

The Danville News
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"Earth Day"
Word Count: 750

Finally! Isaac James, our second grandson, was born on January 23. We finally got to see him in person the other week. Well, I saw him. He smiled wide at peek-a-boo and nose beeps. I saw him. Darling wife held him. And held him. And wouldn't let him out of her loving arms. And rocked him. And danced with him. Despite his father being a modern jazz drummer, Isaac James enjoyed dancing with his Gran to the eighties pop tunes I tuned into on my transistor radio. Our daughter and her husband enjoy music. Both play piano. Margaret sings beautifully. They play their phonograph albums at dinner. TV? Nope. Screen time is strictly controlled. No regular broadcast television. Netflix, yes. But only on weekends. Only for adults. They don't watch regular television, but what they do watch is worthwhile. Which explains why I bring my radio. How else can I keep current with the news?

Isaac James especially enjoyed dancing to Cindi Lauper, Bon Jovi, and Billy Joel. Who wouldn't? I joked about Elaine preparing to dance with him at his wedding. Let's see, he might marry in his late twenties. Okay, Elaine will be in her late eighties, but I'm betting she'll be up for a slow dance with her grandson. Maybe a gentle swing dance. I doubt I'll be around. Makes you ponder what our grandchildren will see in the years to come.

David Attenborough, in his latest documentary which we watched one night, offered some thoughts about the future decades. He's worth listening to, either by reading his book or tuning into Netflix for his, "A Life On Our Planet." He explains how this documentary is his witness to his ninety-three years of observing nature and the damage to the earth he's seen -- global decline in a single life. "We are facing nothing less than the collapse of the living world."

1937. Population = 2.3 billion. Carbon in atmosphere = 280 parts per million. Remaining wilderness = 66%.

1954. Population = 2.7 billion. Carbon in atmosphere = 310 parts per million. Remaining wilderness = 64%.

1960. Population = 3 billion. Carbon in atmosphere = 315 parts per million. Remaining wilderness = 62%.

1978. Population = 4.3 billion. Carbon in atmosphere = 335 parts per million. Remaining wilderness = 55%.

1997. Population = 5.9 billion. Carbon in atmosphere = 360 parts per million. Remaining wilderness = 46%.

2020. Population = 7.8 billion. Carbon in atmosphere = 415 parts per million. Remaining wilderness = 35%.

Predictions? None. Extrapolations? Plenty. The problem and threat is us and the disastrous, destabilizing dominance of the human species over nature, us consuming the earth till it's used up. The

earth is a closed system. Attenborough states it's a "series of one way doors of irreversible changes to the earth" unless we change our behaviors immediately. Nature cannot hide from us. Poverty and greed are destroying essential biodiversity. The equation is simple: When we destroy nature, we destroy ourselves. 2030, nine years from now: massive biodiversity loss, Amazon forests cut down altering the global water cycle, unpredictable weather patterns, drought, floods, and fire, oceans absorbing global warming, arctic ice-free in summer, manifold species extinct. 2040, when Isaac James will be 19 and his sister 21: frozen tundra thawing, releasing methane. 2050, when Isaac James will be 29 and his sister 31: oceans heat up and become more acidic, coral reefs die, fish populations crash, vast regions uninhabitable. 2080, when Isaac James and his sister will be a little younger than we are now: 4 degrees Celsius warmer, global food crisis, pollinating insects disappear, soils exhausted from overuse, approaching the sixth global extinction event.

To Attenborough, is this bleak future for our grandchildren inevitable? Catastrophe will be, unless, as he teaches: "If we take care of nature, nature will take care of us." The healthier is nature, the healthier it is for humans. Healthy oceans, healthy rain-forests. Us working with nature not against it. Saving ourselves. Given the chance, nature will craft its own recovery.

Solutions? Bring countries out of poverty. Improve universal healthcare and education to stabilize the population growth. Reject reliance on the terrible investment in fossil fuels and boost renewable energies (solar, wind, tidal, geothermal). Restore wild places to increase biodiversity. Reforest the world. Re-wild the wild. Where no fish zones have been established, the fish population increases and the fish populations overflow into fishing zones. Increase plant based diets.

Will Isaac get to dance with his grandchild?

Earth, it's personal.