

What the “Wet Paint” Sign Does Not Mean

The sign that reads “Wet Paint”
does not mean
“Touch me to see
if I am still wet.”

Steve Bloom
July 2015

The Number 2 (And Its Consequences)

The number 2
is the only even prime number.

All of the subsequent prime numbers
will be odd.

I discover this rather interesting,
and obvious (once
you start to think about it)
fact for myself today, realize right away
that of course I am not the first. It must
have some revered place
in the trivia of mathematics.

And then I consider another truth
I am not the first to stumble upon:
how thrilled a child will be to discover
for himself so many things
the rest of us learned long ago,

like

* How the sand dissolves beneath our feet
as a spent wave flows back down the beach
toward the sea.

* the way gentle raindrops make overlapping circles
on the surface of a lake,

* and the explosion of flowers in springtime fills us with hope,
if it isn't with a sense of loss,

* while each choice changes the future—irreparably
and forever.

Only as we become adult
do we learn to disregard
childish things, celebrate our discoveries
if, and only if, they are revelations
for all time.

And so I spend the next hour
or two quite thrilled
by my elegant discovery
about the world
of prime numbers—and
by the prospect
of sharing it with you.

Steve Bloom
July 2015

Visiting the Falls

1)

There are 21 along the “Falls Trail”
in Ricketts Glenn State Park, PA,
big enough that someone bothered
to give them names. I pay
my respects this morning,
on a seven-mile hike,
starting at the Northeast corner,
walking down through Glen Leigh
to the Southernmost cascade
(“Murray Reynolds”), returning
up the Eastern fork of the gorge
past the towering “Ganoga” (at 94 feet)
and then, finally, back along
the “Highland Trail”
to the place where I began.

On my descent I have to turn
around, as I pass each
of the cascades,
look back, stop for a while
in order to take in the experience.

On beginning my ascent,
however, I realize that each
will now confront me face-on.

Still, I choose to stop anyway.
The body does, after all, need
a bit more rest on an uphill climb.

2)

In a pleasant spot along a relative trickle
that passes beneath the Highland Trail
I find a fallen log
just the right height
to perch upon
as I eat my lunch.
I notice a place where the water stumbles
over a rocky outcrop, plunging five or six inches,
decide that this is high enough
to proclaim it “Steve Bloom Falls.”

Perhaps the name will stick,
I decide,
if I put it in a poem.

3)
Two mornings later I visit
(for the first time in my life)
the place called “Niagara,”
where the falling water dwarfs
all those I speak about above
by so many orders of magnitude.

The ones in charge haven’t
done badly. The most obvious
of the tourist schlock
has been kept at a distance.
Still, there are parking lots
and paved walkways
virtually up to the water’s edge
to accommodate the throngs.

And I remember fondly
my walk in the woods
48 hours before,
in particular the waterfall
small enough to be worthy
of bearing my name.

Steve Bloom
July 2015

Roads and Streams

The road into the mountains
follows each twist and turn
of the stream rushing down
alongside of it,

which is one more example
of nature showing us the way—
If only we will allow her to.

If only
we will allow her to.

Steve Bloom
July 2015

Flags

After crossing the bridge
at Niagara Falls I notice how
suburban subdivisions in Ontario
look pretty much the same
as suburban subdivisions
in New York.

Same houses.
Same lawns.
Same people even—
or so it seems—
including the same tendency
to fly the flag
outside some residences.

Of course here all
the flags on display
depict a maple leaf.
There is not a single
“stars and stripes” to be seen.

For which I am thankful,
because it is useful to have
one more reminder—
along with thinking in kilometers
and remembering what money to use—
that I am, actually,
visiting another country.

Steve Bloom
July 2015

Still Another Riddle Solved

Why is a state park like a poem?

Because you never really know
until you get there.

Some are just not worth the trip,
and most are no more than ho-hum.

But then there are the precious gems
that you will remember,
 forever.

Steve Bloom
July 2015

Secrets Revealed

You might, perhaps,
notice a theme in my poetry:
Take me to a place where
the crowds are far away.

There is an exception, however,
that so far I have not mentioned:
give me a beach that is full
of female humans
in bathing costumes
that leave little
to my imagination,
but which little
is well worth imagining.

Sorry, I am not particularly proud
of this tendency, but poetry
should be about honesty,
not about pride,

also about what we can imagine.

Steve Bloom
July 2015

Another Rule of the Road

13) Stop once each day
in a spot where you can pick
three or four wildflowers
to add to those you picked
yesterday, and the day before
sitting in a paper cup
filled with water
in a cup holder
on your dash.

Don't bother to discard
the old and fading ones. Just
keep adding the new.
And your cup of flowers
will remain alive.

Steve Bloom
July, 2015

Great, Greater, Greatest

The United States of America
spends a greater amount
per capita on medical care
than any other nation in the world.
The result, however, is not so great.

The United States of Amerrica
spends a greater amount
per capita on its military
than any other nation in the world.
The result, however, is not so great.

The United States of Amerrrrica
spends considerably less
per capita on education
than many other nations in the world.
The result, once again, is not so great.

The United States of Amerrrikkka
spends a greater amount
per capita on prisons
than any other nation in the world.
The result, however, is not so great.

Still, the residents of this land
will loudly insist that they live
in the greatest country
the world has ever known.

Just don't ask them to explain why.

Steve Bloom
July 2015

The “Angry Bull Steakhouse”

I spy it by the roadside as I drive through Ohio, headed East.

At last, I tell myself, a restaurant
with an honest name.
I have never quite understood
“Chirping Chicken”
or “Laughing Pig.”

You can, I guess, fool all of the animals
some of the time.
And you can even fool some of the animals
all of the time.
But you cannot fool all of the animals
all of the time.

The bull is angry now;
a good first step.

Steve Bloom
July 2015

Education

There is no pedagogy
which can overcome ignorance
so entrenched
that it believes it knows.

Steve Bloom
July 2015