's just a place where people live” – a settlement without the structure of a community, evidently.
- With Dave from Henderson. He turns his white pick up truck and waits for me. Clear, blue eyes, prominent cheekbones. “Do you want a ride?” When I explain to him why I don't accept his friendly offer he

says: “I am starting feeling bad. I wish we were back in the horse and buggy days.”

- With Mary McCreary from Dickson. The photographer who still works with her old classic Hasselblad camera supports me in many ways. She gives me a donation and spoils me with organic food. She also gives me a book with texts for daily meditation. She is also there when NewsChannel5 TV makes a film. When the reporter asks her whether her encounter with me has motivated her to do own steps she says she wants to fix up her bicycle and use it again. Now people in Dickson ask her on the street whether her bike is already repaired.
- With Anita and John Luther who welcome me like an old friend in their marvellous Bed & Breakfast home. Often these days I see beautiful houses surrounded by old trees and dreamy gardens; and now in Dickson, I can stay in such a homestead. Every detail expresses much care and love, from the candies on the bedside table to the delicious blueberry pancakes in the morning.
- With Wayne Curtis from Burns – a tall man, white cowboy hat, dark moustache. Wayne invites me to a horseback ride at his “Whoop & Ride Farm”. Unfortunately the farm is too far away for the walker.
- With the firemen Dave, Daniel, Tigger, and Jim in Bellevue. They give me good advice concerning route and lodging. Jim gives me a children’s book that he wrote and drew himself. With this book he wants to encourage young people to choose a healthy life style.
- With the media people who help to spread the message: Jerry Wilson from the Brownsville “States Graphic”; Stanley Dunlap from the newspaper “Jackson Sun” who finds me in the public library and makes an interview that is very supportive to my cause; Harrell Carter, Community Affairs Director at News/Talk 101.5 WNWS-FM who passes me on the road and makes a radio interview. Mike McCullen and Brent Frazier from TV NewsChannel5 – Mike is on his way home from the studio when he sees me walking on the road. He makes a first film and returns to the studio. Half an hour later Brent and ...are back and make a comprehensive film about the SunWalk that opens the Sunday evening news on 5/4/2008; and mainly Anne Paine from the “Tennessean”, the biggest newspaper in Tennessee. Anne informs about the SunWalk in several ways – an article in the paper, foto gallery and video in the internet. Anne also opens many doors for me here in Nashville. The same is true for Christine Iziarry who works in the archive and does research for the newspaper. She is an enthusiastic hiker. She takes me for a walk through the farmers

market and to the school of her daughter, where she brings me together with students and their parents. One of the mothers approaches me and speaks to me in Zurich dialect – she comes from the Toesstal near Winterthur.

- With Perry Baggs whom I also meet at the “Tennessean”. Perry has made history as a member of the Country Music Band “Jason and the Scorchers” which combined country music with elements of the pop and punk culture.
- The good coverage by the media here in Nashville enables again new encounters: In Belle Meade, the fancy Nashville suburb where Al Gore lives, a police car stops in front of me – blue flashing lights. What did I wrong this time – without any bad intentions? “Hi Doc,” the police officer greets me friendly. “Welcome in Belle Meade. I saw you on TV. If we can be of any help to you let us know.”
- I also meet Anne Riley Miller and Jack Miller who visit me at the hotel, together with her friend Lea McKissick. Anne has seen me on the road. We beckoned to each other; and then she read about the SunWalk in the newspaper. We tell each other our life stories. Anne was a ballet dancer, Rick an orthopedic surgeon. After a while we find out that Anne knows Cathy Sharp, the dancer and dance teacher who lives in Basel and whom I also know.

Many more stars I could mention. The more I approach the east coast the more people I meet, the more opportunities there are to spread the message about the number one priority – climate protection, clean energy. The extreme weather conditions and the soaring gasoline price raise also the awareness for the survival issue.

In the weekly Internet Quiz of the NewsOK of the Oklahoman newspaper the number 8 question asks:

Why is Martin Vosseler of Switzerland walking across the United States?

- a) To encourage climate protection.
- b) To endorse a new sneaker.
- c) To pay off a soccer bet.

There is also a letter to the editor in the “Tennessean” of May 5<sup>th</sup> responding to Anne Paine’s article:

“The ‘walk for Solar Energy’ is a good start

Swiss physician Dr. Martin Vosseler is walking coast to coast, from Los Angeles to Boston, in an effort to promote solar energy (“Solar awareness is afoot,” May 7).

Dr. Vosseler is one man doing his part as he says, “...to keep this wonderful, miraculous planet habitable.” In my opinion he has assumed a great risk in walking across this country to promote his message.

How much influence will this walk have on others? Surely there will be some influenced by his message, however, it is going to take a lot of us working together. If it is true that the solar industry would create millions of jobs, not only is that a great incentive for heeding Dr. Vosseler’s message, but also we would have a cleaner environment at the same time...”

