

LOGO

1) Create a personal logo-design

Working on scratch paper or in your journal, develop a meaningful personal symbol of some kind. This could ultimately be the cover of your portfolio. There are no rules for this other than that (as always) you do it carefully and that, like your epigraph, it is positive and meaningful to you and tells us something about you. Take your time developing the design. Let it somehow symbolically represent something about you – your values, family ethnic heritage, beliefs, hopes, dreams, whatever, whatever. When you have it the way you want it, put it carefully on the upper half of a sheet of paper. And then...

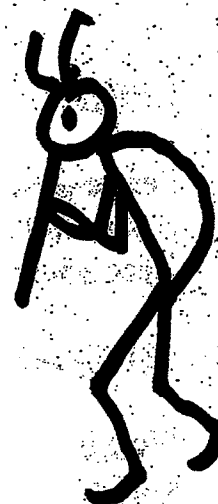
2) Write about it in your journal

Take some time to write about your creation in your journal. What feels good to you about it? Did any new feelings or insights or ideas come to you as you created it? Is there a story or a memory somehow connected with it? How is it connected to your *heart*? Explore such things in your journal. And then...

3) Develop a short, careful piece of writing for the class that somehow brings your log to life for us.

This should fit on the bottom of the page. Practice reading it aloud as you work on it. Listen to how it sounds. Don't just mundanely explain your logo to us. Make it alive with story and stuff. Once you get it so it says what you want it to say, print it carefully on the bottom of the page – and make copies for all of us. Be sure your name is on it.

NOTE: The logo itself need NOT be complicated or fancy. Worry more about its meaning and about the writing than about the art work involved. Work with layout and the "space" of the page. Try to finish with something that feels good to you.

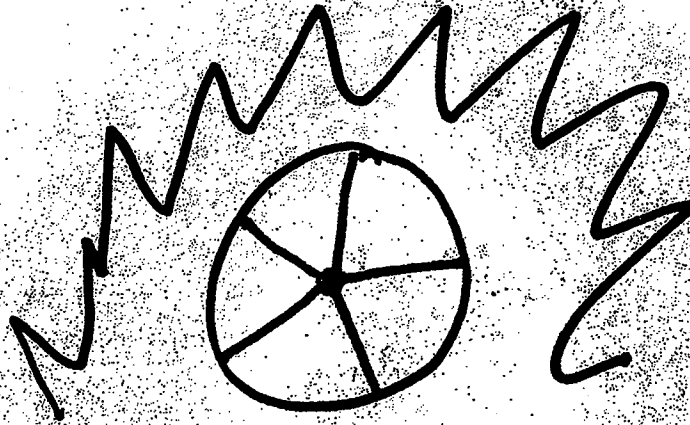


Kokapelli. Years ago, when I first started hanging around the reservation, he was there – baked into the shards of ancient Pima pottery, woven into the designs of O'odhom baskets, even sketched in the corner of the menu at the Sandwich House in Sacaton. The strange little guy was everywhere, but I didn't really see him then. It was back here, in this world, where I really saw him for the first time. It was a few years ago when I found him – or he found me. It was at the first English department meeting of the new school year. (It was before I realized life was too precious and stopped going to such meetings)

I don't remember feeling particularly depressed or stupid before the meeting; but as it drones on, those feeling wash over me with increasing intensity. The talk is of research and publishing and merit pay and promotion. It is grimly serious – long faces, hard eyes, big words. Alternately, I feel like crying and like standing on my chair taking off all my clothes. In desperation, I open my journal. Within minutes, I have escaped (leaving my body behind, of course, so no one will know). I leave in search of something that my heart can hold on to so I will not be swallowed by this grimness. And I find such things: A sweatlodge memory of darkness and earth and glowing rocks and glistening bodies and the sweet praying voice of the old man; A lost memory of bravery, of my father, asking me, his son, to take him to the mental hospital; A memory of Rodale singing "Amazing Grace" for us in my Rainbow class....

And then I watch as my hand draws a crude stick-figure in my journal, and my heart finds something to hold on to in an ancient drawing of kokapelli, the "hunch-backed flute player" – because I like the way he walks as he plays his flute and because I know his hunch-back has taught his eyes to be soft and because he does not carry a briefcase and does not care about publishing and merit pay and promotion and because (somehow I know) children are following him, dancing

Renee
Basinger



It defines me. It breathes in me. It encompasses what I was before it and what I will always be because of it. Like a ghost, pale, listless, lifeless, transparent against the wall of hope, intent on continual utterance of my name, I cannot scare it out of my mind.

It. Cancer. It.

