

## Web Blog SUNwalk 2008 english X

3/13 – 3/17/2008

Clovis, New Mexico – Amarillo, Texas

3/13/2008

Clovis - Bovina

Walking through the vast landscapes of the High Desert I often think: What an ideal place for wind farms and big solar power plants – so much wind, so much sun. So many jobs could be created. The towns and villages could be revived. And in fact I hear about a project: 9 miles south of Willard, on the Mesa de los Jumanos, High Lonesome Wind Ranch LLC, a joint venture of Foresight Wind, Karbon Zero and Edison Mission Group, is planning a big wind farm. The construction of 40 big wind turbines will be started soon (see also NYT article of 2/23/2008 “There’s Money in Texas Wind” in “Buds of Hope”).

I am still walking in the industrial area of Clovis. I have to stop because of a nose bleeding. Adjacent to the road there is a big free lot with a meadow. Suddenly I become aware of high pitched, rhythmic sounds. They remind me of the whistling sounds that marmots in the Swiss Alps make although these-ones I hear here are not as high pitched. Is it a bird? I watch carefully the area from where the noise is coming from. Something is moving at the same rhythm like the sounds, in the middle of the field, on top of a small, flat hill. I walk closer. Now I see a pair of small, dark eyes watching me, and a little tail that pulsates with the rhythm of the sounds. Soon, I hear the sounds of a second animal that peeps also out of a neighboring hole in the ground. I discover several of these hills, holes everywhere, a whole village of prairie dogs (*Cynomys gunnisoni*). They are not so shy like their bigger cousins in the Swiss Alps, the marmots; so I can watch them for quite a while.

Texico is the last town in New Mexico, before I cross the border to Texas. The name is a portmanteau of “Texas” and “New Mexico”. After the border the character of the landscape changes immediately. Rolling hills dominated the High Desert of New Mexico – here the land is absolutely flat, endless pastures, meadows, fields. The sky cannot become bigger than it is here. Towards the little town of Bovina, some flat hills appear again. From far away they appear black, with a few brown and light speckles. What could that be? Forests? Tires stored in the landscape? As I come closer I see thousands of cattle that are fenced together in huge territories. Almost no movement, no sounds, spooky. I estimate a number of 10’000 animals. The owner of the Bovina motel, Richard, tells me, there are next to 30’000 bulls and cows waiting here to be butchered in the big “Packaging Companies”, the huge industrial slaughter houses

nearby where up to 4000 animals are killed and “packaged” every day. Constantly, big trucks with cattle pass me, loaded in one direction, empty into the other one.

In Bovina, the headquarters of the XIT Ranch were located. It was the biggest fenced ranch in the world – 6000 miles of barbed wire fences (the Swiss borders are about 1200 miles long). The area included 3 million acres. The owners of the ranch received this big territory as the honorarium for the construction of the Texas State Capitol in Austin (1882



- 1888). The ranch existed until about 1910. It was the beginning of the cattle mass production in this area of Texas. Now the towns here use attributes that reflect the meaning of this area for meat production: “Hereford – Beef Capital of the World”, “Frisia – Cheeseburger Capital of Texas”; but also: “Frisia – the Biggest Small Town in Texas”.

In this context I reflected about my remarks in the last Web Blog - how we treat animals, about my judgment concerning meat consumption. I would like to overcome my tendency to accuse, to judge, to provoke feelings of guilt. I am convinced: In enthusiasm, in joy there is much more potential for change, in a much stronger, healthier, and more sustainable way than in feelings of guilt, fear etc. I can convey my enthusiasm, my awe about the uniqueness and beauty of animals. I can describe the good feelings that go with the encounters with animals. I can express my joy about a healthy vegetarian life style – and I believe it is stronger than to preach in a judgmental way that may provoke bad feelings in others.

Many animals live in these plains. Again and again a hare jumps out of his grass hide-away and runs into the fields, at an incredible speed – dozen of hares, with dark ends of their long ears. The hares are more able to escape the traffic than other animals – I encounter one dead hare during three days, but 12 (twelve) dead owls, 4 foxes, 6 coyotes, on the side of the road where I walk.

3/14 – 3/15/2008

Bovina – Hereford - Canyon

Today a strong wind is blowing, up to 70 miles an hour, fortunately backwind. The wind is blowing dry tumbleweed bushes over the plain and the highway. They are rolling and stumbling from southwest to northeast. The smaller ones look like bleached skeletons of tiny Christmas trees. They glide across the pavement with a fine scratching sound. Next to fields where the soil is not covered by vegetation the wind fills the air with fine red-brown sand. It's like walking through colored fog – I have to breathe through my handkerchief. Once a gust carries my little hat away. It needs a fast sprint in order to get it back.

