

Ravin' Against the Wind

by

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caveat lector

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Born Again to Rave Again.

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Introduction

We were young and strong we were runnin' against the wind
—from *Against the Wind*
by Bob Seger

Forced Obsolescence

When I was young, my father warned me about planned obsolescence. I might be wrong about this but it seems to me that things have changed since then. My father called it planned obsolescence. I see it as forced obsolescence. That is, maybe there was some choice, back then. Even if the marketing swindlers claimed that the thing was obsolete, you could still keep using it. Today, no choice. You have to throw away your old stuff. You can't keep using it. Parts aren't available. Nobody is willing to repair it, or knows how, or cares. Things that work with it are no longer available. It's incompatible with new things. There isn't any choice. Thus, obsolescence isn't just planned. It's forced.

Automobiles

When I was young, my father told me that the Model T Ford was the best automobile ever built. Maybe he was right. What little that I know of it suggests that it did everything that an automobile needs to do and nothing that an automobile doesn't need to do. It was as simple a design as could be achieved. Simplicity is a great virtue and, seemingly, a lost art. Complexity is a sign of incompetence. Anyway, my father told me that the only necessary and legitimate function of a car is to get a person from one place to another. All of the other crap, his word, that they keep adding to the cars is unnecessary.

A while back, I saw a news report about a woman who drove her car into a flooded location. I don't know why she did, but she did. She couldn't get out. She was trapped because everything in the entire car was electrically operated. Nothing was manual. Nothing would work because all of the electrical equipment failed when it was submerged. Some cops came along, before the car completely sank, broke into the car, and extricated her. The car, supposedly wonderful and modern, was a death trap.

When my grandmother was a little girl, her family moved west in a covered wagon, to Oklahoma, as I understand the story. They stopped in a little village just on the near side of a ford (no pun intended) across a local river. The locals warned them about the ford. The slab of rock at the riverbed, that made it possible to cross at that location, had an abrupt edge, on the right side. The locals said that the depth of the water beyond that edge had never been successfully measured. They declared, probably inaccurately, that it was bottomless.

As my grandmother told me the story, her father strayed too far to the right and the right rear wheel of the wagon slipped over the edge. The entire rig began to slide backward, into the allegedly bottomless hole. Her father yelled for everybody to hang on, grabbed his whip, and started to whip the horses. Grandma reported that they were a team of Morgans. She said that it was the only time, in all of the years that she knew her father, that she ever saw him whip a horse. She said that, look-

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ing up at the Morgans, from her position behind the seat at the front of the wagon, she could see them pulling so hard that their bellies were nearly touching the ground. They pulled the entire rig back up over the edge and out of the river. The wonderful fancy new automocrap, mentioned just above, when it went into the water, was a death trap. The Morgans were lifesavers. That ain't progress.

Taking Care of Our Stuff

I was raised at a time, in a place, and in a situation, where we repaired our own stuff. It was rare, or maybe unknown, for us to take a car to a mechanic to be repaired. It wasn't until many years later before I ever had a repair done in a shop. That was when I took the cylinder heads off of my 1961 Plymouth, myself, took them to a shop for a valve job. Even so, I removed them myself and reinstalled them myself. After college, I rebuilt my own carburetors. I remember my first wife looking at a carburetor that I'd disassembled, cleaned, and laid out on my workbench. She noted in surprise that it was so clean that you could eat off of it. I used to rebuild my own brake cylinders. I even had a hone that would recondition the inner surfaces. Rebuild kits were inexpensive.

By the 1980s, that had all changed. I remember doing a brake repair for someone and, when I removed the brake drum, it was almost a nightmare. I was accustomed to brakes consisting of a cylinder, two brake shoes, and some springs. The contraption with which I was confronted on that car was so complicated that it was actually part of a turning point in my life. I became so disgusted with the complexity of cars, along about then, that I just made a conscious and considered decision to not work on them any more.

The advertisements about car repairs that I see on the television today seem sort of like auto shop horror movies. The prices that the insurance advertisements quote for car repairs are outrageous beyond description. I used to buy wheel bearings for five or ten dollars and install them myself. The modern scenario is a tribute to the greed of the marketing swindlers, the complicity of the automotive designers, and the stupidity of the car buyers, for putting up with it.

Over the years, most of my automotive tools and equipment disappeared, bit by bit. I still have some tools, and I still tinker in my shop, but I avoid cars like the plague. I haven't owned one for years. Nowadays, I don't even pay any attention to the brand. They're all technocrap. When I was young, the old-timers used to rant that, "I wouldn't have one of them newfangled things as a gift." Nowadays, I understand. I agree.

