

Ned Roundtree

Amarillo, TX

Barry Booker
St. Joseph, MO

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July 7, 2014

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Barry,

Hey pal. Ned from Amarillo here. Another year, another letter. Things have been getting steadily worse since the blackout happened, but we're stuck here for the long haul.

We still don't have the irrigation problem fixed. Some go getter windmill experts -- those guys who used to work on the wind turbine generators, you know. They've been trying to convert one or two of those big turbines to pump water from Lake Meredith down to town. Don't see quite how they are going to do that. I figured it would be a tall order, and even taller with no electrical equipment to work with. All the same, having a stable source of water down here would be a hell of a good thing, particularly for the ranchers and farmers (not surprising). I got an idea to help, but more later on that. And it's just an idea, so until we get some way to pump water, we just have to cross our fingers, wait for rain and keep the gutters funneling into barrels. It's precious little when I think about

how much we used to use around here, but it gets us by. The garden in the backyard isn't too much, and it seems like took us forever to get any real produce out of it, but it keeps the kids halfway busy. Jenny and I have enough trouble keeping them in line, so anything that'll keep them occupied is a Goddam blessing. Teddy's been running with a bad crowd lately, and it's like moving heaven and earth to get him to help out with anything at all. Just lazes about, smoking dope. Goddam shame, he used to be a bright kid. Shouldn't write him off so quick, I suppose, but it's been hard. I used to bash 'em blue at PTA and district meetings, but I guess the public schools were useful for something after all.

Bandits have been getting worse lately. The first year or so it was just street gang stuff, vandalism and looting. Bad enough, you know. But the last couple years they've been organizing, and a couple of the larger groups apparently have horses now. Rustling cattle, hijacking shipments of grain and other staples. Even killed a few folks earlier this spring, just west of town. Some Indians coming in from New Mexico, killed for some dried chilies

and parched corn. Bad business. Can't even seem to get any good whiskey in here without trouble, and there hasn't been any beer to be had for the last two years, at least. Most of the hold ups and attacks have been between here and Lubbock and a handful west of town, one as far out as Tucumari. The sherriffs haven't been much help, even the rangers can't seem to pin down the more organized packs.

I told the folks in Washington, those chickenshits in Austin, everybody who'd lister, that building that stupid fence in the middle of the desert wouldn't stop anyone determined enough to make it over here. Now I know what you're thinking, but you're wrong. For the most part, the Mexicans that come over are hard-working folk trying to make a living. Can't very well begrudge them that. Putting up a fence just makes it harder on them. I hate regulations and big government as much as the next guy, but we could have put into place some kind of system to weed out the good folk from the drug runners and other scum criminals. And that's the majority of the banditos now. Well, there are of course a large number of no-good white and black

knuckleheads mixed up in that business, but the plain fact of the matter is that most of these banditos are Mexican-American, and those that aren't speak good Spanish or, at the very least, Spanglish. And this is up in the Goddam punchbowl, not down in the belly of the beast.

So, our pumps still ain't pumping. Not a huge surprise to you, I'm sure. They've been sitting still for almost three years now. I had to cut loose pretty much everybody on staff, and it hurt to do that. But, you know, when you try running them manual and all they do is pull up that Goddam nasty sugar water stuff, there's no profit and no way we can keep folks on. Again, I'm sure I'm not telling you anything you don't already know, but small-time oil was always hard enough when what was being pumped was oil... Doesn't make any sense to them, either, when they can be off gardening best they can or fixing up bikes and running mail or just heading out of town for good. And a lot of them have.

Lately, though, I've been thinking a lot about those pumps. I'm so damn dense that it hadn't occurred to me until I heard someone else talking about something really similar.

But, you know how those wind wranglers are trying to convert their turbines to run water to Amarillo and elsewhere? Well, I been imagining that we could convert them pumps of mine to move water instead of petroleum. Just gotta get the oil residue out of them-- Flush them out good, and that sugar water seems to have done a pretty good job of that, and move them to good locations from which to move the water. The wind turbine boys seem to be pretty well-organized, so I don't believe I'll be able to compete with them directly. I've been thinking more along the lines of a partnership with them. Been trying to draft up a proposal for them to look at. Connecting the turbines to readily available pumps seems to me to make a lot more sense than getting new pumps made and moved all the way cross country. Risky business there. Simpler and safer to move my pumps out to their turbine(s), hook them right up and get the water pumped that way. I have a hunch it'll be a little more involved, of course, but it could make life a lot better around here, and keep us aright financially, too.

What have you been doing with your pumps? Reckon you've got plenty of water up in your

Neck of the woods, with the Missouri right in town, but it's probably still hard for you to get it moved around to the right places. I think this wind turbine-pump operation has a lot of promise. As a matter of principle, I never used to give free advice. Much less to a seasoned competitor such as yourself. But, I think that the situation over the last three years has changed most folks, me included. So I say you ought to seriously consider doing this. You've got windmills and turbines up there, right? You got enough wind, I know that, with all those loess hills. All that good earth just piled up all around you. Heh.

I've still been wondering how in hell all of this came about. I know there's been talk about the Chinese, and how they had some weapon that worked on us but backfired on them, too. Now I just think that's a bunch of Bull, and let me tell you why. Here we have one of the biggest economies on earth that's growing by leaps and bounds a year -- China's economy that is. And they're doing it by selling everything they make to the United States and bankrolling the debt that we're accruing in purchasing that stuff. They had us over a Goddam barrel and not even given us a

reach around, and took our cake and eating it too. Preposterous situation for us to be in, and all to China's advantage. They knew it, we knew it, Europe knew it. Hell, I bet even half of Afrika knew it. And then they make a weapon that can molecularly alter all our domestic energy mineral deposits and our bullets, and hose up magnetic interactions to mess up the grid... all of these things that even American weapons manufacturers couldn't do... well, that we know of. But they make it, don't tell anybody about it, don't test it (that we know of), then just up and decide to use it on the biggest cash cow of a nation that ever existed? Doesn't make a lick of sense.

Heard some crackpot up north is saying that mushrooms are to blame for the whole thing. Well that doesn't even rank debunking. Just hogwash. I look around this range and don't ever see hardly a single mushroom blooming up out of the red earth. There's just no way it could have happened.

No, I have to tell you. It's aliens. Couldn't tell you how they did it, but sure as my name is Nedrick Roundtree, they did. The few real astronomy egg heads will tell you

it might have been something else. Moving into an unmapped and magnetically unstable area in space, weird chemical reactions from comets or what not. Simply doesn't add up. Couldn't tell you why they did it, either. All's I can say is, I sure hope it was an accident of some kind. Some interstellar galactic bureaucrat's clusterfuck. Because I can't imagine all this that's happened being on purpose, and a friendly one at that. They still haven't showed their faces -- if they got them -- around here that we've been aware of. Hope they never do.

Used to be, Jenny and I would get the kids all piled into the Suburban with picnic baskets and telescopes and drive up near Lake Meredith, just to the Southwest of it. There was, still is for that matter, nice wildlife refuge up there, and we'd camp and take turns looking at the stars and planets. Had to head out of town to see them very well from Amarillo -- too many lights in town. Now we can see them almost every night from in town -- huge islands of diamonds on an ocean of oil -- but I don't want to look up, much less through a Goddam telescope. I'm scared to death I might see something looking back.

All the best from out West, Ned & family