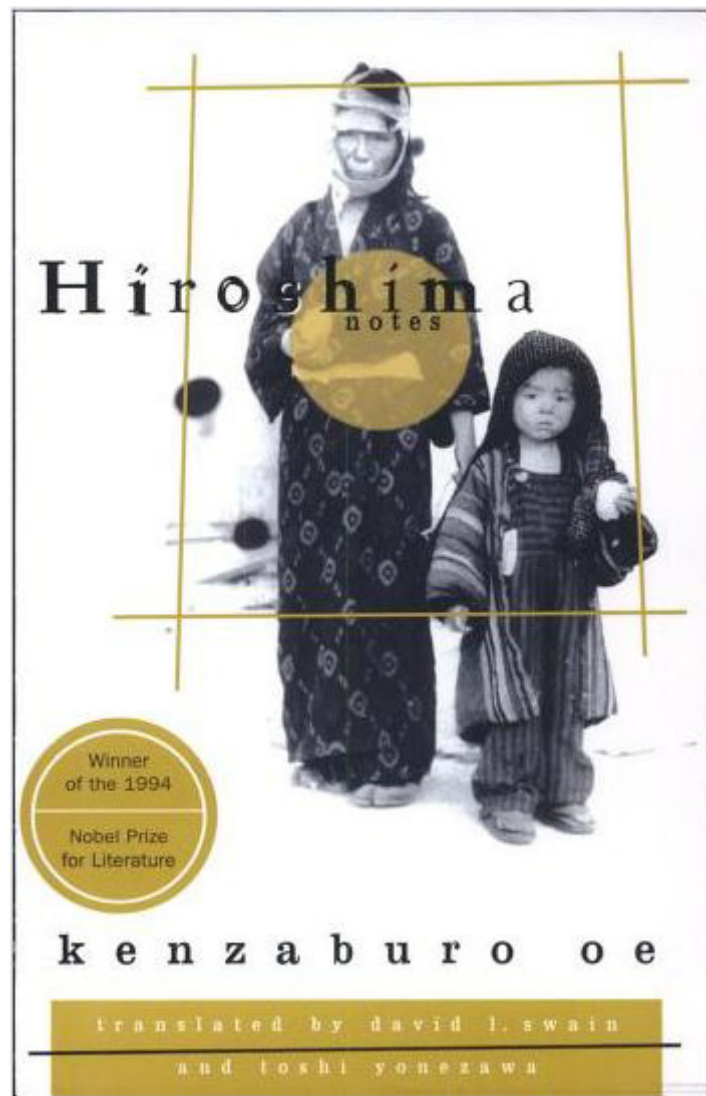


~~KURT VONNEGUT, JR.~~ KURT VONNEGUT



Kenzaburo Oe visited Hiroshima, and has truly learned its lesson.



Kurt Vonnegut visited Dresden, and has truly learned its lesson.¹

1. There may be other less famous cases of which we are currently unaware (for instance, after WWII certain select German government officials were treated by the Allies to a tour of former concentration camp sites).



KURT VONNEGUT

KURT VONNEGUT

1753

April 3: [Kurt Vonnegut](#), the immortal author of *FATES WORSE THAN DEATH*, has designated this to have been the first, the original, “Writer’s Day.” We shall celebrate the anniversary of this April 3d because [Samuel Johnson](#), who was working up his *DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE*, recorded a prayer in his diary on this day:

O God who has hitherto supported me, enable me to proceed in this labor & in the whole task of my present state that when I shall render up at the last day an account of the talent committed to me I may receive pardon for the sake of Jesus Christ.

1848

Clemens Vonnegut, Sr. emigrated to North America. (It is a **total coincidence**, that this man who would become an ancestor of [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) was emigrating to the New World just at the point at which the war technology of aerial bombardment of human population centers was first being experimented with! The ancestor’s attitudes toward aerial bombardment of civilian families, if he had any such attitudes, are **totally unknown!**)



NOT A BIG FAN
OF AERIAL BOMBARDMENT

1913

November 22: Edward Benjamin Britten was born in Lowestoft, Suffolk, the youngest of four children born to Robert Victor Britten, a dental surgeon, and Edith Rhoda Hockey, an amateur pianist and singer.

Protests by Alsations continued. Ten [German](#) soldiers were taken into custody on a charge of having passed information to the Zabern press.

Kurt Vonnegut and Edith Lieber, who eventually would become the parents of [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#), got married in Indianapolis, Indiana.



KURT VONNEGUT

KURT VONNEGUT

1914

Bernard Vonnegut, who would be [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s older brother (but not yet), was born.

1917

Alice Vonnegut, who would be [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s older sister (but not yet), was born.

1922

November 11: [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) was born in Indianapolis.

1928

From this year until 1936, [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) would be attending the Orchard School in Indianapolis.

1936

From this year until 1940, [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) would be attending Shortridge High School in Indianapolis. He would contribute to the [Shortridge Daily Echo](#), a student daily newspaper, as reporter, columnist, and editor.

1940

[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) matriculated at Cornell University as a biochem major. During his college years he would contribute to the [Cornell Sun](#), as managing editor and columnist.



KURT VONNEGUT

KURT VONNEGUT

1943

March: [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) enlisted in the United States Army. He would be sent to the Carnegie Institute and to the University of Tennessee for training in mechanical engineering.

WORLD WAR II

1944

May 14, Sunday: [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s mother Edith Lieber Vonnegut committed [suicide](#).

US submarine *Bonefish* (SS-223) sank [Japanese](#) destroyer *Inazuma* in the Celebes Sea, 3 degrees 8 minutes North, 119 degrees 38 minutes East.

WORLD WAR II

KURT VONNEGUT

KURT VONNEGUT

December 22, Friday: [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) got captured during the Battle of the Bulge while a battalion scout with the 106 Infantry Division.



What
goes
around
keeps
coming
around
and
around
and
around...



United States LST563 went aground at Clipperton Island. United States Destroyer *Bryant* (DD-665) was damaged by [Japanese](#) Kamikaze in the vicinity of Mindoro, Philippine Islands at 12 degrees 0 minutes North, 121 degrees 0 minutes East.





KURT VONNEGUT

KURT VONNEGUT

Japanese Torpedo Boat *Chidori* was sunk by US Submarine *Tilefish* (SS-307) off Honshu, at 34 degrees 33 minutes North, 138 degrees 2 minutes East.

WORLD WAR II

KURT VONNEGUT

KURT VONNEGUT

1945

February 13-14: [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) –an American prisoner of war who had been sent on a work detail to a city in [Germany](#) which had no war industries and no military garrisons, and was helping make a dietary supplement for pregnant women– spent this night and the following day in his POW quarters in a requisitioned meat locker buried in the ground underneath Slaughterhouse #5, unable to go into the city of Dresden because of a firestorm raised by 771 tons of incendiary devices dropped from 733 British bombers and 311 US Flying Fortresses which utterly destroyed eleven square miles at the center of Dresden (the basis for SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE).²



It has been estimated that about 1,300,000 people were in the city as the raid started. Around 200,000 of these were refugees from the east who were being allowed to camp in the city's "Grosser Garten." What was being accomplished in that city amounted to the greatest number of casualties generated at one place and time during the entirety of WWII. The death count would reach 135,000, only a few of whom had been soldiers.³

2. Thousands of British and American prisoners like Kurt were on work detail in the city from the large POW camp "Stalag IVb" at nearby Muehlberg.

3. The death toll would have been much higher, but some of these bomber crews –aware that their leaders were trying to kill thousands of civilians refugees in a city that lacked any significant war industry and contained no significant military base– had traitorously jettisoned their bombs.



KURT VONNEGUT

KURT VONNEGUT

As he would report in the introduction to his novel MOTHER NIGHT in 1962,

After a while the war came, and I was in it, and I was captured, so I got to see a little of Germany from the inside while the war was still going on. I was a private, a battalion scout, and, under the terms of the [Geneva](#) Convention, I had to work for my keep, which was good, not bad. I didn't have to stay in prison all the time, somewhere out in the countryside. I got to go to a city, which was Dresden, and to see the people and the things they did.

There were about a hundred of us in our particular work group, and we were put out as contract labor to a factory that was making a vitamin-enriched malt syrup for pregnant women. It tasted like thin honey laced with hickory smoke. It was good. I wish I had some right now. And the city was lovely, highly ornamented, like Paris, and untouched by war. It was supposedly an "open" city, not to be attacked since there were no troop concentrations or war industries there.