Laurel Johnson, Franklin 37064

This letter was awarded with three stars as the best letter-to-the-editor of that day. The author will be invited to the annual Forum Banquet that is held every year in honor of the best letter-to-the editor writers.

I am staying in Nashville for several days.

Nashville is a green city. From a hill in Belle Mead in the west of Nashville there is a splendid overview: Some high buildings at the horizon – other than that only green tree crowns wherever you look.

Nashville is a music city. In the center there is live country music in all restaurants and bars. In the Ryman auditorium, the pretty brick building with its Gothic windows, Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys, and also the Stanley Brothers with Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs have created the Blue Grass music. I dive into this world, at “Robert’s Western World”. John England and the Western Swingers are playing there. They sing and play with melting, wistful voices, sonorous gliding sounds of the pedal steel guitar, and zippy rhythms of the fiddle and the piano, of the banjo and the drums.

Nashville – that’s also a breeding ground for women’s rights. On May 1<sup>st</sup> 1916 Anne Dallas Dudley (1876 – 1955) walked with other women from the

Nashville center to the Centennial Park in order to demonstrate for the woman suffrage. All her life she worked for the promotion of women's rights.

Nashville – a hub for politics: In the office of the Representative Jim Cooper next to the Public Library Lisa Quigley, Chief of staff, and all the staff members welcome me cordially. We share the political dreams. Lisa tells me that her daughter is involved in the promising education project “The Green Train” ([www.greentrainglobal.org](http://www.greentrainglobal.org)). The reception room is decorated with a big photo. It shows Jim Cooper's father, Prentice Cooper, the Governor of Tennessee from 1939 to 1945, in an open car with President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the opening ceremony of the Obey River dam. Later I see in a book the pictures of the village Willow Grove that was flooded in 1943 when the dam was finished – the church, the school, the Esso gasoline station; and I read the poem that Dewey Birdwell wrote:

“We Love Our Homes”

We don't want to move at all;

But people in power say:

“We want an Obey River Dam,

And you must move away.”

We will miss the church so bad

And schools where we often met

In Willow Grove, the place we love

And a place we won't forget.

But as we leave this place today

Let's hold our head up high

And take the advice Dr. Clark gave

This 18<sup>th</sup> of July.

And if we never meet again

Like we have here today –

Let's hope we meet in a better world

Where we won't have to move away.

Nashville – there are promising projects to promote walking, biking, and public transportation. One morning I meet Sharon Simmons (Regional Transportation Authority), Renee Bates (Greenways for Nashville), and Natalie Gualy (Gresham, Smith & Partners) in front of a big office building. They invite all employees that arrive without a car – walking, biking, and with public transportation – to a bagel and orange juice breakfast, for the promotion of car free commuting.

Nashville – that's also modern architecture in old style – the Schermerhorn Music Hall, the Public Library, both buildings have been built recently in classicistic style, with much love for beautiful details and with precious construction materials, sandstone and marble. I am also impressed by the Parthenon, a 1 to 1 copy of the Acropolis temple in the Centennial Park. The temple has been built as the main attraction of the Tennessee 1897 Centennial Exhibition. Later between 1920 and 1931 its plaster and wood was replaced by concrete in order to make the building durable. There is a giant, golden dressed and crowned Athena statue standing in the “cella”. The astonishing details of the original temple – e.g. a curved basis line, slightly inclined columns – were also reproduced in this temple copy in Nashville.

Die Public Library is huge. Dozens of computers are available; and the organization is perfect – the best one I experienced so far. If somebody arrives, he or she gets a paper slip with a number and a bar code label. A reservation for an hour can be made. After that hour one can apply for the next hour. If there is a free computer available there is no waiting time. If not one has to wait for a while until the next free computer is available. Everybody is welcome – students, homeless people, mothers with children if they are quiet, professors, old and young, black and white, rich and poor.

Nashville – that is also a moving theatre evening with the play “The Twelve Angry Men” written by Reginald Rose. 42 years ago we played this modern drama in college, in the German version of Horst Budjuhn (Die zwölf Geschworenen). Twelve men of a jury decide whether a 16 year old adolescent has killed his father or not. I become very emotional. Whole sequences of the text pop up in my mind “...through the windows of a passing el train...” After all these years I realize much more consciously how great this play is, how involved the authors were, how up to date the subject is still today.