Taking Care of Ourselves

When I was young, we didn't rush off in a panic to an emergency room, in response to every little twitch or itch. Minor bites and scratches got some iodine and a band aid. Something more serious might get some hydrogen peroxide, to clean the wound. If it started to look infected, then it got soaked in a hot solution of Epsom salts. Only serious injuries, like a broken bone, for example, rated a trip to town. Illnesses, things like measles or chicken pox, and so forth, things that draw shrieks of "epidemic", today, and activate the medical alarmist faction, got saltine crackers

and 7-Up. The generally accepted rule-of-thumb was that if such an illness didn't go away after about two weeks, it would justify a trip to the doctor's office. Note, it was a trip to a doctor's office, not to an emergency room, a trauma center, an intensive care unit, or some other such thing. Back then, we had family doctors, the last dying gasp of the traditional country doctor. We got by okay, and we weren't, back then, facing a world-wide die-off caused by an exploding world population approaching 9 billion. What's the obsession with saving lives when overpopulation, and the near certainty of a die-off, is our absolute number one problem? Friedrich Schiller noted that against stupidity, the very gods themselves contend in vain.

The self-healing philosophy still works. Shortly after I moved to Mecham's farm, during the middle 1990s, I got sick. I suppose that I caught something from working with the farm animals, a new exposure in my life. I don't know what it was, but it was serious. Neither me nor anybody else ever suggested a trip to town, The thought never even entered my mind. I laid in bed for more than a day, laying still, sweating and panting like I was running a marathon. I recovered. Here's information for you. A doctor can't charge for a home cure.

Here's another story. As I got older, I started to occasionally get constipated. It was never a problem when I was younger. So, I started checking medications. I tried one or two different brands, with moderate success. Then, one day, purely as a coincidence, I ate a bowl of canned chili and noticed that, by the very next morning, my constipation was gone. Since then, I don't need those chemical medications. A bowl of canned chili works, every time. I wonder why the doctors don't tell us that. The reason that the pharmaceutical companies don't tell us is obvious.

Incidentally, back when I was young, taking a pet to a veterinarian was an unknown extravagance. Maybe a farmer with an unusually valuable animal might consult a veterinarian but our pets either lived or died on their own. We had our very own little pet cemetery, out in the back field behind the chicken lot until, one sad day, our neighbor, Mr. Williams, drove his tractor over and plowed the field. I'm appalled, nowadays, at the funds that people spend on pet doctors, pet cemeteries, pet insurance, and who knows what other extravagant pet nonsense. They're pets, not people. And, they're not "members of the family". That mutt isn't a member of the family unless it came out of the woman's birth canal. In that case, I have some serious doubts about her sexual preferences. You hear jokes but, oh well.... There's also a problem with the theories of genetics. Finally here's my belief regarding that nonsense about animals being members of the family. People live in houses. Animals live in barns or pastures.

Videos

My first wife and I bought our first video cassette recorder when they first became available. Video cassette recorders, not wives. The thing was very expensive. It turned out that the wife was, too, but that's a completely different story.

Let's get a little terminology straight. It isn't videos or DVDs. A DVD is a video. The "v" in DVD stands for video. It's a digital video disk. So, it isn't videos or DVDs. It's videocassettes or DVDs. They're both videos.

The transition from videocassettes to DVDs was a very successful marketing scam. Tons and tons of videocassettes and VCRs were sent to the dumps. Tons and tons of DVDs and DVD players were needlessly purchased. Millions of dollars were needlessly spent by gullible buyers, all for a marginal improvement in video quality. I've watched many recordings, from both videocassettes and from DVDs, and the only place that I've discovered where the increased video quality of DVDs is of any real significance is in the closing credits. On a videocassette, the closing credits are often unreadable. However, on the television, nowadays, and to my disgust, they squeeze the closing credits down into a little box, or run them past at super speed, or don't even show them at all. So what difference does it make? Nobody reads the closing credits anyway. A marginal increase in video quality doesn't make it a better movie, or a more instructive documentary. The DVDs ought to have been an alternative, not an effectively mandatory replacement. The whole transition was a shameful waste.

Computers

I bought my first computer when McIntosh computers first became available. I will happily admit that it was a vast improvement over the pen and paper, and later, the typewriter, that I'd been trying to use for my writing. Before long, I was even able to buy an upgrade kit, to add some better features to the computer. That practice of providing upgrades lasted for a little while but, inevitably, the day came when, in order to get an improvement, it was necessary to buy a whole new computer.

Even so, Apple insisted on compatibility. The new computers would still run all of the old operating systems and programs. I have an old graphics program, SuperPaint, that I bought while I was using System 6. It still runs on OS 9.2.2. Sadly, that enlightened policy came to an end. When Apple introduced OS X, the old programs would no longer run on the new operating system. For one or two initial versions of OS X, Apple provided a sort of OS 9 emulator. At first, while I was working on this essay, I inadvertently, typed in immolator instead of emulator, an error that presented a strange kind of poetic justice. Anyway the emulator enabled the old programs to still run on the new computer, but it was a clumsy and inconvenient pander to the marketing swindlers. After a few versions of OS X, even that disappeared. It became necessary to buy new programs.