But high explosives were dropped on Dresden by American and British planes on the night of February 13, 1945, just about twenty-one years ago, as I now write. There were no particular targets for the bombs. The hope was that they would create a lot of kindling and drive firemen underground.

And then hundreds of thousands of tiny incendiaries were scattered over the kindling, like seeds on freshly turned loam. More bombs were dropped to keep firemen in their holes, and all the little fires grew, joined one another, became one apocalyptic flame. Hey presto: fire storm. It was the largest massacre in European history, by the way. And so what?

We didn't get to see the fire storm. We were in a cool meat-locker under a slaughterhouse with our six guards and ranks and ranks of dressed cadavers of cattle, pigs, horses, and sheep. We heard the bombs walking around up there. Now and then there would be a gentle shower of calimine. If we had gone above to take a look, we would have been turned into artifacts characteristic of fire storms; seeming pieces of charred firewood two or three feet long - ridiculously small human beings, or jumbo fried grasshoppers, if you will.

The malt syrup factory was gone. Everything was gone but the cellars where 135,000 Hansels and Gretels had been baked like gingerbread men. So we were put to work as corpse miners, breaking into shelters, bringing bodies out. And I got to see many German types of all ages as death had found them, usually with valuables in their laps. Sometimes relative would come to watch us dig. They were interesting, too.

The flames of the induced conflagration were so intense that the rows of 35,000+ civilians sitting in air-raid shelters underground simply roasted like turkeys, with their body fats running out and forming a deep pool of black grease on the floor, and then their body juices evaporated and they became as light as cinders (according to Kurt, this lightness somewhat eased the job of postattack cleanup).

WORLD WAR II

KURT VONNEGUT

KURT VONNEGUT

It is an ill wind indeed, that blows **nobody** any good. The firebombing of Dresden actually **saved** some lives, for some Jews at this point still remained in the city. They were the ones who had been spared being deported to the gas chambers because they were the wives or husbands of certified Aryans. However, Nazi minds had been changing and these survivors were being collected together, and the lot of them were scheduled to be shipped by one of those special trains, to Auschwitz, departure scheduled for the 16th. In this final batch of Jews for the burning was, for instance, Victor Klemperer — because of the firebombing he would continue to live.

Later, in *FATES WORSE THAN DEATH* in 1991, Vonnegut would add some remarks which we might find useful when contemplating Thoreau's civil disobedience:

Among the unidentified, not-even-counted dead in the cellars of Dresden there were, without doubt, war criminals or loathsomely proud relatives of war criminals, SS and Gestapo, and so on. Maybe most of the Germans killed in Dresden, excepting the infants and children, of course, got what was coming to them. I asked another great German writer, Heinrich Böll, what he thought the dangerous flaw in the character of so many Germans was, and he said, "Obedience."



NOT A BIG FAN
OF OBEDIENCE

Obedience to a leader, plus an evil leader, is adequate in itself to produce disaster:



"I cannot see why man should not be just as cruel as nature."

— Adolf Hitler



KURT VONNEGUT

KURT VONNEGUT



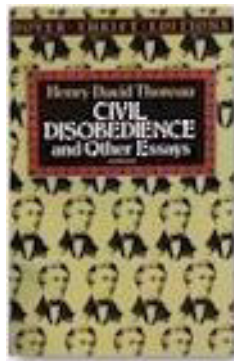
The point has been generalized by Howard Zinn:



"Civil disobedience is not our problem. Our problem is civil obedience. Our problem is that numbers of people all over the world have obeyed the dictates of the leaders of their government and have gone to war, and millions have been killed because of this obedience.... Our problem is that people are obedient all over the world in the face of poverty and starvation and stupidity, and war, and cruelty. Our problem is that people are obedient while the jails are full of petty thieves, and all the while the grand thieves are running the country. That's our problem."



— Howard Zinn, "Failure to Quit,"
page 45, FREEDOM ARCHIVES,
522 Valencia Street,
San Francisco CA 94110
<<http://www.freedomarchives.org>>



KURT VONNEGUT

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It should be taken into account, by opponents of new technologies such as the [atomic bomb](#), that as is pointed out in David Irving's *THE DESTRUCTION OF DRESDEN*, the 135,000 civilians who died there on this date, died as the result of an attack with **conventional** weapons.



Likewise, on the night of March 9, 1845, a firestorming of Tokyo by American bombers, using **conventional** weapons, would produce 83,793 deaths.⁴

After this, Kurt would write. He confessed, however, that there was a problem inherent in this:

Over the years, people I've met have often asked me what I'm working on, and I've usually replied that the main thing was a book about Dresden.

I said that to Harrison Starr, the movie-maker, one time, and he raised his eyebrows and inquired, "Is it an anti-war book?"

"Yes," I said. "I guess."

"You know what I say to people when I hear they're writing anti-war books?"

"No. What do you say, Harrison Starr?"

"I say, 'Why don't you write an anti-glacier book instead?'"

What he meant, of course, was that there would always be wars, that they were as easy to stop as glaciers. I believe that, too.

— [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE*
OR *THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE*
A DUTY-DANCE WITH DEATH. NY: Dell, 1971, page 3.

4. Should this not put an end forever to the speculation that we were willing to drop the [atomic bomb](#) on the [Japanese](#) because we are by and large racist Caucasoids who consider Mongoloids to be Other? Clearly we did not wince at the firestorming of a civilian Dresden filled with Caucasoid women and children and old men any more than we would wince at the firestorming of a largely-civilian Tokyo.

(Also, we have now become aware that [Winston Churchill](#) would have dropped 500,000 4-pound [anthrax](#) bombs on selected cities in Germany, regardless of the fact that these cities were full of Caucasoid women and children and old men, if only our germ-bomb plant near Terre Haute IN had been able to produce these bombs before Germany had a chance to surrender.)



KURT VONNEGUT

KURT VONNEGUT

May 22, Tuesday: Heinrich Himmler committed suicide. Prisoner of War [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) was able to make his way out of the Soviet-occupied zone of [Germany](#), and would return to the USA to receive his Purple Heart.

[Japanese](#) submarine chasers #37 and #58 and transport #173 were sunk by carrier-based aircraft off southeastern Japan at 29 degrees 45 minutes North, 129 degrees 10 minutes East.

Friend [Agnes Carol Zens Kellam](#) wrote from Washington DC to her husband, Friend [John R. Kellam](#), who was being held in a federal penitentiary for having refused to participate in the killing:

My Darling:

Practically ten days since my last epistle to thee! Gosh! But the weather was so hot, and I was so tired, that I just couldn't write. It's cooler now, and I feel much better, although Sunday I fainted in Meeting. It was only temporary, and I was greatly embarrassed, and people were quite concerned. I really think it was caused by lack of air, as thee knows how I suffer in close spaces even without Junior to provide for, and if he takes after me in his oxygen requirements, I really have to have quit a supply.... I wonder if I should attempt Meetings any more. The books say to avoid crowds, but I don't know if I should go to that extreme.... [A neighbor] has said his car was available at any time, day or night, that he was there to drive me to the hospital. He thought it would be impossible to get a taxi. I'll ask the doctor about that when I go to see her next week.... TIME ... tells about Pastor Niemoller [the [Reverend Friedrich Gustav Emil Martin Niemöller](#), a German founder of the Confessional Church and author of the poem "First they came..."], briefly. Says he "became an anti-Nazi the hard way." He was a staunch early-Party member. But when he saw how the wind was blowing he stood up in his Dahlen pulpit and denounced Hitler's mumbo-jumbo racial theories. He also refused to put the will of Der Fuhrer above the will of God....

All my love to thee, Johnny.

