

## Epilogue: The Long Vision

When I first came to Guemes nine years ago, the island was in what now might be called the last days of an era, although not many people were aware of it at the time. Certainly, I was not. But to hear people speak of that earlier Guemes is to hear tales of a community that somehow, perhaps, better knew its own heart.

Maybe that knowledge is just a function of a smaller population. Maybe it is simply hindsight, a function of age and nostalgia. But even I remember when one could walk for hours on empty roads, when the occasional double run was cause for dismay. Those days are not long past as years go, but they seem almost prehistory in 1992, given the rate of clearing and building, the soaring property values and all else that the eighties and nineties brought to a place that for so long seemed frozen in time.

What concerns me now is that so many questions seem to need answers so quickly, and yet the significance of any response may reach far beyond what we can now easily see. I'm not advocating any one position here, I only want to say: do we truly understand the questions at hand? Are we searching for the long vision that will enable us to do what is right, not only for us but for those who are to come, the seventh generation of which other cultures speak? Are we, as a community, prepared to accept, and do we understand, the consequences of whatever action we will take? Because it seems to me that the questions facing us are not simply "yes" or "no" questions, but are questions whose answers will haunt or light our way for years to come.

When I first came to Guemes, I don't recall that the island had much impact on me. But over the years of leaving and always returning, I have found that Guemes is nothing if not transformative to those who live within her shores; and to live here is to love and need Guemes for its rich serenity, its slow, sweet rhythms, for the way the island embraces us all like a good mother. I go looking for the heart of the island, and I find it in every summer twilight, in the musty pungency of

winter fields, the liquid trill of red-winged blackbirds down by the marsh in the Hollow.

In short, I have come to believe in the magic of Guemes. And I have faith in the power of the island to sustain its believers. I would like to believe that all of us who call Guemes home share this faith, that we know we are onto something good in the deepest and best sense of the word. I would like to believe that we are willing to protect—at least steward—conscious of our responsibilities, and not just to ourselves, but to our neighbors—both human and animal—our little bit of paradise on Earth.

Jean McCracken

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