At the present time there are many tornados here. 47 twisters have caused great damage during the last week-end. In this tornado season already 98 people have been killed. And how much suffering in Burma! The symptoms of the climate crisis are increasing; but the encouraging news too. Here some of them (Climate Crisis Coalition Newsfeed):

**Connecticut Legislature Sends Climate Bill to Governor for Signature.**  
*By Jon Lender, Hartford Courant, May 6, 2008.* "The [Connecticut] Senate gave final -- and unanimous -- legislative approval Monday to a tough new bill requiring drastic reduction of greenhouse gas emissions connected with global warming, and the [Republican] leader in the Senate said he expects Republican Gov. M. Jodi Rell to sign it into law. 'I'd be surprised if she didn't,' Senate Minority Leader John McKinney [R-Fairfield], said... after the Senate... passed, by a 35-0 vote, the same bill that the House last week had [approved]... The bill would force state agencies to calculate and list greenhouse gases produced in the state, come up with strategies to meet the new reduction goals and start measuring the state's progress. Those efforts could affect daily life in Connecticut in ways including electricity costs; incentives for saving energy and using alternative, renewable sources; how homes and businesses are built; the kinds of motor vehicles on the road and availability of public transportation... The new bill would build on goals established four years ago and would require Connecticut to cut emissions, mainly from the burning of fossil fuels, to 10% below 1990 levels by 2020 and 80% below 2001 levels by 2050."

**After Tornado, the Greening of Greensburg, Kansas.** *AFP, May 5, 2008.*

"On the evening of May 4, 2007, a category-5 tornado swept through... 1,300-strong [Greensburg, Kansas], killing 9 people and razing to the ground the school, the hospital and more than 900 houses. [President] Bush, haunted by his administration's slow response to Hurricane Katrina... visited... a few days later. Town leaders vowed... to rebuild... [making Greensburg] the first town in the U.S. to have all municipal projects built to the highest environmental and efficiency design standards... The town is now building an eco-lodging project, a recycling center and a water conservation system to turn rain into drinking water. Officials hope... [to] put their tiny community on the map as a leader in green living... 'The community is dedicated to putting the green in Greensburg,' [Bush said yesterday on the one-year anniversary]. 'As you work to achieve this vision, the federal government will honor its commitments, and continue to stand by you.'"

**Small Car Sales Surge in U.S.** *By Bill Vlasic, NYTimes, May 2, 2008.*

"Soaring gas prices have turned the steady migration by Americans to smaller cars into a stampede. In what industry analysts are calling a first, about one in five vehicles sold in the U.S. was a compact or subcompact car during April... The switch to smaller, more fuel-efficient vehicles... has accelerated recently with the advent of \$3.50-a-gallon gas. At the same time, sales of pickup trucks and large [SUVs] have dropped sharply. In another first, fuel-sipping four-cylinder engines surpassed six-cylinder models in popularity in April. 'It's easily the most dramatic segment shift I have witnessed in the market in my 31 years here,' said George Pipas, chief sales analyst for [Ford]."

**Bloomberg Gives Bicycles A Try.** *Posted by Andrew Posner,*

*TreeHugger.com, April 29, 2008.* "Perhaps because Mayor Bloomberg's plan for congestion pricing in New York City has failed, the Big Apple is now trying to make up for it by becoming more bicycle-friendly. As it is, 112,000 New Yorkers bicycle on an average day, an increase of 10% over the last decade. The proposal, which is part of a new Department of Transportation strategic plan [called **Sustainable Streets**], hopes to double that number by 2015, as well as 1) add 200 miles worth of new bicycle lanes between 2007 and 2009, 2) install 37 bicycle shelters and 5,000 bike parking racks by 2011, 3) install 15 additional miles of protected on-street bike lanes by 2010 and 30 miles from 2011 to 2015. Finally, 'to raise bike-consciousness in the city, the [DOT] and the nonprofit group **Transportation Alternatives**, are

holding a competition to find the most bicycling-friendly employers in the city."

**In Dramatic Showdown, Kansas Governor Prevails on Veto of Kansas Coal Plants.** *By Scott Rothschild, Lawrence Journal, May 2, 2008.*

"[Kansas] Gov. Kathleen Sebelius' veto of two coal-fired power plants survived a furious charge from legislative leaders on Thursday. In a dramatic showdown, the Kansas House voted 80-45, falling four votes short of the required two-thirds majority needed in the 125-member chamber to override the veto... Sebelius has rejected the two 700-megawatt coal-burning plants in southwest Kansas because of concerns over climate-changing carbon dioxide emissions, [among other things]... [House Speaker Melvin Neufeld, R-Ingalls] said supporters of the plants weren't giving up. 'We have other options,' he said, but declined to say what they were... But State Rep. Tom Sloan, R-Lawrence, who supports the project, said the speaker's options were limited because he lacks the two-thirds majority to overturn Sebelius."

The magazine TIME dedicates its last April issue to the topic "How to Win the War on Global Warming?" The front page is framed in green, instead of red. On the cover the famous Iwo Jima photo of Joe Rosenthal has been changed. The soldiers don't prize up a flag, but a redwood tree.