Hope All's well. Thy, Carol

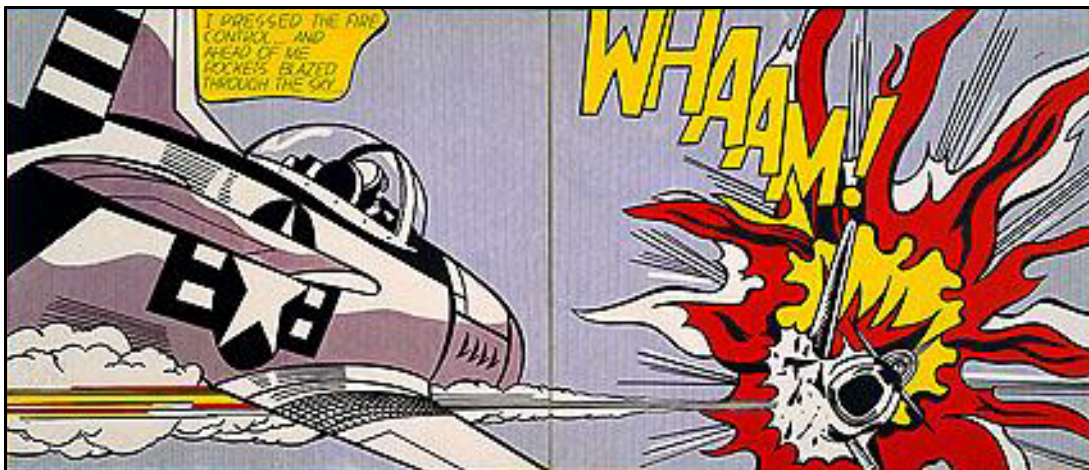
WORLD WAR II

KURT VONNEGUT

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August 6, Monday: Major Richard I. Bong, the fighter pilot from Duluth, Minnesota who had shot down 40 Japanese planes and for this had received the Congressional Medal of Honor, died in an explosion shortly after takeoff, above Burbank CA.



This was to be our 1st Hiroshima Day. We prayed for a day that would live in history. We dropped one of our two [atomic bomb](#) designs on [Hiroshima](#), Honshu, [Japan](#).



Carrier aircraft from naval task group (Vice Admiral J.B. Oldendorf) struck enemy shipping in Tinghai Harbor, China.

Carrier aircraft bombed Wake Island.

WORLD WAR II

President [Harry S Truman](#) had instructed that the [atomic bomb](#) was to be utilized in such a manner that “military objectives and soldiers and sailors are the target and not women and children.... [Secretary of War Henry L.

Stimson] and I are in accord. The target is a purely military one.”⁵



It Is Not Enough

It is not enough
if your name is Harry Truman
and you have that sign on your desk
saying “The buck stops here”
to only take responsibility.

I am sure he did not lay awake at night
agonizing over giving the order
to obliterate Hiroshima.
He was proud to take the
responsibility for this action.

But life is so short and the long-term
consequences of our nuclear actions
Unfold like the growing of
a mighty Redwood.

I wonder if Harry was willing to be
responsible for the consequences
of his actions since they are still
unfolding a half a century later?

I wonder if Harry could look at pictures
of Hiroshima survivors
or the shadow in the concrete

5. Actually, President Truman knew very well that the targets for the A-bombs were not military at all, but were instead cities full of civilians, cities that had been selected primarily because so far in the war they had not sustained significant bomb damage. He also knew very well that his Secretary of State, James Byrnes, was very much opposed to this use of the bomb on civilian populations. While he was aboard the USS *Augusta* waiting for the first bomb to be dropped, therefore, Truman hid out from his Secretary of State in a marathon poker game. Another player in that fateful shipboard game, United Press International reporter Merriam Smith, would report on this, that the President of the United States of America “was running a straight stud filibuster” against his own Cabinet member.





KURT VONNEGUT

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of those publicly cremated?

I wonder if he read the reports
of the continuing, widespread
radiation sickness occurring
long after the bomb was
only a memory?

I wonder if Harry was warned that
cancers traced back to genetic
damage or a high incidence
of deformed children would be “the rule”
and not “the exception” for generations?

Would Harry have been willing
to have eternally twisted and
torn the genetic matrix of
a whole people?

I wonder if Harry was able to envision
a world where more and more nations
possess nuclear capability
and terrorist groups will
soon be able to buy from
those who wish to sell?

Would Harry have been willing
to accept these consequences
and worse? Would he have been
able to watch the Twin Towers fall?

Would Harry have been able
to sleep and have sweet dreams
knowing the consequences
of his actions?

I do not know if there will be
a final day of judgment
and God will assess what
we gave to the world in return
for Her giving us life and a free will.

Perhaps when Harry stands
alone before God, She will have wept
so long and so hard with those
killed or worse, over the centuries as a
result of his action, that She will just
sit in silence as he squirms.

I would not like to be anywhere
near that part of the galaxy when



KURT VONNEGUT

KURT VONNEGUT

that confrontation occurs.

Warning to all heads of state!
Do not post signs that you will take
responsibility for your decisions
unless you are willing
to accept responsibility
for the long-term
consequences as well!

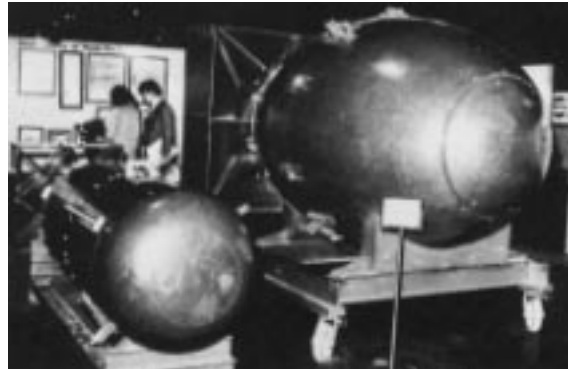
Poor, dumb Harry.

— Harold B. Confer,
Finding My Voice
Enumclaw WA:
Winepress Publishing, 2003

KURT VONNEGUT

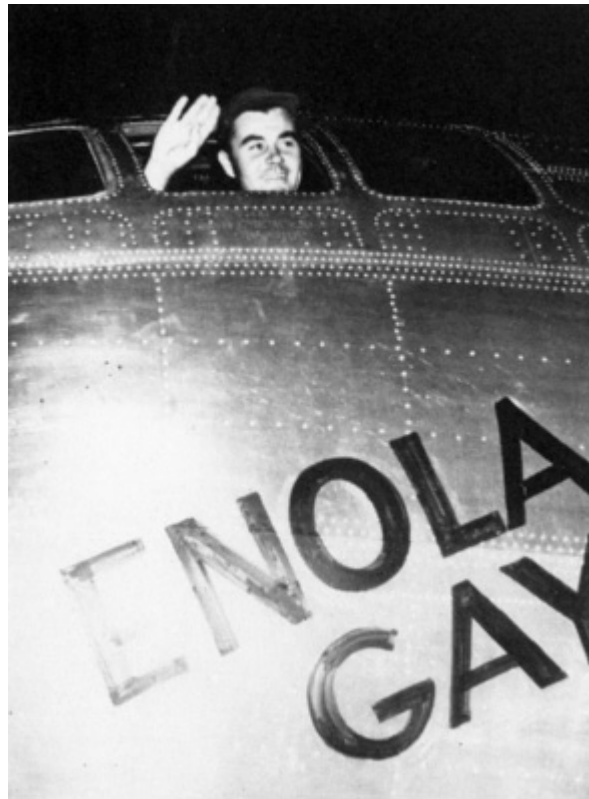
KURT VONNEGUT

Subsequent to the explosion of the “Jumbo” tower device at Trinity flats on July 16th, the US had two weapons in its nuclear arsenal, one a trigger-mechanism enriched-Uranium₂₃₈ bomb named “Little Boy” that had been constructed in the Tennessee Valley facility (on the left below) and the other an implosion-mechanism Plutonium₂₃₉ bomb named “Fat Man” that had been constructed in the Hanford, Washington facility (on the right below).



This was, therefore, to be the 1st Hiroshima Day. A day that would live in our memory.

