

## Roatan 2 Statement of Purpose

11-April-2023

First, I must apologize for my previous article's curtness and missing last month's issue as I was in the throes of a severe case of walking pneumonia (fully recovered, thank you).

Now, in full retirement and having a year to get used to it, I am somewhat overwhelmed by what I have been missing as far as my understanding and interaction with nature's constant presentation of mise-en-scènes. There arose earth shaking philosophical conclusions when, over this environmental theatre, I juxtaposed Shakespeare's syllogism of "To be, or not to be" and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's (paraphrased) premise that "a human being is a soul cleverly hidden in an animal". The resulting inferences will surely place me among those metaphysical giants of the past like Plato, Socrates, Aristotle and Vernon Snodgrass (a really clever kid from my 4<sup>th</sup> grade class), but I digress.

As you can see, my personal train-of-thought process has an all-terrain locomotive, powered by an Eveready battery. Even when it is off track, it just keeps on going and leads to some interesting, if not logical, segways into whatever espoused topic I am setting forth. In this discourse, the subject being microscopy, I feel full disclosure of context is necessary so stay with me.

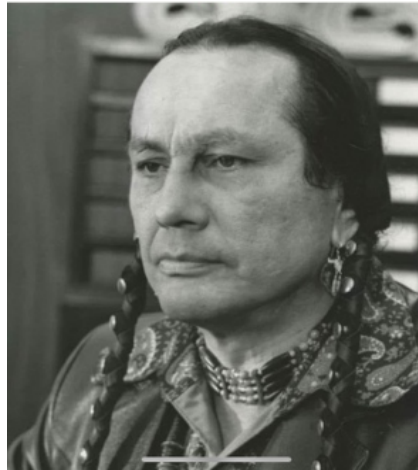
The philosophical framework:

My lovely wife has brought to our lives and educated me on, Native American Indian culture, traditions and spirituality. Her father was a full-blooded Oglala Sioux so she knows whereof she speaks, particularly about this tribal nation. She introduced me to a society that was sane, logical, respectful and not wasteful of the world's bounty. Honor, trust and loyalty abound and these virtues provide a stark contrast to what is seen in many of the ways, mores and values of cultures around the world today. The more I learned, the more I tend to embrace their core value precepts for a noble existence.

My search for an all-encompassing, lowest common denominator "noble existence" ideology continues, but the phrase "appreciative of life" is a front runner as a visionary speculation. Speaking to that, Roatan is a bit of a Garden of Eden. Life teems here. We have constructed a fence from fallen tree branches. Trim the branch to be a fence post, stick it in the ground and the darn thing starts growing! Our lime tree, with a little verbal coaxing, gave us 2700 limes last year and looks to beat that this year! On the property, we found we have a veritable cornucopia of bananas, plantains, chattas, soursop, mangos, avocados, a local cherry and hobo plum trees, plus, a plant that produces a small fruit that tastes exactly like a sweet tart. We have planted every seed they sell at the local nursery. All sorts of interesting critters here too.

Therefore, to conclude this erudite reasoning, I have included the quote below. It's from Russell Means, an unrelated member of the Sioux Nation. An applicable statement of fact because lately, it has become our state of mind of to be the best stewards of the environment that we are blessed to be a part of and apply this conviction as practically as we can, without being prey

to a green fraternity obsessive-compulsive disorder about it (like some acquaintances I have had).



Russell Means, Oglala Lakota Nation (November 10, 1939 – October 22, 2012)

“Before I was six years old, my grandparents and my mother had taught me that if all the green things that grow were taken from the earth, there could be no life. If all the four-legged creatures were taken from the earth, there could be no life. If all the winged creatures were taken from the earth, there could be no life. If all our relatives who crawl and swim and live within the earth were taken away, there could be no life. But if all the human beings were taken away, life on earth would flourish. That is how insignificant we are.”

The ecological framework:

So now, moving forward, I have the chance to leisurely observe the “significant” life surrounding our humble domicile. You don’t live with nature here. Nature lives with you. Easy to do. Hummingbirds fly into our living room and hover about two or three feet in front of our faces to say good morning. We have named all the lizards that roam around in and outside the house. And of course, all of the birds that frequent our deck area. The tarantulas are purple, the racoons are blond and there is a weird ubiquitous mammal called a Watusa or Agouti. They look like a cross between a squirrel, short eared rabbit with no tail, hamster and guinea pig.



Spiney tail iguana



Watusa or Agouti



*Avicularia purpurea* (Purple tarantula)



Blondie Raccoon, checked into his room, only to find.....



“Why does it always have to be snakes” (Indiana Jones). This is a 5ft *Drymarchon melanurus* we pulled from our cistern using a dry-box lid.

*The Watusa and spider photos were taken from Wikipedia which I am pretty sure is public domain but want to acknowledge them just to be sure.*

The geologic framework:

Roatan is a 40 x 5-mile-wide island about 45 miles off the north coast of Honduras. The only flat spot on this part of the bay island archipelago is the airport, or so it seems. Highest spot is 900 ft. An unforeseen benefit of these abrupt elevation fluctuations is they supply us with healthy and endlessly entertaining cardio workouts such as running from the horse and chasing the lawnmower, wheelbarrow, cart or other garden implement that has mastered AI and is attempting to escape downhill. After a year of this I can actually bend down and pick stuff up from the floor, including myself.

We are outside of the main Caribbean hurricane tracks. Our five acres is nestled on the south side of a valley and includes woods, wetlands hills and fields. We don't have any problem with the heat as there is a constant pleasant breeze. Only used the AC for two hours last year and that was to cool down the dogs. Nights are wonderfully cool but only require a sheet and/or a light blanket.

Cruise ships and Scuba diving is arguably the mainstay tourist industry of the island. The fringe reefs are perched on the Cayman trench and afford some of the best diving in the Caribbean.

The demographic framework:

In general, the local Honduran populace is friendly, hardworking, helpful, Latino Christian, but, as in any society, there are a few jerks (mostly, I am sad to say, from the large American expat community here). Driving is not for the timid, the centerline is only a suggestion and it is obviously not illegal to pass someone going uphill on a blind curve unless you cause an accident. Beyond this I could write a novel about the culture here but that will be reserved for further scholarly musings. There is so much to tell about this place!

The entomological menagerie:

It's a Baskin Robbins of ant flavors here. 31 varieties for sure. A huge pastel green wasp with no stripes, what appears to be several species of ticks, varied interesting small arachnids etc.

So, the plan here is to produce a microscopic slide collection representing a cross section of the Roatan biological and botanical ecosystem of such quality, which, after some maturity, will break all auction records at Christies thus heaping long overdue fame, glory, accolades and ensuring financial harmony and lasting enshrinement among those sages of our scientific discipline. That, or I will bequeath them to *Micscape*.

Finally:

Haven't had as much time constructing our lab as I wanted. Our little girl (Chamaca the horse) should have her foal any day now. We have been busy fencing in a safe foaling area.

As I watch the world around me here, I smile, and my heart beats a little stronger. As I watch the world out there, I pray for sanity and common sense to prevail.

Hopefully, more progress next month. Comments encouraged [gwilhelm@metsonmarine.com](mailto:gwilhelm@metsonmarine.com)

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Part 1 of the series. February 2023, [A Return to Microscopy](#).

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