

1995 Year-end letter by John and Mary Lou Tanton

At Year's End 1995

Our year started off with a bang left over from 1994: in December, a threejudge panel of the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco decided 3-0 that the Arizona Official English constitutional amendment (passed by initiative in 1988) was unconstitutional, and that the state employee who brought the case, Maria Yniquez, had a right to use Spanish on the job, even though her supervisor could not understand the language or read the reports that she wrote. We (being Bob Park, the leader of this fight in Arizona, and English Language Advocates (ELA), a group that a number of us set up to pursue this case), decided to appeal.

We asked the 9th Circuit to rehear the case *en banc* (as a group), a rarely granted request (about 10 times out of the 9,000 cases they hear yearly) - and they voted to do so!! This time an eleven-judge panel heard it. The decision again came down against us, but 6-5 this time, with several good dissenting opinions on our side. We are now asking the Supreme Court to review the case.

The fundamental question is whether we are to have a bi-(or multi-) lingual society. The separatist vote in Canada shows what can be done down the bilingual road. The courts are one approach to settling the question. Others are the federal and state legislatures (Montana, New Hampshire and South Dakota made English their official language this year, bringing to 22 the number of states that have done so), and the court of public opinion. ELA works in all of these venues. Let us know if you want more information on any of this - we have lots!

We took a break from all of this in April, rented a 26-foot motor home, and set out to explore Arizona. We started with a few days at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in the SW corner of the state, where we had a chance to contrast the competition there for water (resulting in shrubby growth) with the competition we see in the northeast for sunlight (resulting in tall trees). The excess fertility with which nature has equipped all organic beings was also on display: the Saguaro cactus produces about 200,000 seeds yearly for about 100 of its 150 year life span: 20 million in all. Yet if the number of Saguaros is to remain the same from one generation to the next, it follows that only one of these can grow to an adult. The rest provide food for wildlife or otherwise meet their demise.

We dropped down to the Mexican border below the park, and saw some excess reproduction of the human kind. The situation is really quite unbelievable in the wake of Mexico's population increase from 15 to 85+ million in this century, coupled with the push pressures provided by NAFTA, political turmoil and the peso crisis (crisis is the wrong word: all of this is more chronic than acute). Typical of our too crowded lives, Mary Lou flew home for five days in the middle of this trip to attend some crucial meetings of the Emmet County Planning Commission, on which she has served for about fifteen years. Our area is under siege: there are proposals for a concrete necklace (by-pass) around Petoskey, a big controversy about Wal-Mart coming to town (where,

how big, signs, etc.); one of the biggest resort developments anywhere in the U.S. on five miles of former cement plant property along the Lake Michigan shoreline just west of town - and to top it all off, a proposal for a new Indian gaming (read gambling) casino in nearby Mackinaw City. There is no rest for the wicked, as my father used to say.

Back in Arizona we drove to the Chiricahua Mountains in the southeast part of the state, where we had hiked and camped with our two girls in 1969. This is a great area for birding, which we did in the company of an excellent guide, David Jasper, who works out of Portal on the forest's east side. We saw one rarity, the elegant Trogon, which comes up from Mexico. We also hiked and camped on the top at 7,500 feet, where there was still a good deal of snow ... and the ruins of extensive fires the year before.

We finished off our Arizona tour by looking up rather than down: we attended the annual meeting of the International Dark Sky Association, to which Mary Lou belongs in her planning commissioner capacity - one of the local planning goals is to avoid obliterating the night sky with scattered urban light. This led to meeting David Levy of the Shoemaker-Levy astronomical team that discovered the comet that came to bear their names, and that crashed into planet Jupiter earlier this year, to great publicity and the wonder of sky watchers everywhere. We continue to sleep out on our deck on occasion in July and August, to watch the stars and satellites whirl overhead.

A note for the retired-but-still-vigorous-crowd: At the Arizona national parks, we found many retirees in voluntary positions, helping to make the system work. They manage campgrounds, staff desks in the nature centers, guide people on tours and give talks, among other activities. All seemed enthusiastic - obviously, or they would not have been there. We may try this some day.

