

Tomatoes from the greenhouse mission.

Missions of Obscurity

There are No Lost Causes.

When I was a little kid, I was considered a lost cause by everyone except my parents. I probably would have been kicked out of school and become a deadbeat if they hadn't struggled to prove that I wasn't a bad kid, but that my brain didn't work. Coming that close to being lost forever changed me. When the madness came again, I vowed that if I survived, I would seek out the lost and save them too.

The difference between a Mission and a Mission of Obscurity is that something obscure is not readily noticed or seen. Things like AIDS and Wildlife conservation are not obscure, because people hear about them all the time and so have a sufficient base of force to keep the movement going. An obscure cause has few or no one to champion it because it's not readily noticed or seen.

My first Mission of Obscurity came by accident when I went to the plant Nursery several Julys ago. I saw a dumpster full of discarded tomato plants, thrown away for no other reason than that they had grown spindly. It wasn't the tomato's fault it grew that way, planted so close together and all. I spent an hour in the hot sun digging out the dying plants in their plastic planters and set them up in the trunk of my car. I literally grew 110 tomato plants in my trunk for about a month. I would leave the trunk open during the day in the guarded parking lot so they would get sun and went out to water them on my lunch break. Alas, I had nowhere else to bring them. Ma wouldn't let me plant them at home and I had yet to discover the lot behind the

apartment's parking garage. After a heartbreaking struggle to keep them in my trunk so they could live out their lives, Ma threw them away.

I can talk to plants, at least I think I can. You can't prove that I can't so I'm running with it. I can hear them living. They were sad that they were thrown out, but felt that they deserved it. They never did really recover from being thrown away, but by the end they had hope. I know at least some of them appreciated the rescue, even if a minority thought it would have been more honorable to die in the dumpster.

It was a sad ending, one that still haunts me but ultimately affected no one. The next Mission, however, would ultimately lead through the heart of the entire world.

In May of that same year, 2001, I saw a documentary on Afghanistan. Seeing humans doomed to the curse of Obscurity, I set about trying to make people aware of a little known group called the Taliban. Working in joint with the Afghan Women's Mission in California, I put together a packet explaining the horrors of Afghanistan and a request for donations to help build a hospital in Quetta, Pakistan for refugees. I figured that if the humans knew what was happening to others in their tribe, they would immediately help in any way they could.

I suppose that is a sign of how utterly naive I was. I made 100 packets and put them in 100 envelopes, stamped with the red star of the back. When I went to see teachers during the school year, I noticed that many of them had covered their doors with political slogans, articles, and various



This was the first time the Seventh Star was used as a personal symbol and it marked the official creation of 'The Seventh Star Projects.' Originally meant to stand for the Missions, SSP now refers any project I undertake.

Missions of Obscurity



liberal opinions, including one very annoying doctored picture of Elian Gonzalez being kidnapped by Bill Clinton. I decided that if these people were so for justice and the human condition, then surely they would help. I only taped envelopes to the doors of people with pro-human propaganda. It was summer and no one was around, but when Fall came, surely they would get the notices. But I received no replies. One man was present during my postings and told me that with so many problems in the world we could only pay attention to the most pressing.

Most pressing? I could not think of people in a more dire need than the ones in Afghanistan. It didn't make sense. I hit my old high school as well (faculty only) in late June but also received no replies. My old Biology teacher said he would see what he could do, but never did. I carried on alone, making posters and sticking them up on campus. No one noticed until one clear day in September...

9/11 and life on the Epicenter.

The first thing I remember thinking was 'Please let it not be Afghanistan.' I didn't wonder if my Dad survived; for some reason I knew he did. I'm not really sure how I knew he wasn't in the building but somehow I wasn't concerned. I was worried about my Ma though. I don't think I ever thought it through,



She is someones mother. She could easily be yours.



that I knew Da was okay even though I didn't and that I was calling my Ma to confirm that. It's ridiculous, but that is how it went. I was probably the only person in the states that was asleep when it happened. Beanie had to call from work to wake me up. My first reaction was to call Da's office and ask if it was true, but why would he be by the phone if a plane hit his office?

In case it hasn't become clear, Da worked in the World Trade Center when they came down. The only Cantor Fitzgerald workers that survived were the ones that were late to work, and my Da was one of them. He watched the whole thing from the Ferry Dock in Hoboken.

I lived 9/11 in a surreal way. The Towers had come down, but I wasn't surprised. How could I be surprised if I had been trying to make people aware of the danger for three months? That wasn't very logical, to think that nothing would happen if we let Afghanistan stay as it was. But no one else knew about Afghanistan or saw the danger looming. To the general population it was as if a giant hand came through the sky and scooped the towers up. I had a very hard time acting panicked, but it was expected so I tried my best.

