

A Brief Charles Overby Bio – “a road less traveled by.”

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.”

From Robert Frost’s poem “The Road Not Taken”

Reflecting back over three quarters of a century, Frost’s poem “rings my bell.”

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I began in 1926 in Cascade Montana as one of six children in the family of economically poor and formally uneducated Norwegian immigrant parents. With youthful innocence I fell in love with flying machines, and found myself in US Air Corps B-29 tail-gunnery training, destined for Japanese sky, when mushroom clouds ended World War II in a nuclear holocaust.

After WW-II, thanks to the GI-Bill, I earned a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering with high distinction (arts and sciences “summa cum laude” equivalent) from the University of Minnesota and an ROTC commission as a second lieutenant in the US Air Force in June 1950. “Second lieutenancy” became my ticket to the Korean War. I was involuntarily recalled to active duty in early 1951, volunteered for pilot training, and spent the last six months of that war as a B-29 copilot flying bombing missions from Okinawa’s Kadena Air Base to targets in North Korea.

After the Korean War and some years in industry, by this time recognizing how grossly ignorant I was about most everything in life other than engineering – I returned to graduate school and truly “educated myself” at that great public university, the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where I earned a 1959 master’s degree in engineering, and a 1965 interdisciplinary Ph.D.

I am so profoundly grateful to have had these eight years at Wisconsin where my wife and I nurtured three great Phi Beta Kappa daughters, and where my perspective expanded as I “collected myself” after Korea. This, my “less-traveled-path,” enabled me to grow in not just engineering, but also from swimming in some political science and economics [“political-economy”], history, psychology, medical school physiology [for my human factors engineering interests], philosophy and ethics, international relations, industrial relations, international socio-economic development, and some law in the Wisconsin Law School. This academic milieu in synergy with the rich intellectual and internationalist University of Wisconsin culture -- lifted and launched me on my “less-traveled-path,” and as Frost said, ...”that has made all the difference.”

One of the most meaningful treasures that I discovered at the University of Wisconsin was the beautiful wisdom that is Wisconsin’s “Sifting and Winnowing” academic freedom ideal. This ideal arose out of a late 19th century conflict in which the “robber-baron” corporate power structure that ran the state, unsuccessfully sought to silence an economics professor, Richard Ely, whose ideas they did not like. The Wisconsin “Sifting and Winnowing” ideal reads as follows –

“Whatever may be the limitations which trammel inquiry elsewhere, we believe that the great State University of Wisconsin should ever encourage that continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth can be found.” **

** please see page 5.

I have been a faculty member at the University of Wisconsin, Madison [1957-1963]; Ohio State University, Columbus [1965-1967]; and Ohio University, Athens [1967-1992] where I am presently an emeritus professor. I have been a visiting professor at The University of Washington, Seattle (three months) [1980] (See WISE below); Chubu University, Kasugai (Nagoya) Japan (three months) [1981]; Shanghai Institute of Mechanical Engineering, Shanghai China (six months) [1986] and; Montana State University, Bozeman (four months) [1989].

Academic and professional career involvements over a half century, include “quality and reliability systems” - “design and analysis of engineering experiments” - “engineering economics” - “human factors engineering” - “occupational health and safety” -- “green technology by design” - “engineering and public policy” - “technology culture symbiosis” - and “war, peace, and non-violent conflict resolution” --- and industrial employment and consulting.

Somewhere in the mid 1970s I was asked to chair and breathe some life into our moribund College of Engineering Lecture series. This I did until I took early retirement in 1985. Reflecting my own broader interests from my teaching and graduate student days at Wisconsin and other subsequent meaningful professional experiences – I was able to bring many unique and distinguished persons to the College of Engineering and the Ohio University campus over the years. A few that come to mind are – author and practicing engineer, Sam Florman, *The Existential Pleasures of Engineering*; Dr. Russell Peterson, former Delaware Governor, Chairperson of the US Congress, Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) and President of the National Audubon Society; author and energy physicist, Rocky Mountain Institute, Amory Lovins, *Soft Energy Paths: Towards a Durable Peace*; consumer and citizen activist, Dr. Claire Nader; economist and author Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process*. G-Roegen, a rare economist, understood the linkage between “free market” economics ideology and scientific laws of thermodynamics. Economic processes are intrinsically entropic.

