

Gas-Fast on Cape Cod

The Gas-Fast Plan

Excerpt from a letter to an editor, June, 2005:

I am mindful when I drive my car that my consumption of gasoline promotes the demand for oil that engendered the war in Iraq. Furthermore, my car's production of CO₂ emissions is changing the climate.

Ideally, individuals examine their behavior and do what they can; political leadership at the top in Washington toward renewable energy seems virtually non-existent.

This is why I will endeavor to park my car for July, taking advantage of one summer month to make a gesture to the Earth and its people.

Cape Codders know how difficult it is to be here without a car, to bring in food and necessities, to earn a living, and to socialize. I intend to have some food stocked up in my somewhat isolated home, and I will use my bike for errands. I'll use every skill I can muster to keep my livelihood going.

Just beforehand, I thought, can I really make this social, physical, and economic sacrifice? Maybe nobody even cares if I do a gas-fast.

Two things pushed me forward.

1. A question: Do I love the Earth or not? This I kept asking myself.
2. An experience: My daughter and I were on a lovely hike by Pleasant Bay. She is twenty-one and has given up driving. When I told her I was considering a fossil fuel fast, she beamed with pride and said, "High five, Mom!"

July 15, 2005

The Trip to Town

Instead of driving as usual, I biked twenty miles to my shopping town.

On the bike, every hill is respected, every uphill improves me, and every downhill refreshes. Every yard is bought with the fuels of water, breath, and what was for breakfast.

The wayside is fragrant with lilies and cut grass. From the window of a Bed and Breakfast wafts the smell of pancakes and butter.

Part of the trip is on a charming bike path. But, upon emerging into the congestion of the town, I realize how sensitized by car-less living I have become.

Out on the street, as I try to navigate up a hill, a truck comes within inches of my tender left side. Taking refuge on the sidewalk, I contemplate the traffic. It is a mechanical, roaring, fummy river of metal and rubber rushing by.

I think to myself, it does not have to be like this.

I walk the bike on the sidewalk over to the market.

The Market

I have not been shopping for two weeks.

When I enter the market, my inner eyes are tickled by the variety of colors & packaging shapes. Purchases are considered in terms of weight to carry back home, as well as quality and price. At the newsstand, on the NY Times front page, there is a picture of two men weeping over coffins. The headline says, "Eighteen Children Killed in Baghdad." I look up from the newspaper to see summer tourists in the market deciding which chocolate bar to buy. The very harsh idea looms up that children are dying because of our U.S. life style. At this point, no oil = no trucks = no chocolate bars.

Yes, of course, commerce should bring us chocolate, lots of different kinds of chocolate. Transportation of goods and our selves has become a right and that's fine.

But what is the price tag for oil? Is it violence and killing that ricochets around the world as we enter conflicts over dwindling oil resources? The U.S. didn't "bring democracy" to an oil-less nation like Tibet under a despotic rule, so why are we in Iraq?

Is it steadily rising global temperatures and hostile weather? When I drive my Toyota wagon, it sends eleven pounds of CO₂ per day into the atmosphere. That is about two tons per year.

What if the manpower and cost of the Iraq war had gone into a cleaner and green transportation vehicle?

July 20,2005

I Like This

Situations came up in this month that might have justified breaking the fast, like getting to a doctor or making some money. (Why is there no regular bus up 6A? I live in the bus black hole of Cape Cod.)

Anyway, today I realized that I like this gas fasting. I feel fit from biking, rich from not spending money, sensitive to the Earth, and peaceful because I boycott a substance that causes trouble. I like this car-free life, and I recommend it, and when I tell people about it, some say, "Hey, I want to do that, too. I'm sick of driving."

Have your own gas fast, for the love of the Earth and its people, and for your own pleasure as well. Have a car-free Friday, for instance. Even one day a week is a start.

Some day the world will be peaceful and clean like we never dared imagine.

I think to myself, it can be like that.

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