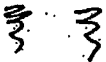
GROWING EVEN IN DEATH, IT REACHES PLACES IT COULDN'T EVEN TOUCH DURING THOSE FIRST FEW YEARS. LIKE THE ASHES, BURNING IN THE DEAD OF THE STORM, EMBERS SPREADING, AND YET, NOT IGNITING, THE FIRE BURNS STILL. CAN IT BE TWELVE YEARS SINCE IT TOOK CONTROL? THE SHADOW LINGERS. THE DEATH TOLL MOUNTS IN MY HEART - IF TIME IS ERASED, IF THE PICTURES FADE, IF THE SOUNDS GROW DIM, I LOSE. I MUST KEEP IT ALIVE EVEN IN ITS DEATH.

When my son was just eight months old... he... was diagnosed with cancer.

I used to try and deny that this one event in my life did not, could not, run and rule my world, my total existence, but I must now admit that I have succumbed to that notion. No matter how hard I try to move on, to find something other than...it... to define my world, I cannot. Oh sure, there are my other children, my husband, my career goals, my friends and such that clearly have an impact on how I think and what I do, but nothing can compare to this one, clear cut, almost demonic, event in my life. I say, "my life", but I do, and I must, acknowledge that I was not the one with the cancer, although I often feel like I was the one; surely I feel as if I should have been the one. That's what demons do - trick you into believing what you've always been taught to be true.

I should be beyond it by now, and yet the scars, physical, mental, emotional, transcend all rationality; to make sense of it all would in a way be letting go of who I truly am, what I have become, and then where would I be? I really can't say who I am aside from what this cancer has made me - hard, vulnerable, easily frustrated sometimes, and yes, strong; stronger than the poison once put in the veins, stronger than the cries deep in the night, stronger than the dreams that he'll someday walk. "It's not about you", I want to say. But, it is.

It. Is.





Ok. So I ripped off the Darwin fish. I'm sorry. I didn't *mean* to rip anyone off. *Really*. In a sense, I am just collecting on an old debt. I mean, Darwin *does* owe me an explanation—evolution hurts like hell! My life, the last fifteen years of it at least, has been all about evolution. Hm. Let me tell you that story.

I was raised in a good evangelical Christian home, one in which Charles Darwin was persona non grata. About fifteen years ago, I began to question many of the certitudes I had been taught since childhood. I read some philosophy, history. I visited Thailand, met some Buddhist monks. Eventually, I realized just how culturally conditioned my Western Christian worldview really was. I learned, for that matter, that *all* worldviews are culturally conditioned, grounded, as they are, in human experience, both individual and corporate. That little insight didn't cost me much, just my parents. I am now dead to them, even as I live.

They don't believe in evolution.

The thing I find terrifying about evolution is that you have no idea where it will lead you. It is an ongoing existential tornado, grinding up everything in its path, confounding the forecasters. It is a fierce maelstrom, violently uprooting your walls of certainty, turning them into deadly missiles aimed at the very core of your being. In the end you are left destitute, stripped of all certainties, save just one: *nothing* is certain. Once the walls of your self-erected fortress have been pulverized to dust, you are left alone, and that utter aloneness is the very foundation of your existence. What else, but the foundation, can survive such a storm?

Now, the big questions, the ones which really haunt me (we all should have questions that haunt us), are these: have I really evolved? If so, was it worth it? Does this thing come with a warranty?

Psst. Hey, Dave. Here. Have a bite of THIS apple. It's delicious and fat-free. And it'll open your eyyyes!

Or, have I actually devolved? Should I carpe diem while there's still time, hack off the legs of that mutant fish, throw the moribund little bastard back into its slimy hole, and embrace whatever system promises to untangle all of life's complexities? Am I even serious about the question? Should my humble syllable grace the side of a *clown* fish instead? Am I...

Oh, for chrissakes! Are you fucking morose, or what?

What? But, but I...

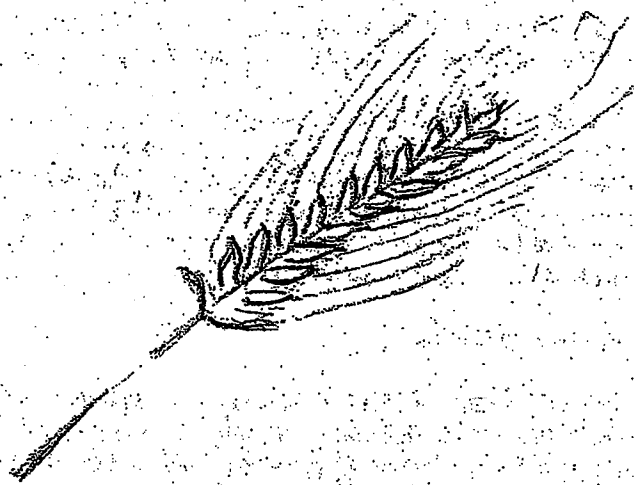
But nothin'! Look, why don't you just roll up the windows, have yourself a little Marlboro marathon, and think this shit over some more? I mean...hell! Way you're talkin', you might as well tie a rope around that pathetic neck of yours, go for a swing in that summer breeze you love so much. Man, you make Nietzsche sound like Billy friggin' Graham!