In 1977-78 on a sabbatical leave year with the US Congress, Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), I worked on resource conservation and environmental issues. My professional engineering task at OTA was to examine some of the enormity of United States’ resource consumption, our wastefulness as a nation – and to suggest policy recommendations for improvement – almost all of which fell on deaf ears.

In 1980 I was the first faculty-member-in-residence (FMR) for a new and still continuing program on “Educating Engineers in Public Policy” called the “Washington Internships for Students of Engineering” (WISE). This summer-long program took place in Washington DC with fifteen top engineering students competitively selected from around 120 applicants from major universities across the USA. Students earned academic credit from the University of Washington, Seattle. In July 2005 my former students and I celebrated the quarter-century anniversary of this meaningful social invention. See the end of my web site for a 1981 paper describing this experience.

In 1982 I ran unsuccessfully for the US Congress as a peace candidate in the Ohio 10th District Democratic Party primary -- in opposition to the Reagan administration’s acceleration of the arms race. For this patriotic exercise of my citizenship -- my department chairman and engineering college dean significantly financially punished me.

After the 1991 Persian Gulf dominantly “Oil Resource” War ended -- with the encouragement of several persons in the Athens Ohio Unitarian Fellowship, I founded the Article 9 Society (A9S). A9S is an organization dedicated to the preservation of the Japanese Constitution's war-renouncing Article 9 and to the ultimate adoption of Article 9’s principles by all nations on Planet Earth.

The World's Greatest "Rule of Law" --

ARTICLE 9 of the Japanese Constitution

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

Article 9 is another of those rare and wonderful bits of species wisdom, like the University of Wisconsin's "Sifting and Winnowing" ideal -- that offers a hopeful model and path by which humanity might find its way to a meaningful existence in a world that sadly often seems intent on destroying itself with -- [1] increasingly lethal engineering and scientific weapons of mass destruction creations in synergy with [2] profligate and inequitable over consumption of Mother Earth's beautiful resource treasures, leading to "resource wars" and globally warming ourselves to Martian lifelessness.

More on these ideas and concerns show up on my web site www.article9society.org, and are the subject of the bilingual (English and Japanese) book -- Overby, C. [text], Kunihiro, M. [translator], & Momoi, K. [photo artist], *A Call For Peace: The Implications of Japan's War-Renouncing Constitution*, Kodansha International, Tokyo, 1997, Kodansha America, New York, May, 1998. (Paperback edition 2001) In July 2005 this book was republished and up-dated with a new 48-page preface and index -- by Tachibana Publishing Inc., 2-17-8, Nishiogiminami, Sugunami-ku, Tokyo, 167-0053, Japan. www.tachibana-inc.co.jp/

I have made many lecture trips to Japan, covering all five of the major islands -- and around the world, in support of Article 9's wisdom.

My three latest journeys to Japan were [1] an October-November 2003 six-week lecture tour ranging from Hokkaido to Okinawa, [2] a July 2005 three-week trip to Hokkaido and Honshu, and [3] a five week lecture in May-June 2007 again from Hokkaido to Okinawa. In 2007 my main paper title was, "Imagine the Magic of an Article 9 Without Borders." These 2007 presentations were made in eight [8] major Japanese universities and nine [9] major Japanese cities. I also met in smaller seminars with Japanese engineers, scientists, and eco-economists on "Green Technology by Design" [GTBD] as non-violent, non-military means to prevent -- [a] "oil and other resource wars" and -- [b] ecospheric pollution and "global warming."