We got home in early May in time to start the garden, and make use of the ten-foot square lean-to greenhouse we put up in the fall of 1994. It proved great for starting plants - and also for having a spot of tea on a sunny February afternoon. The garden - which doubles as my "shrink" - was fine this especially hot and hence dry summer, thanks to copious irrigation from our well. The melons were particularly good, as were the new varieties of potatoes we tried, which one recently discovered in the Andes Mountains (where potatoes originated). The pests were minimal, and concentrated on our bees rather than the plants.

I have kept bees as a hobby since high school. In the summer of 1993, our ten hives yielded over a ton of honey - a record for us. That fall a parasitic mite arrived - the mites had been imported accidentally into Florida from South America in the early '80s. They have spread like wildfire throughout North America, decimating native wild bee populations and the tame imported variety as well. (Honey bees are not native to the Americas, but were brought so early by the settlers from Europe that we tend to think of them as native.) During the winter of '93-'94, half of our hives died, and the 1994 honey production dropped to 200 pounds. I built our apiary back up to ten hives by the end of that summer, but half died again last winter, and the yield for summer 1995 fell to about 100 pounds. I'm back up to ten hives again; we'll see what this winter brings. The hope is that a resistant strain will evolve ... we're trying to speed the process by rearing our own queens from the hives that are strongest and hence presumably most resistant genetically. There is a miticide that can be used, but we'd rather not. Stay tuned.

In midsummer, our friend Wesley Maurer died. He was 98+, and still actively writing editorials for the three newspapers he ran until he suffered a stroke several months before he died. Wes was professor of journalism at the University of Michigan for about 40 years, was an ordained Methodist minister and an old-fashioned liberal. He had lived a very interesting life, including such experiences as reporting from the coal fields of southern Ohio in the '20s when John L. Lewis and the United Mine Workers were organizing there, and contending with Senator Joseph McCarthy.

In 1989-90, I recorded an oral history on Wes, both because I felt the story of this highly optimistic man should be available for posterity, and for the selfish reason that I wanted to learn more about him, how he thought, and what made him tick. As a result, the family asked me to deliver the eulogy (eu=good; logos=word) at his funeral. It was a challenge to honor this man of letters. At several points in the ceremony, I played back some of the more memorable passages that we had recorded. At the grave side, I summed up Wes's cheerful outlook on life: "Against all weight of evidence, he remained optimistic on the human prospect."

The immigration issue has been boiling along since the Republicans took over in Congress. FAIR - the Federation for American Immigration Reform - which I helped found back in 1979 and on whose board I still sit - has been in the thick of this "food fight." The issue is moving up on the national agenda as you have doubtless noted, especially with the publication of Peter Brimelow's book, *Alien Nation*. We were pleased to be able to supply Mr. Brimelow with a lot of data and information, some of which found its way into his manuscript. I continue to edit and publish the quarterly journal, *The Social Contract*, which focuses on population, immigration, language and national unity issues. We have put out five volumes so far - twenty issues. It is a BIG job! Roy Beck, *The Social Contract's* Washington editor, has a book coming out in April from W.W. Norton, about the same time that Dr. Wayne Lutton and I will be bringing out the next edition of our pocketbook *The Immigration Invasion*. Some 200,000 copies of our first edition are in circulation. Last January, we reissued the highly controversial French immigration novel, *The Camp of the Saints* - it has been selling very well. All this has made for a very stimulating year in the intellectual realm. If you would like to visit our home page on the Internet, we're at www.freeway.net/soccon/.

One of the other treats of working on the immigration issue is the annual "Writers' Workshop" we have in October, an in-gathering of writers and thinkers on this topic. Nearly sixty people attended, mostly from the U.S. but also from such far-flung places as Australia, Germany, and France.

When Labor Day rolled around Mary Lou and I headed off to Maine to take a course on medicinal plants at a small biological field station. It was taught by James Duke, a renowned botanist who is just about to retire from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, for whom he has run the worldwide search for useful plants. Some of the participants left after our course to spend the next week in the Amazon with Dr. Duke, but we decided to put that off for another year. Instead we poked around Acadia National Park, and then took the boat to the artists' colony at Monhegan Island (south of Acadia) to visit friends and see hurricane-generated waves crashing into the Island's Atlantic shore. We enjoyed reading an excellent new book entitled *Kate Furbush and the Flora of Main* by Frank and Ada Graham (Tilbury House, Gardiner, ME). It is really a biography of this fine artist who traveled and collected in the Maine woods during her long life from 1834-1931. This is an historical and artistic book that non-botanists would enjoy. Maine's "billboard-free" highways inspired us to persit in efforts for logo signing with Scenic Michigan, which Mary Lou now chairs.