No! I am not a nihilist! What! Am I supposed to believe that heaven is devoid of pain? What sort of a lifeless, pitiful, bullshit existence would that be? What do you want, platitudes? Well, the last time I checked, the duck-billed platitude was extinct!

Unlike a nihilist, I *do* believe in salvation. I find great meaning in the simplest pleasures of life: playing music, reading great literature, Kafka, Twain, Kurt Vonnegut. I find it in the trees, the flowers, birds, in gazing upon my wife's graceful profile as she sleeps, in playing with my kids—making them laugh. Hanging out with friends. These aren't platitudes. They are the things which, collectively, make up that wondrous trip we call life. I mean, really. What else in life is worth striving for? So you see, it is life—literally, life! —which saves me from that existential death we call nihilism.

Well. That, and the inescapable suspicion that somewhere, nestled snugly in between The Almighty's ass and his pompous throne, is one hell of a big whoopee cushion.

— Dave Mead



Wheat makes bread and bread is romance. When teachers have me read things I always notice the food things, especially the wheat things, like the main character of *Cyrano de Bergerac* is really Ragueneau the baker who imagines he is a poet and his wife hates his poetry and she avenges herself on him for lack of attention by wrapping pastries in his compositions. That to me is the charming part, the important thing. Many of the most significant arguments I have had with others have to do with wheat. An argument begins when I say out loud: "Bread is more important than literacy." I do believe that, though few suspect it. I said it once, at a good friend's wedding, to a teacher-guest at my table who I silently re-named "Little Squab Bones." I said to her: "Bread is more important than literacy." She was just getting certified to teach, had spent a good deal of money and time on the idea of teaching, so, naturally, she had a tremendous investment in my being wrong. I, too, had spent a good deal of money and time on the idea of teaching, but I did not mind the idea of bread being more important than literacy as much as she did. In a sense, I believe that thinking that can really *add* something to your teaching. It seemed like we were having a good talk about bread but it turned out we were not. My friend who was the groom told me that the discussion had made Little Squab Bones uneasy. The wedding was exquisite. They served crab claws, salmon mousse, poached pears, slivered almonds, and lovely rolls shaped like seashells and dotted with sesame seeds. I was enamored with those rolls, as you can well imagine. An angry professor-guest at the table did not think dinner was nice but bourgeois. Now, it is fine to say that bread is more important than literacy, but it is *unforgivable* to turn up your nose at dinner, to fail to appreciate a kind invitation to the table. You will never catch me ungrateful like that, ungrateful for good bread. I guess the professor did to me what I had done to Little Squab Bones.

Stacy Graber



I remember the day I found out I was pregnant. I remember the fears I had, the regrets, anxiety, confusion, the joy. I was only 20, barely hanging onto a job, barely hanging onto my boyfriend. I was alone and living hundreds of miles from my home and family. It was all a mistake — until I heard his heart beat and I fell in love with the little baby inside me. As I started to feel him move, and saw pictures of him growing, and discovered he was going to be a young man, I knew that something this beautiful could never be a mistake. The mistake was my life, dropping out of college, moving away from home, living at the bars. But I vowed that as long as he was safe inside my womb, I would protect him with all my strength and love him with all my heart. I changed during those months, I grew up for him.

But I lost him anyway. I heard his heart beat not 5 days before the doctors told me he was dead. What went wrong I will never know. Of course, I blame myself even though they say not to. If I hadn't been drunk when I conceived him would he have lived? If I didn't initially regret his presence, would I have been able to meet him? I don't know. I will never know. But what I do know is that he changed me. For just five months I provided him a warm home. I did.

Because of him, I am married to a wonderful man and I have a wonderful daughter. I am so close to achieving my dream of being a teacher. I have matured into a responsible woman. I am the mother I would have wanted to be to him.

I sometimes wish now for a second chance with him. When people ask me how many children I have, I can say now without many tears that I have two. I have one in heaven that I will hold one day and I have one here, that I hold as often as I can.

He would be 12 this year.

Heather Pappas
June 8, 2004