

## War of words starts over environmentalism

Last week I mentioned the "Wise Use" coalition. With a name like that you might expect them to advocate the conservation of natural resources, but their emphasis is less on the "Wise" and more on the "Use."

It's coming down to a war of words, which shape the way people think, which determines the decisions that get made, which lead to very real environmental impacts that will limit the quality of life for the next generation.

There seems to be a frightening number of people who believe we need not worry about using things up because the end of the world is inevitable; people will be saved or condemned, on an individual basis, regardless of the condition of our planet.

One of the thoughts that the "Wise Use" folks like to spread is that environmentalists worship

the creation, not the creator. "Environmentalism is the new paganism," according to Alan Gottlieb of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise. "Trees are worshipped and humans sacrificed at its altar. It is evil. And we intend to destroy it." (The Boston Globe)

I believe "environmentalism" originated with a very human sense of what was more pleasant for humans and had something to do with kindness toward other creatures in the spirit of St. Francis, for example.

It's only been recently that "radical environmentalists" have talked more about other living beings having something like rights — a right to life — and nature, or the Earth, as something like an entity. Those thoughts have led to a defensive reaction from people with financial interests in various natural resources. Those interests are

very powerful.

Whoever came up with the headline for my column last week misinterpreted or misrepresented my words. "Environmental law allows 'playing God'" is the way a "Wise Use" member might think of environmental protection. My suggested headline, "Who will we let play God?" was supposed to be a rhetorical question. What "playing God" means to me is to knowingly allow the extinction of some organism by authorizing a project that will alter or eliminate that creature's last remaining natural habitat.

Despite the nature-worshipping niche that Mr. Gottlieb would put me in, I must say that it's the natural selfishness of humanity that bothers me, and I believe the point of Christianity was to oppose that "nature." I must also add that religion is not the only basis for morals.

—Daniel Clinchard

head. "Well, it doesn't hurt quite that much."

I'm reasonably certain he's never given birth to any children.

"Thanks," I say.

I show Ray the design, tell him where I want it, and we discuss how much it will cost.

Ray finishes tracing my design and transfers it to my upper leg. I check the mirror to make sure it's where I want it.

I then am instructed to recline on the vinyl-covered table and get comfortable. Comfortable? Yeah, right.

By now, the full impact of what I'm doing hits me.

"Michelle, what am I doing?"

But then Ray is inking up and posing above the transfer.

"We're just going to start small, okay?" he says.

Well, Danny was right. The outline is the worst. I try not to think about what's happening on my hip. It does hurt. But not as badly as, say, dental work. I'd rather get a tattoo than have my wisdom teeth yanked any day.

Within the next 25 minutes, Ray finishes the outline and is filling in the spaces. The filling in is, for the most part, not painful, but causes merely an annoying sort of sensation.

Ray's birds keep up a fairly steady chatter while he is working. Although I don't want to distract Ray (I didn't want to make him screw up), I have to ask him if the birds can talk.

"Only when they want to," Ray says.

"Have they learned to say 'ouch'?" I ask.

And then it is over. As Ray is rubbing Neosporin and wrapping

my new artwork with a piece of cellophane, I am thinking, "I am among the tattooed."

After I have inspected his handiwork and we have gone over the care instructions, I ask Ray questions about his trade.

"How much does it usually cost to set up to do tattoos?" I ask.

"If you do it right, now it's going on about \$1,000 to \$1,200," he says. "to get all the stuff you need."

"I suppose everyone asks you how you got started," I say.

"Yeah, when I first got started, it was more like I just did it for fun," Ray says.

Ray says he's been doing tattoos since 1983 — for nine years.

"I knew how to draw before I did this, so that helped a lot," he says. "There's a lot of people that don't know how to draw, and they just jump into it."

"That doesn't make a lot of sense," I say.

"Well, somebody might be a better tattoo artist than they can draw," he says.

We also discuss the sanitary conditions of his equipment.

"I use new needles every time," he says. "A lot of other places just kind of sterilize them."

"These days, that's important," I say.

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It's been five days since I got my tattoo. I still like it and suspect I will forever, or at least for a long time.

Good or bad, the harmless-sounding question Mark asked me a week ago has indirectly left its mark — a permanent piece of artwork I can enjoy forever.

—Shannon Uehling is A&E editor and a Diversions contributor.

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## Tattoo

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I try not to watch the needle play across Kurt's back or listen to the electrical buzz of ink being injected into Kurt's skin.

In short, I try not to look nervous.

All too soon, Ray and Kurt finish up their weekly session, and it's my turn.

Kurt asks if this is my first tattoo. I say yes. He offers me some words of comfort.

"Do you have kids?" I shake my