Other world travels on these twin themes -- "Article 9," and/or "GTBD" include -- China, numerous cities across the country from Beijing to Shanghai -- Mumbai and Delhi India -- Budapest Hungary -- Auschwitz (Oswiecim) Poland -- Manila Philippines -- Berlin Germany -- Lodz Poland -- North Korea -- Vancouver and Toronto Canada, and Quito and Manta Ecuador. I have also made presentations on Article 9 related matters at International Peace Museum conferences in Kyoto Japan [1998] and in Guernica Spain [2005]. Papers on some of these and other trips can be found at www.article9society.org .

Several times I have been an invited lecturer on segments of a Japanese youth organized and run, around the world, cruise ship called Peaceboat. Peaceboat travels to places around the globe that are afflicted by war and violence, human rights violations, and environmental degradation etc. etc. -- educating its paying passengers on these obscenities, and asking "why?" -- and "what might be done." (See www.peaceboat.org) My Peaceboat lectures deal with the

importance, the beauty, the wisdom of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, and the inclinations by both Japanese and USA governments to destroy it. I also explore themes related to “Green Technology by Design” as one means to help prevent [a] “oil and other resource wars” and [b] ecosphere degradation – “global warming.” In 2000 I was invited to become a member of Peaceboat’s Global University Advisory Board. I have tried to help them establish a Peaceboat presence in the USA – a nation much in need of this beautiful youth organized and run institution.

As indicated above, one of my interests is in making peace with the environment as one of the multitudes of activities in which nations might participate non-violently so as to prevent resource wars, and global warming. My most recent publication in this domain is “Green Technology by Design [GTBD]: A New Paradigm for Engineering Education for Sustainable Development”, a chapter in -- Freeman, Puskas, & Olbina, *Cleaner Technologies and Cleaner Products for Sustainable Development*, Springer-Verlag, New York, 1995. An abstract of this paper and an earlier 1980 paper titled “Product Design for a Sustainable Future: A Matter of Ethics?” are at the end of my web site. Also see our book, *A Call For Peace*, page 65 on “oil resource wars,” and pages 173-199 for more on GTBD.

I consider myself a creative critic of my country, the USA, and its path as a world leader. I am deeply grateful for the many opportunities that have been mine as a US citizen, to fulfill some of my promise -- and yet I, along with millions of my fellow citizens, seek to improve this system that nurtured us. We seek a United States of America of which we can be proud – an America that treats all people on Planet Earth with dignity and respect, rather than as “collateral damage,” as “something to be manipulated,” or as “consumption machines.” We seek an America that maximizes equity, democracy, community, and non-military, non-violent, ethical, ecological, caring, and loving relationships on Planet Earth.

I love the words in some of our founding documents, “... all men are created equal... (except for women, blacks, and Native Americans)” -- and as did Martin Luther King Jr., I seek a nation that rises to these 18th Century truths.

However, I am inclined to agree with Michael Sherry in his 1995 book, *In The Shadow of War: The United States Since The 1930s*, when he characterizes the US, as a culture living in a state of “militarization” which he defines as – “... the contradictory and tense social process in which civil society organizes itself for the production of violence.” Sherry’s perceptions are significantly expanded upon in the three more recent books listed below by respected international relations scholar, Chalmers Johnson.

[1] *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2002; [2] *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic*, 2004; and [3] *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic*, 2007.

I am a product of the culture that Sherry describes. I earned a bachelor’s degree with financial help from the World War II GI-Bill, a master’s degree with help from the Korean War GI Bill, and more financial help with part of my PhD expense, as a National Science Foundation Faculty Fellow, because the USSR launched Sputnik in 1957. Sputnik energized the US government into spending wildly on science and technology education at all levels for fear of being “out done” by the Russians. See for example, the 1958 National Defense Education Act [NDEA].

Please also note that the Danforth Foundation also blessed me, as a Danforth -Teacher Scholar, with an additional year of non-governmental financial and moral support on my “less traveled by” Ph.D. path.