Bomber 44-86292, the *Enola Gay*, piloted by Colonel Paul W. Tibbets, Jr., departed at 2:45AM. He waved from the cockpit as he took off, and you can see from the photo how dark it still was:



At about 8:15AM local time, two silver airplanes were circling over the city of Hiroshima, so high up in the sky as to be almost dots, and a dot invisible from the ground dropped from one of the two planes, and then the planes began steep banking turns, one to the left and one to the right. There were at least 15 kilograms of fissile material in the two chunks loaded into the device, since that is the critical amount for Uranium₂₃₈. Forty-three seconds later, at about 8:16AM local time, this dot which had dropped from the sky fell to within a few



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thousand feet of its aiming point, a uniquely shaped “T” bridge in the heart of downtown Hiroshima that was 1.7 kilometers distant from the home in which baby [Sadako Sasaki](#) lay, and an altitude sensor being triggered, a minute conventional explosion inside this canister propelled a small chunk of U_{238} into a hole bored in another, slightly larger chunk of U_{238} beginning a chain nuclear fission reaction which in a fraction of a second went to completion, transforming some of the U_{238} directly into energy in accordance with the exceedingly

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rough $E=mc^2 \pm 10\%$ rule of thumb.⁶

Periodic Chart

KEY:

Atomic Number

Name

Symbol

Electronic Configuration

Atomic Mass

11	2
Sodium	8
Na	1
22.990	

94

Plutonium

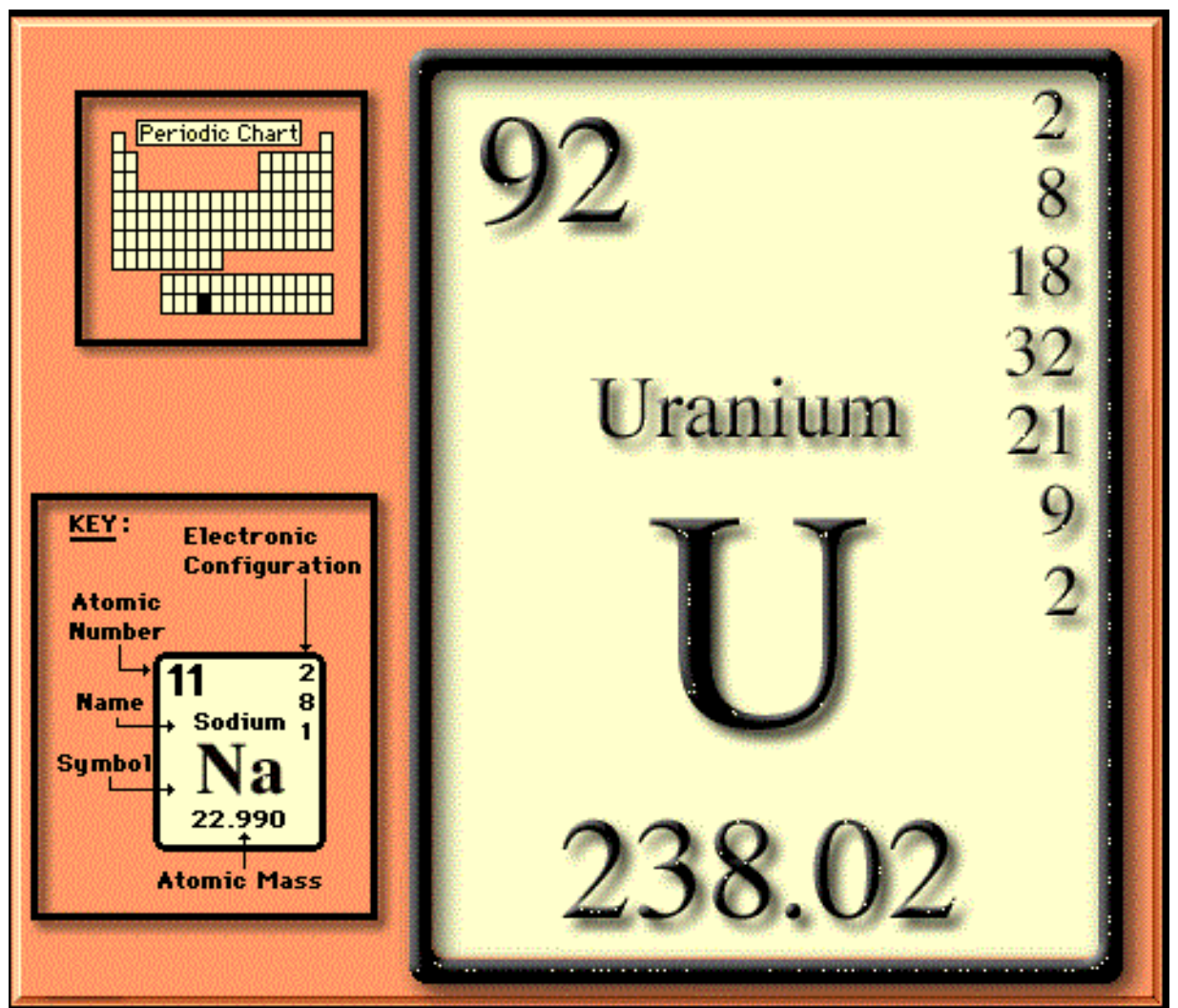
Pt

~239

2
8
18
32
24
8
2

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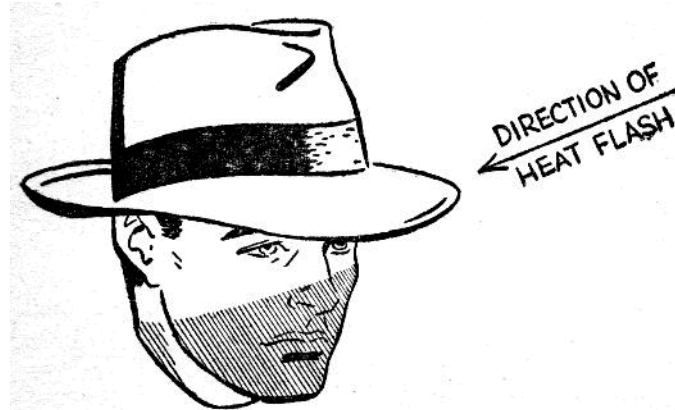
WORLD WAR II

6. Actually, $E=mc^2$ only plus or minus ten percent. The formula has never been either tested or proved — it's not science, but publicity — it's a sales pitch.

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KURT VONNEGUT

Approximately 70,000 men, women, and children, most of them noncombatants, either died instantly and painlessly or would, like Sadako Sasaki, die more slowly and horribly. 90% of the 200 doctors were killed or seriously injured. Three of the 55 hospitals were usable. 150 of the 1,780 nurses were able to perform their jobs. Our trigger mechanism and our uranium²³⁸ technology had worked flawlessly. The aircraft crew radioed its success: "CLEAR CUT RESULTS COMMA IN ALL RESPECTS SUCCESSFUL PD EXCEEDED TEST IN VISIBLE EFFECTS PD" The bomber flight returned to Tinian at 2:58PM, twelve hours and thirteen minutes after takeoff. President Truman proceeded to inform a group of Americans that "This is the greatest thing in history" and went off to see a comedy revue. Our president fully understood how important Hiroshima Day would come to be for us. The narrator of Kurt Vonnegut's 1963 novel CAT'S CRADLE would purport to be engaged in compiling a record of what various Americans were doing at the moment the atomic bomb went off over Hiroshima, and he informs us that at this moment, 8:16AM of August 6, 1945, his character "Dr. Felix Hoenikker, Nobel Prize winner and so-called father of the atomic bomb," having made a "cat's cradle" out of a bit of string, had come up unexpectedly and was frightening his young son, by jerking this string back and forth and exclaiming "See the cat! See the cradle!"⁷



If you are caught outdoors in a sudden attack, a hat will give you at least some protection from the heat flash.



September 1, Saturday: Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. got married in Indianapolis with his Shortridge High School classmate Jane Marie Cox (they had first met in kindergarten; she was Quaker, a daughter of Harvey Cox and Riah Cox and a graduate of Swarthmore College). The couple would produce a boy Mark Vonnegut and two girls Edith Vonnegut and Nanette Vonnegut. They would adopt the orphaned children James Adams, Steven Adams, and Kurt "Tiger" Adams of Kurt's sister Alice Vonnegut Adams. They would be divorced, and Jane Marie would have remarried with Adam Yarmolinsky, before she would die of cancer.

December: Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. enrolled in the University of Chicago's MA program in anthropology. He would work as a reporter for the Chicago City News Bureau.

7. Austin Meredith cannot remember what he was doing, as he was 7½ years old and anyway was not informed of this event until maybe a following day. He was in Brazil, Indiana, at his grandmother's house, and presumably, as it was growing dark, was getting ready to go upstairs to his and his Uncle Vergilee's bed, which had a rustley mattress made of corn shucks.



KURT VONNEGUT

KURT VONNEGUT

1946

At the University of Chicago, [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s MA thesis "On the Fluctuations between Good and Evil in Simple Tales" was unanimously rejected by the anthropology faculty.

1947

[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#), whose brother Bernard Vonnegut was a General Electric research scientist, took a job as a public relations writer at the GE Research Laboratory in Schenectady, New York. During this year his and Jane Marie Cox Vonnegut's son Mark Vonnegut was born.

1949

[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) and Jane Marie Cox Vonnegut's daughter Edith "Edie" Vonnegut was born.

1950

February 11: [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s 1st short story, "Report on the Barnhouse Effect," appeared in Collier's.

February 13: [President Harry S Truman](#)'s fact-finding board found both sides at fault in the national coal strike.

Aaron Copland wrote a conciliatory letter to Arnold Schoenberg.

