

Indies United Publishing House  
Presents

# Fragments of US

A Multi-Author Anthology

Compiled by  
Jake Cavanah

## FRAGMENTS OF US

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First Edition November 2022

SECOND EDITION: August 2024

Published by Indies United Publishing House, LLC

Edited by Jennie Rosenblum and Jayne Southern

Compiled by Jake Cavanah

Contributing Authors: Timothy Baldwin, Laura DiNovis Berry, Jake Cavanah, Jim Infanino, Ron Kinscherf, Lisa Orban, Kasey Rogers, Guy Thair

Foreword by Richard Jacobs

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ISBN 978-1-64456-753-1 [Paperback]

ISBN 978-1-64456-754-8 [ePub]

Library of Congress Control Number: 2024942561



INDIES UNITED PUBLISHING HOUSE, LLC

P.O. BOX 3071

QUINCY, IL 62305-3071

[indiesunited.net](http://indiesunited.net)

For Richard  
A friend, mentor, advocate,  
and climate champion  
until the end.

You will be missed.

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# Foreword

## This Trip We're On



Life, this trip we are on, is a venture. It is through our mind's eye, our built-in camera lens, we explore the wonders of our world and its inhabitants. But there is more than today's moments, preserved like snapshots by our mind's eye. There are all the tomorrows awaiting us.

Our tomorrows depend on what we do or don't do with our todays.

When we abuse the moment, exploit the offerings of our universe, we sap our tomorrows of their vitality. Thus, our challenge is, as Thoreau once said, not merely to "look" but to "see." Seeing carries us beyond the moment – beyond the *Far Horizon* – to the tomorrows eagerly awaiting us. How does *looking* become *seeing*? By actual hands-on experience. Nothing beats it. Not the web. Not TV. Not social media. Nothing, absolutely nothing, beats it.

In my writings, I call it "dirty hands, wet feet learning."

I have been fortunate. I practiced law for some 6 decades. I have trekked, photographed the seven continents. *Democracy of Dollars* and other books I have

written have been shaped and motivated by these life-changing, hands-on personal experiences. Our project at Stetson University College of Law, the *Dick and Joan Jacobs Public Interest Law Clinic for Democracy and the Environment* came about in answer to the lessons learned, and our realization of our responsibilities to pass to future generations the opportunities to be guided by similar experiences. Our future as a democracy depends upon it.

Dick Jacobs



# Bennett Springs, Missouri

## Abe



by Ron Kinscherf

Abe rolled over and opened his eyes. The digital numbers on his alarm clock were dark. He sighed and grabbed his wristwatch off the nightstand. He wiped the sleep from his eyes, looked at the watch, and moaned.

“Bloody 7:25 AM.” He swung his feet over the side of the bed and turned on the lamp on the nightstand. Nothing.

“Jesus Christ. I guess no fishing this morning.” He put his feet in his slippers, went to the front door of his trailer and peered out. Not a single light.

He opened the door and headed to the back of the trailer. Jerry, from the cabin on his left, yelled, “Hey, Abe, you want a cup of joe?”

Waving him off, Abe continued to the back of his trailer. He pulled the cable on his generator. Nothing. He pulled again. Nothing. He stood up ... stretched his back a bit ... and pulled again. The generator started. “Hot damn,” Abe muttered and turned around.

“Here’s a cup, Abe.”

“Jerry, you about scared the piss out of me.” Abe continued right past Jerry.

“Crazy about the power,” Jerry continued. “No storm or nothing. Even the lodge doesn’t have power. The fishin’ siren didn’t even go off this morning, but I’m sure you noticed that.”

Abe hadn’t thought about that. He turned, snatched the cup, mumbled, “Thanks,” and went into his trailer.

Abe flipped a switch and the lights flickered on. He sat at the little dining table and sipped his coffee. He pondered on what could have happened to the power ... tree limb? ... couldn’t be ... no storm. Squirrel? “I bet it was a squirrel.” He chuckled. “Damn squirrels.” He’d fought many a war at home over

the squirrels and the bird feeders.

Cream. He wanted cream. He stood and made his way to the refrigerator. Behind a fish-shaped magnet was the perfect family picture. The whole family caught a fish that day. The first time. The girls in pigtails and overalls. Abe and his wife, Martha. All holding that day's catch. He flipped the picture over: April of 1994. Everyone happy. Everyone getting along. If it could only last forever. Abe put the picture back.

"OK, where were we." Cream. He opened the door. "Shit." He remembered the power. "Wonder how long it's been off?"

Abe threw on a shirt, tugged a pair of jeans over his pajama pants, and grabbed his fishing hat and keys. "Might as well head into town and see what the hell is going on."

The drive to Lebanon, Missouri, would take around twenty minutes or so.

Abe had been coming to Bennett Springs, Missouri, for over 50 years straight. First, with his pops. Then with his brothers. Later, his wife. And when the girls arrived, they tagged along, too ... even as babies. Fifty some years and this was his first solo trip.

Bennett Springs had some of the best trout fishing in the Midwest. Just south of the Lake of the Ozarks, fishermen from all over the country come to throw their lines into the Niangua River.

Abe turned left out of the campground onto Route 66, the Will Rogers Highway. Not much traffic today.

A cloudy sky made it darker than most mornings. To the west, it was really dark, but he didn't see clouds: just a dark, grayish haze. "Peculiar." His eyes flicked back and forth to his rear-view mirror. "What the hell is that?"