I am most grateful for all the above educational assistance. I do wonder, however, why it is so difficult for our government in economically rich America to support any student with the brains to benefit from education -- without this support having to be so largely connected in some ways with military violence of one sort or another. I thus understand Sherry's commentary. This problem still exists in the present. Many non-wealthy USA youth join the military or the National Guard in order for a chance to go to college. Soldier Jessica Lynch, of 2003 Iraq War infamy, demonstrates this dismal picture. As an economically poor person from a poor West Virginia family, she "joined-up" so she could go to college.

I am likewise sadly disturbed by the fact that blacks, our former slaves, who constitute about 12 percent of our US population, are about a third of the US Army's enlisted "grunts" -- those we ask to do wars' most intimate slaughtering and destruction. Considering all different kinds of minorities, close to half of our "killing force" are economically poor minority persons. The other half is largely economically poor Caucasians. What does this suggest? Among other things, it brings me back to Michael Sherry and Chalmers Johnson -- and Naomi Kline, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 2007.

Relative to blacks and other minorities -- in the early to mid 1970s, noting the general absence of black students in our engineering programs, I proposed to our dean's office and others at Ohio University that we make a special effort to recruit black students into our college of engineering. Unfortunately these ideas fell on deaf ears and I did not have the time to aggressively push and seek funding for them. Fortunately, however, in the late 70's and early 1980s with a change in our engineering college administration, a new assistant dean, apparently independently of my earlier efforts, also saw the need to recruit black and other underrepresented minority students. Out of his effort came the Ohio University College of Engineering "Pre-Engineering Program" [PEP] beginning in 1981. It was my privilege to direct this program for three summers, 1982, 83, and 84.

As a registered professional engineer I am much anguished by the huge link forged in America between engineering and the design and creation of things for killing and destruction. I dream that one day we might find a cure for America's addiction to war and thus enable our engineering creative contribution to be more for humanity's fulfillment rather than for empire, war, and violence. I seek an America that provides world-class leadership under "rules of law" rather than under "rules of war." Hence my passion for the world's foremost "rule of law" -- Japan's war-renouncing Article 9.

Unless we learn to do this rather quickly, we human animals will destroy all life on Planet Earth -- [a] with our exponentially increasingly lethal engineering systems for killing and destruction, probably in synergy with [b] polluting and globally warming ourselves into Martian lifelessness with our unnecessarily -- mindless, profligate, and inequitable consumption of beautiful Mother Earth's resource treasures -- converting them into entropic randomness.

PEACE

** These "Sifting and Winnowing" words were taken from a late 19th century University of Wisconsin Board of Trustees meeting in support of the right of economics professor Richard Ely to explore controversial ideas with his students. One of his most controversial ideas at the time was his view that ordinary workers perhaps ought to have the right to collectively form unions in order to achieve some minimum semblance of "balance of power" in relation to the corporate giants who unabashedly ruled the state at that time. This corporate (robber baron) power-structure strongly sought to have professor Ely fired for polluting the minds of youth. The Wisconsin Board of Trustees courageously resisted this pressure and refused to remove Ely. These 36 words of wisdom are displayed as a large bronze plaque, called the "Sifting and Winnowing" plaque. It is mounted on the wall of Bascom Hall, one of the oldest buildings that sits on top of the highest hill on campus, housing the president and administration. As a graduate student and instructor at the Wisconsin, 1957-1965 -- my mind was polluted by these beautiful ideas and ideals.

A UTOPIAN REYARP **

Our father which art in things,
Hallowed be thy lucre.
Thy products come
As it is in thy con-sump-shun-dum.
Gorge us this day with our daily bread,
big mac's,
and artichoke delicacies --
while other bellies bloat
as starvation raves.
Dry our tears --
rivers of pollution.
Forgive us our lagging g n p.
As we forgive those who would
change its distribution.
Advertise us into temptation
so that our bellies swell
armpits smell sweet – and
Humvees and SUVs
deliver us to glory,
on other people's oil --
while valium and prozac
nightly give us,
peace.
Deliver us from heresy
which strangely gnaws at our bones --
Could thou be a false god?
But no --
For thine is the kingdom of consumption,
The power and glory in things,
For ever and ever
ah-man and wo-man --
Have we arrived lost?