Duo for viola and cello by Walter Piston was performed for the initial time, in Los Angeles.

1951

[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) quit his day job at Generous Electric and moved to Provincetown, Massachusetts (later West Barnstable) to make a stab at writing full-time.



KURT VONNEGUT

KURT VONNEGUT

1952

[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s 1st novel, *PLAYER PIANO*, was published by Charles Scribner's Sons of New York, and in Canada by S.J. Reginald Saunders of Toronto.

1953

When [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s *PLAYER PIANO* was distributed by the Doubleday Science Fiction Book Club, that made it his 1st book club selection (the work was also published in this year outside North America, by Macmillan of London).

The [Eastern State Penitentiary](#) became the State Correctional Institution at Philadelphia, or "SCI-PHA."

1954

When [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s *PLAYER PIANO* was reissued as *UTOPIA 14*, that made it his 1st reprint. His and Jane Marie Cox Vonnegut's daughter Nanette "Nanny" Vonnegut was born. During this period the author was attempting by a variety of jobs to support his growing family, including teaching at Hopefield School, writing advertising copy — and opening the 2d Saab dealership in the United States.

1957

October 1: [Kurt Vonnegut, Sr.](#) died.

Claus R. Kirkoff, a swimming instructor who had been deported from the United States of America, unaware that the Spanish Aero Car above the Whirlpool Rapids of the [Niagara River](#) crosses from one Canadian terminus to another, purchased a ticket in order to get across the border from Ontario into New York. Having failed in that attempt, he leaped into the water and swam across the Lower or Devil's Hole rapids.

1958

Alice Vonnegut succumbed to cancer within 24 hours of her husband John Adams being killed in a train crash. [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) and Jane Vonnegut would adopt three of John and Alice's children (James Adams, Steven Adams, and Kurt "Tiger" Adams).

October 5: [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s "*Auf Wiedersehen*," a television drama based on Vonnegut's "D.P.," broadcast by CBS.



KURT VONNEGUT

KURT VONNEGUT

1959

[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s THE SIRENS OF TITAN was published in paperback by Dell.



Following the death of [Jesus Christ](#) there was a period of readjustment that lasted for approximately one million years.

-Kurt Vonnegut, THE SIRENS OF TITAN

1961

A number of [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s previously printed short stories were republished by Fawcett as a collection entitled CANARY IN A CAT HOUSE. In addition, THE SIRENS OF TITAN was reissued, this time in hardcover.

1962

[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s MOTHER NIGHT was published, in paperback, by Fawcett. Monique Theis translated THE SIRENS OF TITAN into French and DeNoël of Paris published it as *LES SIRÈNE DE TITAN*.

January: [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s reflections on our world population crisis, 2 B R 0 2 B, was published in a sci-fi rag.

READ THE FULL TEXT

1963

[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s CAT'S CRADLE was published, in hardcover, by Holt, Rinehart & Winston. The book was reviewed in the New York Times Book Review and The Spectator.



KURT VONNEGUT

KURT VONNEGUT

1964

[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s *PLAYER PIANO* was translated into German by Wulf H. Bergner as *DAS HÖLLISCHE SYSTEM* (published by Heyne of Munich).

1965

March: [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s *GOD BLESS YOU, MR. ROSEWATER*, his first widely reviewed book, was published by Holt, Rinehart & Winston. He accepted an appointment in the University of Iowa's Writer's Workshop. He wrote his first review for New York *Times*. *THE SIRENS OF TITAN* was translated into Italian by Roberta Rambelli and published by Piaccenza in Rome as *LE SIRENE DI TITANO*.

1966

[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s *GOD BLESS YOU, MR. ROSEWATER* was translated into Spanish by Amparo García Burgos and published by Grijalbo in Barcelona as *DIOS LE BENDIGA, MR. ROSEWATER*. New Republic published a factually flawed survey by C.D.B. Bryan of Vonnegut texts, a survey which disseminated needed information on Kurt's largely unnoticed prior writings.

1967

[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s *PLAYER PIANO* was translated into Russian by M. Bruhnov and published by Molodaya gvardiya in Moscow as *UTOPIJA 14*. Kurt was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship that would allow him to revisit Dresden and do needed research for *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE*. In this year Kurt signed a 3-book contract with Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence. The publisher reprinted his novels in hardcover. The chapter "Fabulation and Satire" by Robert Scholes, published in *THE FABULATORS*, was the 1st academic study of Vonnegut's work.

1968

August: Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence put out a collection of [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s previously published short fiction, as *WELCOME TO THE MONKEY HOUSE*. His *CAT'S CRADLE* was translated into Japanese by Itô Norio and published by Hayakawa Shobô as *NEKO NO YURIKAGO*.



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1969

March: [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE, published by Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence, was #1 on the New York Times Best Seller list.

1970

January: [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) traveled in Biafra just before its collapse in a Nigerian civil war. He was awarded a National Institute of Arts and Letters grant. He was appointed to teach creative writing at Harvard University. During this year he and his wife Jane Marie Cox Vonnegut would divorce and he would move alone to New York.

October 7: In the course of a speech, President [Richard Milhous Nixon](#) proposed a “standstill” cease-fire in which all the combatants were simply to cease shooting at one another and remain in place pending a formal peace agreement. It would appear that this idea would not sound as plausible to the humorless people in charge in [Hanoi](#), as it did to clueless TV audiences in America.

[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s “Happy Birthday, Wanda June” opened in New York and would continue through March 14, 1971 (it would be published by Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence).

1971

[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) was awarded an MA by the University of Chicago in recognition for his CAT'S CRADLE's contribution to the field of cultural anthropology. “**Now** will you guys sign off on my dissertation?”



[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE OR THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE
A DUTY-DANCE WITH DEATH. NY: Dell, 1971

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Over the years, people I've met have often asked me what I'm working on, and I've usually replied that the main thing was a book about Dresden.

I said that to Harrison Starr, the movie-maker, one time, and he raised his eyebrows and inquired, "Is it an anti-war book?"

"Yes," I said. "I guess."

"You know what I say to people when I hear they're writing anti-war books?"

"No. What *do* you say, Harrison Starr?"

"I say, 'Why don't you write an anti-*glacier* book instead?'"

What he meant, of course, was that there would always be wars, that they were as easy to stop as glaciers.

I believe that, too.

— [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE
OR THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE
A DUTY-DANCE WITH DEATH. NY: Dell, 1971, page 3.

1972

[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) was elected as the Vice-President of PEN American Center and also elected as a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Peter J. Reed's KURT VONNEGUT, JR. was the 1st book-length academic study of Vonnegut. His son Mark suffered an emotional collapse. George Roy Hill's feature film "Slaughterhouse-Five" was shown nationwide.

March 13: [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s "Between Time & Timbuktu" was put on TV by PBS.

1973

May: Senator Ervin began three months of televised Watergate hearings which reported enemies' lists, money drops, illegally obtained campaign funds, and harassment by the IRS of political enemies. Most importantly, it was revealed that the Oval Office had a secret tape-recording system.

[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS was published by Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence. While this effort was wildly successful as a commercial release, it must be admitted that critical reviewers were, by and large, underwhelmed. The author was, however, awarded an honorary LHD by Indiana University, and succeeded Anthony Burgess as Distinguished Professor of English Prose at City University of New York.

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November 7: [Saigon's](#) bombers devastated Loc Ninh, the Viet Cong administrative center.

The United States and [Egypt](#) agreed to resume diplomatic relations.

The US Congress overrode President [Richard Milhous Nixon](#)'s veto of the War Powers Resolution, thus limiting the president's ability to make war without congressional approval. The President was to be required to obtain the consent of Congress within 90 days after sending American troops abroad.

READ THE FULL TEXT

The government of Luxembourg ordered gas stations to close on weekends. In a national address, the President outlined mandatory and voluntary measures to deal with the projected shortfall in oil. He also informed us that he had no intention of resigning.

The Board of Education of Drake, North Dakota had 32 to 36 copies of [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE OR THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE A DUTY-DANCE WITH DEATH burned, terming them "tools of the Devil" (they would not renew the contract of the teacher who had assigned this book).

Over the years, people I've met have often asked me what I'm working on, and I've usually replied that the main thing was a book about Dresden.

I said that to Harrison Starr, the movie-maker, one time, and he raised his eyebrows and inquired, "Is it an anti-war book?"

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"No. What do you say, Harrison Starr?"

"I say, 'Why don't you write an anti-glacier book instead?'"