I'm not so much a citizen of the US of A as I am of Earth. Places on Earth got bombed by other places on Earth every day and though it wasn't a good thing, it didn't seem out



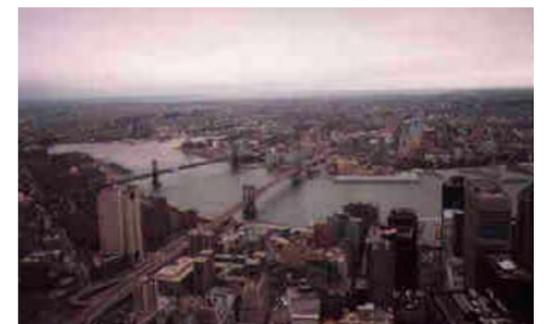
Left: The original webpage I made devoted to the Afghan crisis, long before 9/11 (and website experience). It hasn't been updated since, but the news articles are current as they come from an rss feed.

Above: View from my dad's old office.



These pictures were taken from my dad's old office on the 103rd Floor of the North Tower. I wish I had the photos to rescan, but both the prints and the negatives have been lost in the Great Divide.

The badge was found stuck to the cover of the holy book in use at the time.



Anti-war posters. I usually don't make such things because I feel they don't do much good, but because I was assigned to make them, I went with logic.



Missions of Obscurity

of the ordinary that it would happen here. I mean, this was a place on Earth, yes? I was at a complete loss for the confusion, because I assumed everyone paid at least a moderate amount of attention to what happened on their planet.

Now I realized that most people I talked to didn't even know where other countries on their planet were. I had spent six years absorbing as much Terrian knowledge and history as I could fit in and then I find that I, the only one who wasn't born here, knew more about Earth than its inhabitants. That really put me on my ear.

Post 9/11 was not a good place for an Eccentric, to be sure. I understood patriotism, but why were people putting little flags on their cars and saying to bomb Afghanistan? I tried to tell them that we had to save the people that had been bombed by the same people that bombed us, but no one seemed interested. It was the first time, in the months proceeding 9/11, that it became incredibly clear that I was not at all from this planet. It seemed like I had missed something big, that there was a secret reason why everyone was panicking so much. The buildings were bombed and now they were gone. It was over, I thought. I had nearly lost my Da that day, but he didn't die, he was alive. I almost got killed twice driving home from school, but that was over too, wasn't it? Living in the house with a 9/11 victim and my Da (because honestly I think it freaked Ma more) was hard enough. At least Da had a good degree of common sense and understood my confusion. He also had the good sense to warn me not to talk to anyone about my thoughts for fear of my getting hurt.

But I couldn't stop, for the Mission wasn't done. At first I thought maybe it was, for now that people saw the danger, they would help the other people.

Or not...

To my amazement, the people instead were sending aid to the richest city in the world instead of the poorest. Why on Earth would NYC need food to be brought in? Could not the grocery stores donate their wares and be subsidized by the government?

The few that realized that I had seen the future didn't do much more than remark on how eerily right I was instead of defending the humans in Afghanistan. Never had I felt so frustrated. I missed the Trade Centers. I had been in them a few times and knew people there, but I wasn't even

**FLIGHT FOR FREEDOM
747 CARGO TAKES OFF
FOR AFGHANISTAN W/ AID
ON 12/26/2001
THIS IS A RESCUE/RELIEF MISSION!!
LOADING ENDS 12/14/2001**

The original poster put up around campus.

allowed to feel sad for them because all my concentration was directed towards a far more distressing situation.

Drought-struck Afghanistan survived the past three winters by International Aid, but with the US bombing, no one was able to do the annual drop off. If the bombing didn't let up, then the food would not get there before snowfall. The original Mission reformed into something more urgent. Without aid, an estimated seven million people could die. Seven million people! Why wasn't the US stopping? They couldn't really let all those people die because of what had happened to the people here, could they? It seemed that they very well could. Desperate, the Afghan Women's League and RAWA, an underground rebel group of women in Afghanistan made plea after plea to send in aid. Aid was piling up on the borders with nowhere to go and winter was setting it. Like a stroke of a miracle, Evergreen Aviation donated a 747 to our cause and Microsoft paid for the fuel. Now we had to fill it by December 11th.

Mission 747

I was still begging around campus for help and even went to a war forum to speak.

It was horrible.

Why were they talking about WWII and calling each other socialists? What did that have to do with anything? Couldn't they see the 7 million lives hanging in the balance? Aside from Beanie, the most intelligent wonder, I was alone on my crusade to fill the cargo plane and bought 60 lbs of winter clothing out of my own pocket. It is at this point that I would like to thank the postman who helped me mail it all to Oregon. The cost was well over \$100 and I never would have been able to afford it had he not stuck a pamphlet in each box and declared it media mail. I didn't even know there was such a thing as media mail, but apparently if you are sending paper or books, you can get charged a fraction of the price. It doesn't make much sense but then again nothing does.

