

Settle down now, broom

By Emily Weathers Kennedy, Frequent Advocate Contributor

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It's interesting the things you remember about relatives, their quirks and snippets of things they said. My Uncle Bud used to address us kids with "Come here and let me check your oil." Needless to say, I didn't go within any oil checking range, whatever that meant. My Uncle Wilfred was the quiet type. He commented about interesting stories he saw on the news as well as read about in the newspaper and magazines. But mostly, he just listened. When my parents took their rowdy foursome to visit, he would say, "Settle down now, broom." He sometimes referred to us as *broom heads*, so I guess that meant to simmer ourselves down and stop the ruckus.

Nowadays, when I open the newspaper to the editorials or see political posts on Facebook, I find myself wondering how folks pump themselves up daily with negative adrenaline without their heads or their hearts exploding. Even as I churn out regular op-ed columns, I have to step back and see the beauty in the world, to smell the proverbial roses. I can't focus on the negative all the time—the senseless shootings, the loss of humanity on the part of religious and non-religious alike, the hatred of people who are different.

Our country may have its problems, but all in all, life here is pretty good. We live in a society that allows us the **freedom to speak out**, even if our words are negative and non-helpful.

We can **have our guns**, even if we break the record for gun-related deaths in the world and are under the thumb of the NRA instead of rationality.

Our children might not be praying to Jesus in public schools, but they can spontaneously invoke Him on their own accord and are not subject to group invocations to Buddha, Krishna, Muhammed, or the Virgin Mary. In other words, they **have the freedom NOT to be evangelized by other religious doctrines**.

We are **not in an active war** in the Middle East. Our soldiers are not being sent on mission after mission for goals unknown.

Gay people who marry are not taking away anything from our marriages. They don't affect our lives one iota. Their legal standings are their own and do not affect ours.

Crime in our county is not perpetrated by an influx of bad immigrants. Mostly the offenders are drug users and low-lives who have nothing better to do.

Our country's **economic numbers are better** than they have been since the early 2000s, and, we still pretty much have an under-regulated Wall Street, so **Capitalism is not under threat**.

Millions of people now have health insurance. Yeah, I know, the rollout stunk, and people have high premiums. But, some insurance is better than none. Ask hospital administrators who no longer have the volume of write-offs for people with no insurance. Ask the people who can now get life saving cancer treatments or diabetes medicines.

Certainly there is much to cringe about in the news today—shootings of innocents, wildfires and drought that scorch our West. The key is not allowing the badness in our world to keep us awash with anxiety, so turn off the news!

There is beauty all around us, good things happening, and people making a difference. There is a little girl raising enormous sums for ball fields for handicapped children. There are new businesses opening up in our county, new people with great ideas moving in. There are older folks who exercise weekly and compete in senior Olympics rather than remain idle and sedentary. There are talented teenagers who bring people from around the country to our little area for baseball. There are festivals and events galore, usually produced by volunteers, right here in Lawrence County. There is glorious land abounding just waiting for a hike or a picnic or silent meditation. A quiet mind does good things for the heart, just like volunteering and reaching out to others. To paraphrase Chicken Little and Uncle Wilfred, the sky is not falling, so *settle down now, Broom!*



Emily Weathers Kennedy (right of center) is a freelance writer, blogger, artist, photo stylist, and decorator. Her work is online and in product catalogs. Emily lives with her husband, 4 dogs, and 1 cat and writes from their farm in Loretto, where she was born and raised. The Kennedys have three beautiful grown-up daughters.

Point/Counterpoint: An Associated Press Science Writer and an Alaskan Religious Political Humor Columnist offer different views on the President's recent visit to Alaska. What do you think?

In climate bid, Obama stares down melting Alaska glacier

By Josh Lederman and AP Science Writer Seth Borenstein
SEWARD, Alaska (Associated Press) — President Barack Obama stared down a melting glacier in Alaska on Tuesday in a dramatic use of his presidential pulpit to sound the alarm on climate change.

From a distance, Exit Glacier appears as a river of white and blue flowing down through the mountains toward lower terrain. In fact, it's just the opposite. The 2-mile-long chock of solid ice has been retreating at a faster and faster pace in recent years — more than 800 feet since 2008, satellite tracking shows.

"This is as good of a signpost of what we're dealing with when it comes to climate change as just about anything," Obama said with the iconic glacier at his back.

Obama trekked up to the glacier in a carefully choreographed excursion aimed at calling attention to the ways he says human activity is degrading cherished natural wonders. The visit to Kenai Fjords National Park, home to the famed Exit Glacier, formed the apex of Obama's three-day tour of Alaska, his most concerted campaign yet on climate change.

The president, dressed for the elements in a rugged coat and sunglasses, observed how signposts along the hike recorded where the glacier once stood but now only dry land remains.

"We want to make sure that our grandkids can see this," Obama said, describing the glacier as "spectacular."

In another presidential photo-op brimming with theatrical potential, Obama stood on the bow of a tour boat in Resurrection Bay in Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, staring out at the serene waters and lush mountain vistas in both directions. Photographers and reporters traveling with the president were brought alongside him in a separate boat to capture the moment in living color.

Spotted on his voyage: a humpback whale, and sea lions "hauled out" on a rock jutting out of choppy waters.

Obama is counting on Alaska's exquisite but deteriorating landscape to elicit a sense of ur-

gency for his call to action on climate change. He opened his trip on Monday with a speech painting a doomsday scenario for the world barring urgent steps to cut emissions: entire nations submerged underwater, cities abandoned and refugees fleeing in droves as conflict breaks out across the globe.

Exit Glacier has been receding for decades at an alarming rate of 43 feet a year, according to the National Park Service, which has been monitoring its retreat for decades using photography and, more recently, by satellite.