What he meant, of course, was that there would always be wars, that they were as easy to stop as glaciers. I believe that, too.

— [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE
OR THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE
A DUTY-DANCE WITH DEATH. NY: Dell, 1971, page 3.

1974

February 22: [Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) resigned as Distinguished Professor of English Prose at City University of New York. WAMPETERS, FOMA & GRANFALLOONS, a collection of his essays, reviews, and such, was published by Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence. He received honorary Litt.D degrees from Hobart College and William Smith College.



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1975

[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#) was elected Vice President of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Mark Vonnegut's EDEN EXPRESS was published by Praeger Publishers.

1976

[Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.](#)'s SLAPSTICK; OR LONESOME NO MORE was published by Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence, but received a number of hostile reviews. In this year the author began to identify himself as simply "Kurt Vonnegut."

1977

[Kurt Vonnegut](#)'s 1st grandchild, Zachary, was born to his son Mark's family.

1979

[Kurt Vonnegut](#)'s JAILBIRD was published by Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence.

October 11: Edith Vonnegut's production of the musical adaptation of "God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater" premiered at New York's Entermedia Theatre.

November 24: [Kurt Vonnegut](#) and author and photographer Jill Krementz, who had been together for some time, were wed.

1980

[Kurt Vonnegut's](#) SUN MOON STAR, a children's Christmas story with illustrations by Ivan Chermayeff, was published by Harper & Row.

The City of Philadelphia took title to the [Eastern State Penitentiary](#), for some ungodly reason paying just over \$400,000 to the State of Pennsylvania.



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1981

[Kurt Vonnegut's](#) PALM SUNDAY: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COLLAGE, a collection of essays, reviews, and such with connective commentary, was published by Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence.

1982

[Kurt Vonnegut's](#) DEADEYE DICK was published by Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence.

February 2: [Kurt Vonnegut's](#) “Who Am I This Time?” was adapted from the Vonnegut short story and televised nationally on American Playhouse.

December 15: Lily Vonnegut was born, who would be adopted by [Kurt Vonnegut](#) and Jill Krementz.

1983

Spring: [Kurt Vonnegut](#), a native of Indianapolis, Indiana, preached at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. The subject of his homily has since become Chapter XV of his book, FATES WORSE THAN DEATH: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COLLAGE OF THE 1980S (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1991).⁸ An excerpt of that chapter follows:

FATES WORSE THAN DEATH:

8. I am including this preaching by Vonnegut in my file on the [Eastern State Penitentiary](#), because Kurt would begin to elaborate here a quite tendentious account of Quaker history, that 19th-Century American Quaker foolishness and unworldliness involved the conceit that maddening long-term solitary confinement would possess a magic power as a curative. He would be referring to “the penitentiary system, an invention of American Quakers.” What I want you to take careful notice of is the fact that Kurt for all his lovable storytelling has never been a practitioner of the craft of the historian. When he asserts that he has found out something that nobody else has found out—a piece of true history—there is no reason in the world to believe him. He has no credentials, he has no credibility, in such an area. He has never studied Quaker history, has never been a close reader of Quaker pamphlets; he has never studied Philadelphia history, has never studied the history of American prisons, etc. He knows a lot but not about the way things used to be. He's often right but sometimes attitudes are merely attitudes. He's projects an intriguing personality but he's also a pain in the ass — ask him to draw you a picture of his asshole.

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AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COLLAGE OF THE 1980S



"I will speak today about the worst imaginable consequences of doing without hydrogen bombs.

"Scientists, for all their creativity, will never discover a method for making people deadier than dead. So if some of you are worried about being hydrogen-bombed, you are merely fearing death. There is nothing new in that. If there weren't any hydrogen bombs, death would still be after you...

"But suppose we foolishly got rid of our nuclear weapons, our Kool-Aid, and an enemy came over here and crucified us. Crucifixion was the most painful thing the ancient Romans ever found to do to anyone. They knew as much about pain as we do about genocide. They sometimes crucified hundreds of people at one time. That is what they did to all the survivors of the army of Spartacus, which was composed mostly of escaped slaves. They crucified them all. There were several miles of crosses.⁹

"If we were up on crosses, with nails through our feet and hands, wouldn't we wish that we still had hydrogen bombs, so that life could be ended everywhere: Absolutely.

"We know of one person who was crucified in olden times, who was supposedly as capable as we or the Russians are of ending life everywhere. But He chose to endure agony instead. All He said was, 'Forgive them, Father — they know not what they do.'

"He let life go on, as awful as it was for Him, because here we are, aren't we?

"But He was a special case. It is unfair to use Jesus Christ as an exemplar of how much pain and humiliation we ordinary human being should put up with before calling for the end of everything.

"I don't believe that we are about to be crucified. NO potential enemy we now face has anywhere near enough carpenters...

"But what if they [the Pentagon] said, instead, that we would be enslaved if we did not appropriate enough money for weaponry?...

"And slavery would surely be a fate worse than death. We can agree on that, I'm sure. We should send a message to the Pentagon: 'If Americans are about to become enslaved, it is Kool-Aid time.'

"They will know what we mean.

"Of course, at Kool-Aid time all higher forms of life on Earth, not just we and our enemies, will be killed...

"I have never seen a human slave, though. But my four great-

9. Vonnegut's calculations seem a bit off here. There were 6,000 crosses, and crosses simply cannot be placed less than a yard from one another! To the contrary, for maximum impressiveness they would have distributed those 6,000 crosses all along the Appian Way for the entire distance from Capua to Rome — which would put the average distance between crosses at about 120 running feet.



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grandfathers saw slaves. When they came to this country in search of justice and opportunity, there were millions of Americans who were slaves...

"If the Soviet Union came over here and enslaved us, it wouldn't be the first time Americans were slaves. If we conquered the Russians and enslave them, it wouldn't be the first time Russians were slaves.

"And the last time Americans were slaves, and the last time Russians were slaves, they displayed astonishing spiritual strengths and resourcefulness. They were good at loving one another. They trusted God. They discovered in the simplest, most natural satisfactions reasons to be glad to be alive. They were able to believe that better days were coming in the sweet by-and-by. And here is a fascinating statistic: They committed suicide less often than their masters did.

"So Americans and Russians can both stand slavery, if they have to - and still want life to go on and on.

"Could it be that slavery isn't fate worse than death? After all, people are tough. Maybe we shouldn't send that message to the Pentagon - about slavery and Kool-Aid time.

"But suppose enemies came ashore in great numbers because we lacked the means to stop them, and they pushed us out of our homes and off our ancestral lands, and into swamps and deserts. Suppose that they even tried to destroyed our religion, telling us that our Great God Jehovah, or whatever we wanted to call Him, was as ridiculous as a piece of junk jewelry.

"Again: This is a wringer millions of Americans have already been through - or are still going through. It is another catastrophe Americans can endure, if they have to - still, miraculously, maintaining some measure of dignity, or self-respect.

"As bad as life is for our Indians, they still like it better than death.

"So I haven't had much luck, have I, in identifying fates worse than death? Crucifixion is the only clear winner so far, and we aren't about to be crucified. We aren't about to be enslaved, either - to be treated the way white Americans used to treat black Americans. And no potential enemy that I have heard of wants to come over here to treat all of us the way we still treat American Indians.

"What other fates worse than death could I name? Life without petroleum?...

"My guess is that we will not disarm, even though we should, and that we really will blow up everything by and by. History shows that human beings are vicious enough to commit every imaginable atrocity, including the construction of factories whose only purpose is to kill people and burn them up....

"What can save us? Divine intervention, certainly - and this is the place to ask for it. We might pray to be rescued from our inventiveness, just as the dinosaurs may have prayed to be rescued from their massiveness.

"But the inventiveness which we so regret now may also be giving us, along with the rockets and warheads, the means to achieve what has hitherto been an impossibility, the unity of mankind. I am talking mainly about television sets.

"Even in my own lifetime, it used to be necessary for a young soldier to get into fighting before he became disillusioned about war. His parents back home were equally ignorant, and



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believed him to be slaying monsters. But now, thanks to modern communications, the people of every industrialized nation are nauseated by the idea of war by the time they are ten years old. American's first generation of television viewers has gone to war and come home again - and we have never seen veterans like them before....

"Thanks to modern communications, the poor, unlucky young people from the Soviet Union, now killing and dying in Afghanistan, were dead sick of war before they ever got there....