It got worse. Eventually, even new versions of OS X wouldn't run programs that ran on previous versions of OSX. After that, if you bought a new computer, you'd probably have to get a new operating system, which wouldn't run your old programs. Thus, you needed new programs. I have a version of OS X that included a video editing program. I was forced to buy another computer and get a new operating system because my browsers wouldn't work any more on the internet services and the new versions of the browsers wouldn't run on the old operating system. The new operating system doesn't include the video editing program so, if want to continue to edit videos, then I have to have both computers, with both operating systems.

Hardware incompatibility became an even worse problem, and even more quickly. I provided an article on that subject, *Parasites*, in *Frontiersman*, way back in November 1995 issue. Since then, it's worse. For example, some printers will work only on some operating systems, but not on others, ad nauseam.

Forced obsolescence became a part of the Macintosh scene. Today, I have two different Macintosh models sitting right beside each other on this desk where I'm working on this essay. They can't even recognize each other via Ethernet. The only way that I've discovered to transfer files between them is on a flash drive. Even that's tricky. On the flash drive, I have to use a format that will be recognized by both computers. That ain't progress.

As Poppa said, all progress is change but not all change is progress. As John Muir said, not blind opposition to progress but opposition to blind progress. I can suggest that, if it's blind, then it probably isn't progress.

Internet Access

I'm gradually getting less hopeful that I'll be able to continue to maintain websites that are generally accessible. I can still access my own websites, using my old computers, the old operating systems, and the old browsers. So the website code isn't the problem. My old browser isn't the problem. The problem is in the connection and transfer protocols that, increasingly, refuse to permit access. I have to jump through so many hoops, nowadays, for so-called security reasons, that sometimes I can't even get into one of my own accounts unless a get a neighbor to come over with her cell phone and let them use it to send me a code. I don't have a cell phone of my own and, for what I consider to be some very good reasons, I refuse to have one. See *Mjollnir*, in the November 2025 *Frontiersman*. Lately, since the owner of the place where I'm presently staying cancelled the telephone account, I don't even have a land line telephone.

The requirements for access to things continue to escalate. I'm having difficulty using things like eBay or PayPal. I have to use one particular browser or another, on one particular computer or another, depending on what I want to do. I can't pay for things with PayPal using one of my computers but I can do so using the other one, if I use the correct browser. My gmail email address will no longer allow me to use POP email. I had to set up automatic forwarding from gmail to another of my addresses that still uses POP. I no longer have any access to the customer support help center for my hosting service. Neither the chat feature nor the email address for that service work for me. It's just a nothing, a failure to respond. I can't use their telephone number because I don't have a telephone. So, if I have to change something to make my websites "secured", then I don't have any way to do it and I don't know how to do it anyway. I don't know how to solve the various forced obsolescence problems. I don't know anybody who can help me. I can't keep buying new computers every few months and my old ones don't run the new protocols. Also, the new computers don't run my old programs which means that I'd have to buy new programs. In many cases, Microsoft Word for example, my old files, thousands of them, don't work correctly, or won't work at all, on the new versions of the pro-

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grams. Sometimes when I try to open one of those old programs, Microsoft Word crashes.

I hope that you can still access my websites. I've learned that, sometimes, one browser will work for one thing but not for another, and vice versa. It can make a difference which computer I'm using, with which operating system, so maybe if you try a different browser or a different computer, you might still be able to visit my websites.

Against the Wind

I've been opposing forced obsolescence for many decades, starting, I suppose, sometime during the 1960s. I've written letters, essays, and articles. It doesn't seem to have made much of a difference. Things are immeasurably worse now than they were when I started. Even so....

I'm older now but still runnin' against the wind

—from *Against the Wind*
by Bob Seger

This is probably my last Ravings Essay.

Appendix

Against the Wind, by Bob Seger

Seems like yesterday
But it was long ago
Janey was lovely she was the queen of my nights
There in darkness with the radio playin low
And the secrets that we shared, mountains that we moved
Caught like a wildfire out of control
Til there was nothin left to burn and nothin left to prove
And I remember what she said to me
How she swore that it never would end
I remember how she held me oh so tight
Wish I didn't know now what I didn't know then
Against the wind
We were runnin against the wind
We were young and strong we were runnin against the wind
And the years rolled slowly past
And I found myself alone
Surrounded by strangers I thought were my friends
Found myself further and further from my home and I
Guess I lost my way
There were oh so many roads
I was livin to run and runnin to live
Never worried about payin or even how much I owe
Movin' eight miles a minute and for months at a time
Breakin all of the rules that would bend
I began to find myself searchin
Searchin for shelter again and again
Against the wind
Little somethin against the wind
I found myself seekin shelter against the wind
Well those drifting [*correction* – *drifter's*] days are past me now
I've got so much more to think about
Deadlines and commitments
What to leave in, what to leave out
Against the wind
I'm still runnin against the wind
I'm older now but still runnin against the wind
Well I'm older now but [*correction* – *and*] still runnin against the wind
Against the wind
Against the wind
Still runnin
Against the wind
Against the wind
Against the wind...

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