My feet are hurting, for the first time. Maybe they have to get accustomed to the new sandals I wear today. But the wind pushes me through Texas, 36 miles today – what a power coming from the back! Again and again I let the wind take over and run with it for a while; and my four mantras help – “east, east, east” – “keep going” – “I'll make it” – “don't get into a vehicle”. The next day the pain in my feet has gone.

Again and again drivers stop and offer me a ride. A Latino couple thinks I am a homeless person. The man opens the window of his car and whistle to me. He turns his car and stops next to me. He passes me a ten-dollar bill. “God bless you, my friend!” Alvaro also stops, during dusk, about 8 miles away from Canyon. The young, bright man works at the Social Security office in Amarillo. He must work for a second job at Walmart – “in order to be able to pay the gas”. We are having a long conversation, about my SUNwalk, about the opportunities for wind and solar energy in Texas. At the end he asks again: “Are you sure you don't want a ride to Canyon”. He would have postponed his driving home. He would have brought me to the next town.

It's essential for me not to accept rides. I would like to walk the whole stretch from L. A. to Boston, 100 %. I usually express my gratitude saying that the offer warms up my heart. These gestures of hospitality and generosity also give me energy. Here is another reason to be consequent: It makes my walk easier - like for somebody who wants to quit smoking, the zero solution is necessary.

Near Hereford a brown “Historic Marker” sign reminds tourists of a prisoner camp in WW II. 7000 Italian soldiers were imprisoned here. Many of them became friends with the people of Hereford. Later some of them returned as tourists. It's written that only a chapel remained, all the other buildings of the camp were removed. But I cannot find the chapel either.

3/16 – 3/17/2008

Canyon - Amarillo

There is thick fog on this cool Sunday morning. There is a service road parallel to the freeway, with no traffic at all.

In a suburb of Amarillo I meet friends of Feliz and Mary Garcia from Willard, Arnold and Teresa Schwertner. They celebrate St. Patrick's Day with an Irish stew – together with Teresa's father, sister and brother-in-law. Teresa spoils me with a vegetarian "Lasagne" dish and delicious homemade bread. Teresa teaches at an elementary school. Arnold, originally a farmer, works now as a truck driver; and during the last years he has become a deacon of the Catholic Church. They welcome me like a member of the family.

There is still daylight when I start again for the last miles to Amarillo; but it gets dark soon; and I am having an odysseys in front of me, through dark lonely areas of town because the railway tracks cut all the streets and force me to make a long detour until I reach the hotel area in the east of town, near the freeway 40. But finally, I arrive. Today I enjoy a writing day in the hotel lobby – a good concentration exercise with the TV behind me. In Amarillo there is a debate whether a new nuclear power plant will be built here. A reporter of the Amarillo Globe News has announced his visit – a good opportunity to speak about the huge potential for renewable energy and energy efficiency in this town, the big potential for many jobs that make sense and prepare the future. Tomorrow I'll walk to Panhandle, a town in the northern part of this state that looks like "panhandle" of the Texas "pan" on the map.

I was asked by some readers to add the two Mary Oliver poems I mentioned in my last report. Here they are:

"The Journey

One day you finally knew  
what you had to do, and began,  
though the voices around you  
kept shouting  
their bad advice--  
though the whole house  
began to tremble  
and you felt the old tug  
at your ankles.  
"Mend my life!"  
each voice cried.  
But you didn't stop.  
You knew what you had to do,  
though the wind pried  
with its stiff fingers

at the very foundations,  
though their melancholy  
was terrible.  
It was already late  
enough, and a wild night,  
and the road full of fallen  
branches and stones.  
But little by little,  
as you left their voices behind,  
the stars began to burn  
through the sheets of clouds,  
and there was a new voice  
which you slowly  
recognized as your own,  
that kept you company  
as you strode deeper and deeper  
into the world,  
determined to do  
the only thing you could do--  
determined to save  
the only life you could save.

#### Wild Geese

You do not have to be good.  
You do not have to walk on your knees  
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
love what it loves.  
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.  
Meanwhile the world goes on.  
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain  
are moving across the landscapes,  
over the prairies and the deep trees,  
the mountains and the rivers.  
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,  
are heading home again.  
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
the world offers itself to your imagination,  
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting —  
over and over announcing your place  
in the family of things.”