"Thanks to modern communications, the same must be true of the poor, unlucky young people from Argentina and Great Britain, now killing and dying in the Falkland Islands... Thanks to modern communications, we know that they are good deal more marvelous and complicated than that, and that what is happening to them down there, on the rim of the Antarctic, is a lot more horrible and shameful than a soccer match.

"When I was a boy it was unusual for an American, or a person of any nationality for that matter, to know much about foreigners. Those who did were specialists - diplomats, explorers, journalists, anthropologists. And they usually knew a lot about just a few groups of foreigners, Eskimos maybe, or Arabs, or what have you. To them, as to the schoolchildren of Indianapolis, large areas of the globe were terra incognita....

"So we now know for certain that there are no potential human enemies anywhere who are anything but human beings almost exactly like ourselves. They need food. How amazing. They love their children. How amazing. They obey their leaders. How amazing. They think like their neighbors. How amazing.

"Thanks to modern communications, we now have something we never had before: reason to mourn deeply the death or wounding of any human being on any side in any war.

"It was because of rotten communications and malicious, racist ignorance that we were able to celebrate the killing of almost all the inhabitants in Hiroshima, Japan, thirty-seven years ago. We thought they were vermin. They thought we were vermin. They would have clapped their yellow hands with glee and grinned with their crooked buckteeth if they could have incinerated everybody in Kansas City, say.

"Thanks to how much the people of the world now know about all the other people of the world, the fun of killing enemies has lost its zing. It has so lost its zing that no sane citizen of the Soviet Union, if we were to go to war with that society, would feel anything but horror if his country were to kill practically everybody in New York and Chicago and San Francisco. Killing enemies has so lost its zing that no sane citizen of the United States would feel anything but horror if our country were to kill practically everybody in Moscow and Leningrad and Kiev.

"Or in Nagasaki, Japan, for that matter.

"We have often heard it said that people would have to change, or we would go on having world wars, I bring you good news this morning: People have changed.

"We aren't so ignorant and bloodthirsty anymore....

"I dreamed last night of our descendants a thousand years from now,...I ask them how humanity, against all odds, managed to keep going for another millennium. They tell me that they and their ancestors did it by preferring life over death for themselves and others at every opportunity, even at the expense of being dishonored. They endured all sorts of insults and



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humiliations and disappointments without committing either suicide or murder. They are also the people who do the insulting and humiliating and disappointing....

"I give them a quotation from that great nineteenth-century moralist and robber baron, Jim Fisk, who may have contributed money to this cathedral.

"Jim Fisk uttered his famous words after a particularly disgraceful episode having to do with the Erie Railroad. Fisk himself had no choice but to find himself contemptible. He thought this over, and then he shrugged and said what we all must learn to say if we want to go on living much longer; 'Nothing is lost save honor.'

"I thank you for your attention."

Also known as "Doomsday Critic Laureate," [Vonnegut](#) introduced the above when he was writing *FATES WORSE THAN DEATH*, his naive sermon seven years after he had preached it. For the postscript of his sermon from the cathedral pulpit:

"On the subject of how casual technology had made us about war, I should have called attention to the transmogrification of my birthday, November 11, from Armistice Day to Veterans Day ... and by the time I was preaching in St. John's, the message of November 11 was that there were going to be lots more wars, and that we were ready for them this time (were we ever!), and that not just boys but girls, too, should want to grow up to be veterans (don't be left out!)

"We hadn't yet killed more than a thousand Panamanians in the process of kidnapping their Head of State (a paid CIA agent) on suspicion of drug trafficking, or I sure would have talked about that. I would have reminded people my age what Captain J.W. Philip said to his crewmen aboard the Battleship Texas in Santiago Bay in 1898 during the Spanish-American War. (American public school kids used to know his words by heart. I bet they don't anymore.) Shellfire from the Texas had set the Spanish Cruiser Vizcaya ablaze from stern to stern. And Captain Philip said, "Don't cheer, boys, those poor devils are dying." War back then, while perhaps necessary and surely exciting, was also a tragedy. It is still a tragedy, and can never be otherwise.

"(Yes, and while I was doing the final editing on this book, which was written in the summer of 1990 and is supposed to about the 1980s, we experienced our great victory over Iraq. I will simply repeat what a woman said at supper a week after we stopped shooting and bombing and rocketing: "The atmosphere of this country now is like a big party in a beautiful home. Everybody is polite and bubbly, but there is this awful stink coming from somewhere, and it's getting worse and worse. And nobody wants to be the first to mention it.")

[Vonnegut](#) has nothing but the highest praise for his cathedral host who had lived and preached in Indianapolis for many years and has been his and his wife's friend and traveled with him. In response to a pregnant woman who asked him if he thought it was wrong to bring a child into such an awful world, he said, "What made living almost worthwhile for me was all the saints I met, and I named Bishop Moore."



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1985

[Kurt Vonnegut's](#) GALÁPAGOS was published by Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence, and then the author attempted suicide by a combination of sleeping pills and alcohol — but there was a light at the end of his tunnel.

1987

[Kurt Vonnegut's](#) BLUEBEARD was published by Delacorte. Newsweek, The New Yorker, The New York Review of Books, the Times Literary Supplement, etc. choose to ignore this effort. During this year Jane Vonnegut Yarmolinsky's ANGELS WITHOUT WINGS was published by Houghton Mifflin.

1986

1986: [Kurt Vonnegut's](#) 1st wife Jane Marie Cox Vonnegut, wife of Adam Yarmolinsky, died of cancer.

1990

[Kurt Vonnegut's](#) HOCUS POCUS was published by Putnam.

David Cowart assimilated the spirits of Thoreau, of Thomas Pynchon (THE CRYING OF LOT 49), and of [Kurt Vonnegut](#) (PALM SUNDAY) by declaring the three authors capable of “heteroclitic patriotism,” which he defined as condemning one’s country’s faults yet communicating “an abiding love.” Cowart cited Vonnegut’s offhand admission that “This country has fulfilled more of the requirements of the Communist Manifesto than any avowedly Communist nation ever did.”

The US invaded Panama to oust General “Pineapple Puss” Noriega, who used to be George Herbert Walker Bush’s buddy-buddy despite the fact that he dealt in hard drugs.





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1991

[Kurt Vonnegut's](#) FATES WORSE THAN DEATH: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COLLAGE OF THE 1980S, a bunch of reprocessed speeches and magazine articles, was published by Putnam.

Kurt had a first wife who was a Friend, so presumably he has had an opportunity to learn something or other about Quakerism. In FATES WORSE THAN DEATH he offered a thought on page 180 in regard to the 19th-Century American [Quaker](#) involvement with solitary imprisonment as a curative.¹⁰ Kurt comments on the fact that when his book JAILBIRD was translated into other European languages, none of these other languages turned out to possess any term for “persons who find themselves locked up again and again, since the penitentiary system, an invention of American Quakers, is so new.” —If we did this thing, as for instance in [Eastern State Penitentiary](#) atop Cherry Hill near downtown Philadelphia, then, as Vonnegut comments elsewhere in this opus on human inventiveness,

We might pray to be rescued from our inventiveness, just as the dinosaurs may have prayed to be rescued from their massiveness.

10. Kurt may have acquired this false account of Quaker history from the newspapers of this year, since in this year they were reporting that with generous funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts, stabilization and preservation efforts had begun upon what remained of the structure of the [Eastern State Penitentiary](#).

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So, did Quakers in fact, as Vonnegut asserts, do this thing? Is this sort of experiment in mental torture indeed to be laid directly and solely at our door? No, in fact, although there were Quakers involved in the development of the penitentiary system and the institution of solitary confinement, these committee members were not unusually influential and were not leaders. The head of the prison-planning group, actually, was a member of another Christian grouping (I'm not going to tell you which one), and of influence in that other Christian grouping — yet no-one ever, ever accuses that other Christian grouping (which I have refrained from identifying) of having had bad judgment in the manner in which it has become conventional to accuse the Quakers!

Also, in this book *FATES WORSE THAN DEATH*, Vonnegut wrote the following:



"The United States of America had human slavery for almost one hundred years before that custom was recognized as a social disease and people began to fight it. Imagine that. Wasn't that a match for Auschwitz? What a beacon of liberty we were to the rest of the world when it was perfectly acceptable here to own other human beings and treat them as we treated cattle. Who told you we were a beacon of liberty from the very beginning? Why would they lie like that? [Thomas Jefferson](#) owned slaves, and not many people found that odd. It was as though he had an infected growth on the end of his nose the size of a walnut, and everybody thought that was perfectly OK."