He lived in Central Illinois his whole life and figured he'd seen every type of weather event. But, for the life of him, Abe had no idea what he was looking at. "Martha, I wish you could see this."

The closer he got to Lebanon, the more the traffic picked up. A lot. Trailers, RVs, even some town folk. "And it's Thursday, not a typical getaway day."

Tapping his blinker, Abe turned into the gravel parking lot of Sarge's, a little diner off 66. He shut the truck off, left the keys on the dash and climbed out. In all the years he'd been coming to this place, he had no idea why it was called Sarge's. The current Sarge wasn't in the service; the dumbass had a degree in English Literature. Martha thought that maybe his grandpa had been in the service. The little bell jingled as he opened the door.

At the bar, he picked up a menu and took a seat. There wasn't a soul in the place. "What the hell is—?"

From the kitchen he heard, "Abe! What are you doing here?"

He said, "Well, Sarge, I was hoping to get some food. Where the hell is—?"

Sarge came hustling out of the kitchen, wiping his hands with a towel. "Abe, I wasn't sure if I would see you this April. But I sure am glad to see ya. Really sorry about Martha. I wanted to get to the—"

Abe cut him off. "Thanks." He appreciated the sentiments, but dammit, didn't

anyone have anything else to talk about? “Where the hell is everybody? What’s going on?”

Sarge stared at Abe, “You haven’t heard?”

“Heard what?” Abe answered.

“Just a second. You need coffee. I got a fresh pot that needs drinkin’.”

Abe stared at Sarge as he turned, grabbed a cup, and the pot of coffee, an old glass one with a big dark stain around the bottom. “Sarge, what in the hell is going on around here.”

Sarge poured a cup, set it in front of Abe along with a couple of creams, put the pot down next to him on top of a towel and said, “One more second.”

“Sarge!” Abe was getting a bit peeved. Sarge selected a cup for himself, scooted around the bar and sat next to Abe.

“Oh, wait.” Sarge hopped up, ran around the bar, and returned with the TV remote.

“Sarge, if you don’t tell me what’s going on, I’m going to slap that mustache off your face. I may be old but—”

The TV came to life. “Holy hell, what is that?”

Sarge just stared at the muted TV. Lava everywhere. Cars on highways, bumper to bumper. Reporters covered in what looked like ash. Maps of the United States. Different shades of red west of the Mississippi. Kansas City was orange, Columbia Missouri yellow, as was Bennett Springs.

“Sarge, what is going on?”

“Abe ... there’s this caldera ... was this caldera in Yellowstone and ... wait, a caldera is—”

“I know what a caldera is. It’s the hole at the top of a volcano.”

“Well, I had to look it up, I have degree in Lit, so I had to Google and—”

“Not important. Move along.”

“Sorry. So, this volcano erupted. Wasn’t supposed to. It just happened. There’s no power anywhere in the West. One third of the US is covered in ash. Abe, didn’t you feel it last night?”

Abe watched the TV and shook his head. Since Martha passed, he’d taken a sleeping pill with a shot of Jack to get to sleep.

“Lord, Abe, it knocked half the bottles off the bar shelf.” Sarge pointed to the broken glass on the floor behind the bar. A mop leaned against the beer coolers.

Sarge continued, “So, the President has issued a nationwide disaster thing. All national guard units have been deployed. The religious freaks are yelling that the Book of Revelation warned about this. The Republicans are blaming the Democrats. The Democrats are blaming the Republicans. Oh, and the Chinese, they—”

Sarge rambled on. Abe’s kids. His grandkids. He looked at his phone. No coverage. Of course. The power grid is shut down. Cell service is shut down.

“Sarge.” Sarge kept on talking. “Sarge!”

He stopped and stared at Abe. “Thank you. Where are your workers?”

“People are freaked, Abe. Just freaked. They’ve packed up and left. The ash is coming. It should be here by midnight at the latest. No more sunshine. Breathing may be difficult.”

Abe threw a dollar on the counter and stood up. “I best be on my way.”

Sarge picked up the dollar and put it in Abe’s breast pocket. He put a hand on each of Abe’s shoulders. “Abe. Again, I am soooo sorry about Martha.”

“Thanks, Sarge.”

“What you gonna do? Where you gonna go?”

“Well, I’m thinking I better find the kids.” One of Abe’s daughters lived in Champaign, Illinois, on the eastern side of the state. And his other daughter, the youngest, lived in Terre Haute, Indiana, a few hours from Champaign.

Abe opened the door and was about to let go when he heard Sarge call out. “See you in the Fall, you old fart.”

Abe smiled, nodded, and headed to his truck.



## Dick and Joan Jacobs Public Interest Environmental Law Clinic

Dick and his wife, Joan, have made a generous gift and a significant portion of their estate to establish the Dick and Joan Jacobs Public Interest Environmental Law Clinic and the Institute for Environmental Justice at Stetson University College of Law. The Institute will provide governmental organizations, as well as legal and non-legal communities, with a wide variety of environmental law-related public interest services — while molding law students to become the difference makers to care for Mother Earth. Additional funds are needed to secure the Institute in order for it to produce the long-term, positive results the Jacobs's envision.

If you would like to make an additional donation to this charity, you can at:

<https://www.stetson.edu/law/forms/jacobs.php>