On the way back to Michigan we stopped through Albany, New York to visit a nephew of Mary Lou's, with whom we took a tour down the Hudson to the Franklin D. Roosevelt's estate at Hyde Park, with a stop off at Martin VanBuren's home. This latter was of interest for two reasons in particular: in 1835, VanBuren (or his son) signed the deed to Mary Lou's family farm, when her forbearers took up a quarter section in the Michigan wilderness from the government. Secondly, the VanBuren home is at Kinderhooks, New York, from which our eighth President acquired the nickname "Old Kinderhooks" - abbreviated to O.K., according to one of the many explanations for that ubiquitous expression.

I still practice medicine about half time, and Mary Lou still works with me one day a week on the care of partially sighted or Low Vision patients, as they have come to be called. She has become quite expert at this over the decade that we have offered this service. We still participate in our weekly discussion groups, still segregated by sex (gasp!) the way they started up more than two decades ago: women on Wednesday mornings, and men on Thursday, both from 7:00-8:00 a.m. We also have a monthly "Salon" that meets the second Saturday of each month from 9:30-11:30 a.m. for more extended discussions. Our Great Books group meets five times in the spring and as many in the fall. We're now on our own for topics, having completed the 75 selections in the five volumes that the Great Books Foundation supplies. My German language study group still meets bimonthly.

At one of the discussion sessions, I learned from a fellow senior citizen that tuition at our local community college is waived after age sixty (that includes me!), so I signed up for a course in logic. This introduced me to the instructor, David Payne, who has his Ph.D. in philosophy, and that in turn led to our working together on logical fallacies in the immigration debate, and also on the ethics of immigration control, plus several other topics. One thing does lead to another.

Two other short trips finished off the year. In October on the way to the annual ophthalmologist's convention in Atlanta, we stopped off in North Carolina to visit our oldest daughter, Laura, who is back in school at the Eastern Carolina University at Greenville, taking a(nother) masters degree, this one in social work and counselling. We also visited Mary Lou's niece in Chapel Hill, and had the fun of picking some ripe persimmons, just falling from the tree. Tasty!

Our other daughter, Jane, is still scrubbing on the plastic surgery service at the University Hospital in Ann Arbor. Both girls are still single: eligible males, please step forward!

Grandmother Tanton is still vigorous in mind and body at 87, and continues to live in the ancestral family farm homestead in the Thumb of Michigan.

In December, we went through New York City to visit our friends, Sherry and Jim Barnes (Sherry has chaired FAIR for the last eight years; I'm about to succeed her), with whom we saw Miss Saigon, interesting to us in particular because of its immigration policy message. Then we dropped down to Florida to meet with the folks who are running several state-wide initiatives on immigration and language matters, aimed at the 1996 fall ballot. While there, I (Mary Lou had by this time left for home for another of those pesky planning commission meetings) had the chance to go out into the western Everglades by boat with a real, honest-to-goodness native of the area, Loren "Totch" Brown. He was born there in 1920, grew up fishing, hunting and swatting mosquitos, and graduated to commercial fishing and hunting alligators (legally at first, and then poaching). After fighting in the Battle of the Bulge, he eventually ended up running marijuana - and spending 15 months in jail for income tax evasion. In part, he came to this pass because the commercial fishing collapsed. It was fascinating to meet such a man.

All this is covered in his autobiography (and accompanying video) entitled simply *Totch*, which is Mr. Brown's nickname. The book shows graphically how the primitive fishing methods of his youth have been supplanted by the highly sophisticated methods of today, replete with huge boats and airplanes to spot schools of fish - which led to over fishing. The latter sorry story is told in the November 1995 *National Geographic*. I highly recommend *Totch*, which is one of the best sellers on the University Press of Florida list. Some of the escapades had my heart pounding - I finished it in one sitting.

The bottom of the page is a convenient place to stop. We wish you a healthy and engaging 1996 - it's only five years till the turn of the century and millennium. A lot will transpire - and at our age, the time goes more quickly. As an antidote to our too-frenzied lives, we offer the article in the back of this page. We hope you find it as instructive as we did.

John and Mary Lou