– [Kurt Vonnegut](#), *FATES WORSE THAN DEATH*, page 84



THOMAS JEFFERSON

May 12: [Kurt Vonnegut](#)'s Showtime broadcasted "Kurt Vonnegut's Monkey House," adaptations of his short stories.

June: At the request of the students of Strawbridge Elementary School near the site at which the famous dinosaur skeleton had been dug up in the summer of 1858,  the one denominated *Hadrosaurus foulkii* by Dr. Joseph Leidy, the state Assembly declared that species to be the Official Dinosaur of the State of New Jersey.

[Kurt Vonnegut](#) and Jill Krementz filed for divorce. The petition would later be withdrawn (that dinosaur, however, is still official).



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1996

A Comprehensive [Nuclear Test Ban](#) Treaty was signed by 164 nations, including the United States of America, and ratified by 89 of these nations, such as France, Great Britain, and Russia.¹¹

Robert Weide's adaptation of "Mother Night" was released nationwide by Fine Line Features. Adapted for stage, "Slaughterhouse-Five" premiered at Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre Company.

1997

Said to be [Kurt Vonnegut](#)'s "final" novel, TIMEQUAKE was published by Putnam. This effort contained a couple of howlers about Henry Thoreau:

- On page 2 Kurt introduced Henry as one item on a list of persons whom he says "find being alive embarrassing or much worse," people for whom "the end of the world can't come soon enough." This list of persons he had constructed included, besides our guy, the names of Mark Twain, Jesus, Kurt's father Kurt Vonnegut Senior, and the jazz pianist Fats Waller. His evidence that Thoreau's name belonged on such a list was that "Henry David Thoreau said most famously, 'The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.'" (Although the author has attempted suicide with alcohol and pills, he has not registered his own name on this list.)
- On page 93 Kurt was making a list of books that "despise matrimony" and managed to come up with two such, Ernest Hemingway's A FAREWELL TO ARMS and Henry's WALDEN — evidently for this reason, he said of Henry's book that he "Loved it."

April 25: [Kurt Vonnegut](#)'s brother Bernard Vonnegut died.

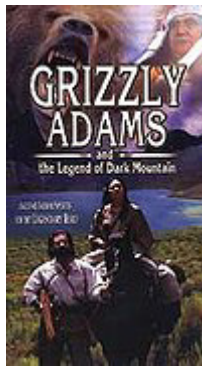
11. In 1999 the US Senate would decline to ratify this treaty.

1999

The film “Breakfast of Champions” was distributed in limited release. Previously uncollected fiction from [Kurt Vonnegut’s](#) 1950’s efforts, BAGOMBO SNUFF BOX, was published by G.P. Putnam’s Sons. Cobbled together from Vonnegut’s afterlife reflective quips on WNYC, GOD BLESS YOU, DR. KEVORKIAN was published by Seven Stories Press.

Liu Haiyan’s “Life in the Open air: Thoreau and his [WALDEN](#)” appeared in [Journalism Lover](#).

[“Grizzly” Adams](#) was played by the actor Tom Tayback in *Grizzly Adams and the Legend of Dark Mountain*.



In the Hollywood movie *P.T. Barnum*, meanwhile, he was being played by Jeff Watson.



2000

January: [Kurt Vonnegut](#) was hospitalized for smoke inhalation following a small house fire.

September: [Kurt Vonnegut](#) taught advanced writing at Smith College.

November: [Kurt Vonnegut](#) was named State Author for New York.



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2007

April 11: [Kurt Vonnegut](#) died in Manhattan after having suffered irreversible brain injuries due to a fall in his home.

A newspaper article entitled “Trace Thoreau’s footsteps on Mount Misery” was prepared by the Associated Press:

LINCOLN, Massachusetts (AP) — It’s not as well known as Walden Woods, but Mount Misery was one of author Henry David Thoreau’s favorite places to take his rambling hikes. Located less than two miles from Walden Pond State Reservation, and connected to it by walking trails, Mount Misery in Lincoln has all the natural beauty of its famous neighbor without the crowds. “This is really a piece of heaven,” said Elizabeth Shienbrood, 39, of Sudbury, who regularly walks Mount Misery’s well-groomed and well-marked trails with Ruby and Riley, her mixed-breed dogs.

The name Mount Misery is a misnomer.

First of all, it’s not really a mountain. The glacially carved hill that gives the surrounding land its name is just 284 feet above sea level. And it’s certainly not miserable.

The 227-acre swath of land next to the Sudbury River and established by the town in 1969 with the help of state and federal grants has a diverse landscape featuring hemlock forest, vernal pools, ponds, agricultural fields and wetlands.

The wildlife is just as diverse, from painted turtles, deer, fishers, barred owls and ovenbirds to the dozens of chipmunks that dart through the carpet of leaves on the forest floor. Beavers have even built dams along the appropriately named Beaver Dam Brook.

“The whole park has so many unique characteristics all together in one area, and that’s what makes it such a special treasure,” Shienbrood said. So how did such a beautiful place get such a bleak name? There are a couple of local legends, said Tom Gumbart, the town’s conservation director.

In one, a pair of yoked oxen wandered away from nearby farm in the late 18th century and got stuck on a tree, one on either side, with the yoke preventing them from moving forward. “They were either too stupid or too stubborn to back up, so they ended up dying there,” Gumbart said. In another story, sheep that grazed in the area supposedly died after tumbling over a rocky outcrop, he said.

No matter what the story, Mount Misery —also known as Lincoln Conservation Land— has had the name for at least a couple of centuries. “We know Thoreau mentioned it in his journals,” Gumbart said. Thoreau’s notes include a passage on the dispersion of seeds that begins, “Returning one afternoon by way of Mount Misery,” followed by his observations of a type of milkweed with a bursting seed pod. Although not quite the wilderness it was when Thoreau lived in the area in the 1840s, it is still a popular destination for a variety of recreational users.

The trails are normally filled with hikers and dog owners, who are allowed to let their dogs off their leashes on certain paths. Some of the trails are open to mountain bikers, and it’s not unusual to see equestrians on the trails.



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Paths where dogs and bikers are allowed are clearly marked. About a quarter of a mile from the main parking lot and trailhead is another parking area with a boat landing for canoeists and kayakers.

People ice fishing on the river and cross country skiing on the trails in the winter are a common site.

The area has even been used for orienteering.

"This is without a doubt the most popular site in our community," Gumbart said.

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It is abundantly clear that the true nature of this site is still being hidden behind eagerly credited just-so stories. The just-so story that Thoreau encountered, that he inserted into [WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS](#),

[WALDEN](#): Some have been puzzled to tell how the shore became so regularly paved. My townsmen have all heard the tradition, the oldest people tell me that they heard it in their youth, that anciently the Indians were holding a pow-wow upon a hill here, which rose as high into the heavens as the pond now sinks deep into the earth, and they used much profanity, as the story goes, though this vice is one of which the Indians were never guilty, and while they were thus engaged the hill shook and suddenly sank, and only one old squaw, named Walden, escaped, and from her the pond was named. It has been conjectured that when the hill shook these stones rolled down its side and became the present shore. It is very certain, at any rate, that once there was no pond here, and now there is one; and this Indian fable does not in any respect conflict with the account of that ancient settler whom I have mentioned, who remembers so well when he first came here with his divining rod, saw a thin vapor rising from the sward, and the hazel pointed steadily downward, and he concluded to dig a well here. As for the stones, many still think that they are hardly to be accounted for by the action of the waves on these hills; but I observe that the surrounding hills are remarkably full of the same kind of stones, so that they have been obliged to pile them up in walls on both sides of the railroad cut nearest the pond; and, moreover, there are most stones where the shore is most abrupt; so that, unfortunately, it is no longer a mystery to me. I detect the paver. If the name was not derived from that of some English locality, -Saffron Walden, for instance,- one might suppose that it was called, originally, **walled-in** Pond.

has been replaced by two other just-so stories, one about stupid yoked oxen and the other about clumsy sheep — but the public credulity is a constant.

You will notice above that the AP's copyright statement is exceedingly restrictive. Could it be that they don't want this quoted because they don't want people to find out how gullible and feckless are their reporters, and how inane and inconsequential their stories?



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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



Prepared: August 19, 2012

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ARRGH AUTOMATED RESearch REPORT

GENERATION HOTLINE



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, upon someone's request we have pulled it out of the hat of a pirate that has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (depicted above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of data modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture. This is data mining. To respond to such a request for information, we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the program has obvious deficiencies and so we need to go back into the data modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and do a recompile of the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process which you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

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Arrgh.