** prayer spelled backwards

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Athens, Ohio
September 1977

(modified periodically as technologies change)

This “prayer poem” was written in the late 1970s when I worked in Washington DC on sabbatical in the United States Congress, Office of Technology Assessment. My professional engineering task was to examine some of the enormity of United States resource consumption, our wastefulness as a nation – and to make some recommendations for improvement. This poem is one of my ecological engineering -- “Green-Technology-By-Design” pieces. From this fulfilling Washington experience I learned much about America’s real god.



World War II and Korean War

Boeing B-29 Superfort

70 tons gross weight

10 ton bomb load

23.5 ton fuel load

[6,400 gallons]

NIGHT VISIONS

Penetrating black voids
in night ahead
brightened with
july fourth-like
works of fire --
Steady on course
into colored holocausts
become hard metal
with rockets red glare --
While below
bombs burst everywhere --
our gifts to "gooks"
and our flag was still there.

© chuck overby; 6/7/78
Korean War B-29 pilot
Founder the Article 9 Society; 3/18/91

Transferring technology to serve the needs of humans everywhere, killing at each other -- B-29 night bombing in Korea. Anti-aircraft fire [flak] at night looks like 4th of July fireworks. Some U. S. national anthem words of violence find their way into this poem. I would prefer something beautifully and thoughtfully gentle like Sibelius' "Finlandia" as a national anthem. The term "gooks" was a common "term of endearment" used in the US military in the Korean War for North Korean and Chinese people who happened to be the "enemy" of the day.

FINLANDIA

(Words by Lloyd Stone 1933 ?)

(Music by Jean Sibelius, 1899)

This is my song, O God of all the nations,
A song of peace, for lands afar and mine.
This is my home, the country where my heart is,
Here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine.
But other hearts in other lands are beating
With hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.

My country's skies are bluer than the ocean,
And sunlight beams on cloverleaf and pine,
But other lands have sunlight too, and clover,
And skies are everywhere as blue as mine.
O hear my song, thou God of all the nations,
A song of peace for their land and mine.



My Ultra-Light Flying Machine

27 ft. wing-span, 5 ft. wind-chord -- 38 HP 4-stroke V-2 air-cooled engine -- weighing in at less than 254 pounds (less pilot) -- and equipped with a ballisto-parachute. 150 -- 200 ft. take-off distance -- 20-25 mph landing speed -- 55 mph maximum cruise speed. See *EAA Sport Pilot*, "Backyard Flyer," December 2006, pp 40-46, for more info. For several years I have been planning a return to my childhood love-affair with flying machines and build one of these ultralight toys from a kit or "from scratch" (built from plans). Unfortunately I never seemed able to disengage from my other passions long enough so as to "get to it." Recognizing my fast shrinking finiteness as I approached the tender age of 81 -- I capitulated and bought this little bird that "grabbed me" -- when I saw its debut at the July 2006 Oshkosh Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) wingding. With parental longevity genes blessing my way, I still hope to build one of my own before entropy totally randomizes me.

Chuck Overby -- December 2006

UNFETTEREDNESS

Eagles soaring on winds
 swept up treeless hills
 of brown summer grass
Or, climbing in thermal drafts
 over broiling prairies --
To be one with the wind,
 freed from tugs of earth
 to wheel and swing
In wild abandon
 with exuberant spontaneity
 through mansions of air --
Eyes of a ten year old see
 childhood dreams of
 eagles views of earth.

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6/25/78

reflections on childhood urges to fly,
growing up in northeastern Montana
in the 1930's