Glaciers ebb and flow due to normal fluctuations in the climate, and even without human activity, Exit Glacier would be retreating. But the pace of its retreat has been sped up thanks to heat-trapping greenhouse gases blamed for global warming, said Deborah Kurtz of the Park Service.

"Climate is the primary driver for the retreat of glaciers and for ice loss," Kurtz said.

The president's trip has been more about visuals than

words, with the White House putting a particular emphasis on trying to get his message across to audiences who don't follow the news through traditional means. To that end, Obama taped an episode of the NBC reality TV show "Running Wild with Bear Grylls," putting his survival skills to the test in the national park.

Obama's first glimpse of a glacier on the trip came as Marine One whisked him about 45 minutes south of Anchorage to tiny Seward. As he flew past snow-capped peaks and sprawling forests, the sheet of ice emerged, snaking its way through mountains toward a teal-tinged lake.

His itinerary also includes the first presidential visit to the Alaska Arctic, which comes amid concerns that the U.S. has ceded influence to Russia in strategic Arctic waters. Melting sea ice has been making way for shipping routes that never existed before, but the U.S. only has two working icebreakers, compared to 40 in Russia's fleet — with another 11 on the way.

As he arrived for the boat tour, Obama said he was asking Congress to speed up construction of an additional icebreaker and plan for even more. Yet he offered few details about the timeline or costs, and the White House declined to elaborate.

"These icebreakers are an example of something that we need to get online now," Obama said. "They can't wait."

Although Obama's trip hasn't entailed new policy prescriptions or federal efforts to slow global warming, Obama has said the U.S. is doing its part by pledging to cut carbon dioxide emissions up to 28 percent over the next decade. Obama set that target as America's commitment to a pending global climate treaty that Obama hopes will be a capstone to his environmental legacy.

Despite his efforts, the U.S. isn't a shining example when it comes to greenhouse gases. Each American emits more than twice as much carbon dioxide as a Chinese and 10 times that of someone from India, Energy Department figures show. China, the U.S. and India are the world's top three polluters.



Obama's Alaska Global Warming Fieldtrip

By Susan Stamper Brown

"Study the past if you would divine the future." — Confucius

President Obama told some whoppers the size of Mt. McKinley (I mean Denali) about global warming while he was here in Alaska.

At a climate change conference in Anchorage, Obama attempted to scare the long-johns off Alaskans he obviously thinks are stupid when he predicted coming "submerged countries, abandoned cities... entire industries of people who can't practice their livelihoods, desperate refugees seeking the sanctuary of nations not their own, and political disruptions that could trigger multiple conflicts around the globe."

Honestly, it sounded like he was describing the effects of his policies thus far, but I won't go there.

But then, the strangest thing happened. It was as if the planet's Creator laughed at all that nonsensical hot air rising. Temperatures dropped and it snowed. A lovely summer snow, dusting the mountaintops, reminding those with common sense who's really in control. Not us. If I were him, I would've taken the hint, loaded up my eight ton gas-guzzling armored "Beast" and headed back to the Oval Office to deal with more important things like the Chinese Warships spotted off Alaska's coast while he was sightseeing.

I guess we should ignore that back in May, NASA said global warming isn't causing polar ice retreat. In fact, NASA's satellites revealed the planet's "polar ice caps have not receded at all since the satellite instruments began measuring the ice caps in 1979," says Forbes.com. That is, if you want to believe NASA.

I suppose we should also overlook Obama's war on the Trans-Alaska pipeline. One doesn't need to be a rocket scientist to see Obama's killing the Alaska oil pipeline by slow bleed, currently pumping 500,000 barrels per day -- versus 2.2 million, years back. Might he care more about ANWR's caribou than he does about Alaskans considering most of Alaska's state revenue comes from the oil industry?

I can't help but wonder if Obama would've even visited if he really believed his own hysterical hype. The millions of dollars spent and carbon footprint wasted just so he could check a box on his bucket list to climb a glacier. If he believed his hype, why'd he order better Coastguard ice-cutters?

Surely he knew that the Exit Glacier, his apparent poster child for global warming, has been in a state of retreat since just after the Little Ice Age. Fact is, the glacier did the majority of its retreating in the 1800's to early 1900s, long

before manmade greenhouse gas was a thing. Especially in a sparsely populated and largely undeveloped place like Alaska. Overall, since the Little Ice Age, the Exit Glacier's retreated more than 1.25 miles, possibly trekking on a journey to return Alaska to what it once was.

Shhh, don't tell the alarmists, but Alaska was once a tropical paradise. In 2004 an Arctic expedition team, Integrated Ocean Drilling Program, used ice breakers and a drilling rig to core out and remove the first-ever Arctic sediment and samples from the ocean bottom. They discovered that millions of years ago the Arctic Ocean was ice free with a year-round average temperature of 74 degrees -- meaning something other than oil drilling, fracking, wood burning, coal mining, or other man-caused greenhouse gas activities heated the Arctic.

Speaking of gas, one of the scientists affiliated with this research, Netherlands palaeoecologist Appy Slujs said, "Basically it looks like the Earth released a gigantic fart of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere -- and globally the Earth warmed by about 9 degrees Fahrenheit."

While up here, Obama also predicted the Earth will warm up to 12 degrees by century's end and said deniers "are on their own shrinking island." Wow. That's three degrees higher than what happened last time. If he's right, the earth better get busy doing what it does to work up all that gas. In the meantime, this denier who trusts the Creator will get busy up here in Alaska with some online bikini and sandals shopping.

Susan Stamper Brown Susan's is a recovering political pundit from Alaska, who does her best to make sense of current day events using her faith. Her columns are syndicated by CagleCartoons.com. E-mail Susan at: writestamper@gmail.com.

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