Along the way I did find people that understood after all, but were afraid to speak in the hostile climate. This heartened me. It wasn't that they were blind, but rather afraid. Or at least I hoped that was what it meant.

The plane made it to Afghanistan by mid January after being delayed three times. I never found out if my clothing made it to the humans but I hope it did. Slowly and painfully, the main population realized Afghanistan's plight and the situation ceased to be obscure. At least for now, the humans could fix their own problem, which was what I wanted in the first place. I was more than happy to leave the political scene. I was only there for the same reason someone pulls a person from a burning vehicle. It's just what you are supposed to do.

Not all my Missions are Grand and Majestic. Most of them have to do with small amounts of abandoned things, like buildings, plants, animals, and humans. Many of them only make sense to me, like the tomatoes. I like to be obscure myself.



Second Edition Notes:

Originally there were more missions in this book besides the 747 and Greenhouse Missions, but the book has grown too massive already. Other Missions range from taking care of elderlies, to shelter animals, to abandoned lots, to signing various petitions for human rights/wildlife issues. I haven't done anything as public as 747 since.

I consider this book to be a Mission, but not a Mission of Obscurity, unless it ended up aiding an obscure cause.

:Return to Sender

Who our friend is today, may not be tomorrow and that sad lesson learned is that we never give weapons we merely loan them for a while

For we always get them back...eventually...

There is no War to end all Wars

For the Young will always avenge the Old
That being true,
that War is a means to an End,

What End are we looking for?

How far we've come

As Humanity wanders through time, only one thing is sure.
Must we always use violence
to get what we want?

Surely there is another Way we can learn...

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The Greenhouse Mission

To Make Life Where There is None.

It wasn't intentional. I was looking for a way to escape the Winter during college and there it was, an abandoned greenhouse. When the new science building was built, the Biology Department had left the old one to dissolve. I asked the Earth and Environmental Sciences people who now owned it if I might play in one of the rooms and they said yes.

That was February when the seeds were planted, and as of today the greenhouse now has a purpose once more. It was hard work but a labour of love.

The After pictures were taken a month ago and aren't current when this went to print. It is currently in bloom and there is much to eat! I hope to give the food to my parents when they come to my Graduation next week.

Second Edition Notes:

The greenhouse has passed on. When I graduated in 2003, I still continued to water and tend it. However, a heatwave over a July weekend wiped out most of what I grew. A few months later I had a dream calling for its reconstruction. Again it failed. The third and final try lingered on until February, when my sprinkler system was dismantled without my knowledge.

Earlier on, I moved one of the tomato plants to the apartment's gardens. It died that winter as tomato plants do, but had dropped a few seeds that returned the following year. The greenhouse lived on in them.



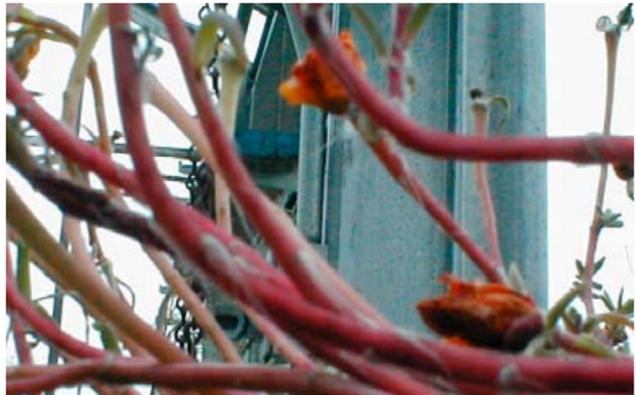
Before

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After. And yes I know these aren't the best pictures ever but I was young and the camera was old. What more can I say?

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Second Edition Notes - Greenhouse Forever

Holding on

Learning about death and change does not come easily for most people, but for me it was even harder. At the time of the greenhouse mission I had never really had to let go of something I loved before, even if they were only plants. After I graduated I continued to haunt the greenhouse until a heatwave destroyed it. I tried to walk away but couldn't, even though it was becoming obvious that I couldn't keep driving all the way up to the college just to water my plants. So I set up a sprinkler system to do the job for me. More time passed and my trips up there became more and more infrequent and my guilt began to grow. I am ruled by my own one-man religion that I've written about later in this book, and two of its unbreakable laws are that it

is forbidden to abandon and it is forbidden to kill any living thing. Leaving the greenhouse would break both. When you believe in something, really, really believe in something, it is just so hard to defy it even if it has begun to create all sorts of problems. The easy answer would be to accept that it's time had passed. Anyone would have chosen that rather than make the trek up to campus every day. For me it took another year. It may have dragged on to this day except that someone shut off the water and killed it all for me. Nothing lasts forever.

The greenhouse as it appeared in its final days... ➤

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