

# TRAVELING WHEELS

Hello one and all, and greetings from lovely downtown Providence, Rhode Island. Marcy and I are both here for Netroots Nation; she has been in town since yesterday, and I just arrived this morning. We will both be here through Sunday afternoon.

So far Marcy and Jim have kept up regular posting, which is fortunate because I had a literal clusterfuck of problems rain on me yesterday which I was supposed to be providing content and getting ready to go. I have no idea what substantive posting we will do, so Jim may be piloting the ship. I'm a gonna guess he may want to be trash talking about Alabama, an SEC team, finally breaking through and winning the Women's College World Series in softball. Credit where due, they rolled the two other best teams in the brackets, Oklahoma and ASU.

More importantly, if any of you are at Netroots, or in the vicinity, we would love to say hi. Leave a note here, or just find us – we are wearing stinking badges!

We will be around, but if there is any hot breaking news, and we don't look to be around at the moment, put it up in comments and let fly with the analysis. In the meantime, since these Wheels are traveling, some traveling music for you from Bob Seger and the Silver Bullet Band.

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## MERRY CHRISTMAS!

It's that quiet part of Christmas morning where just McCaffrey the MilleniaLab and I are up. I'm drinking coffee preparing myself to take McC out into the "Al Gore is fat" springlike day, and tie up last minute loose ends for the day ahead. And, in spite of all the personal and political stresses, I'm remembering how many gifts my

lives includes.

This community is near the top of that list.

Thanks for all your voices, which make this place a warm, dynamic place. And thanks for all the other support you give emptywheel, in various ways.

Have a Merry Christmas today (or, if you don't celebrate Christmas, enjoy having the streets empty and quiet for the first day in weeks!).

And whatever you believe, let's all just keep working on the Peace on Earth part!

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## IN THANKS FOR MICHIGAN'S BOUNTY



Two  
years  
ago, I  
made a  
concer  
ted  
effort  
to  
cook

our entire Thanksgiving Dinner, save for spices and olive oil, with products from MI.

I've moved twice since then, but found this year that I almost pulled it off without trying (I didn't use MI flour and butter).

Here are some of the great farmers and producers we'll be thanking tonight for their bounty:

Crane Dance Farm: We've come to rely on this Animal Welfare Certified farm for most of our meat and had the opportunity to tour the farm back in September, when we met the turkey (above) and bacon (right) we'll be eating tonight, as well as the hens who laid the eggs

in our pumpkin pie. This is one of those farms that cycle their stock (pigs follow chickens follow cows) to optimize the use of the land. Did you know chickens like to wallow around in the dirt if they're able?



Hilhof Dairy: I've never been to this farm, but I'd like to, because their milk and cream tastes amazing, with a real depth of creamy flavor.

Blueberry Heritage Farms: When we moved to west MI, we moved to blueberry country. This particular farm, which does some organic berries, also sells cranberries in big 2 pound boxes. So in addition to the cranberry-apple chutney we'll be eating tonight, we'll be eating lots of cranberry goodies for the next several weeks.

Ham Family Farm: Since we didn't do a CSA this year, we got the veggies for tonight's feast from a range of farmers at the Fulton Street Farmer's Market. One we buy from a lot—Charlie Ham—talked me into brussel sprout leaves this year, rather than brussel sprouts themselves. The leaves look like collard greens and have the bitterness of the brussel sprouts to set off the sweet and rich food, but also has a hint of sweetness to it. Plus, I figure it'll cut down on work to just saute the greens.

Brys Estate Wines: Between a great wine dinner we had at Salt of the Earth restaurant and some trips up to Sleeping Bear Dunes, we've been trying more Brys Estate wines. I've got some wines I mistakenly didn't get sent waiting for us at the winery. So tonight, we'll just have some Riesling (along with an unoaked chardonnay from Bowers Harbor and some Old School Red from

Peninsula Cellars).

Founders Brewing Company: And of course, we now live in beer mecca, just over a mile from Founders. There might be some Reds Rye PA in my future, particularly if the Kitties don't win this afternoon. Also likely if they win.

May your bounty be as wonderful as ours today!  
Happy Thanksgiving.

Update: I've had a request to explain how I use bacon on my turkey. As I've explained, I think the bacon serves the same purpose as brining (slow application of salt), without the meat losing it's "bite" as I think can happen with brining. Plus, it protects the breast from over-browning. And best of all, you can pick it off at that point of the afternoon where you start to get really hungry but don't want to ruin your appetite. And once you've cleaned the bacon off, it'll brown nicely.

As you put the bird in the oven, cover it with bacon. I will use a full pound for a big bird, which is what we have this year (14 pounds).

I'll tent my turkey for about an hour, then let the bacon brown for about 1.5 hours, and by then I'll be ready for snacking. Which, after a couple of trips back to the oven to strip the bacon, should leave about an hour for the bird to brown.

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## **GONE ~~FISHING~~ TO THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACE IN AMERICA**

Mr. EW and McCaffrey the MilleniaLab and I are off for the weekend—apparently, with a horde of others who take their travel tips from Good

Morning America, which voted Sleeping Bear Dunes the most beautiful place in the US.

Between you and me, I'm also a big fan of Sedona and Grand Teton, which were also in the running. We had our wedding celebration in the former.


And there's a part of Sleeping Bear that reminds me a lot of Point Reyes, where I used to hike all the time when I lived in San Francisco. No oysters at Sleeping Bear Dunes, though.

But hey, if GMA wants to send a bunch of people to spend money as tourists in MI, we'll welcome them gladly.

I've pre-posted something for Sunday. And bmaz assures me he'll share the likker cabinet this time, and get Trash Talk up before Sunday morning. So you should be in excellent care for the weekend.

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## STILL FISHING

 If you haven't already figured this out, after Netroots Nation I dragged bmaz up to northern Minnesota to count lakes, counting backwards from 10,000. We only got down to 9,976, but I understand there are actually far more than 10,000 lakes in MN.

The picture-photo credit: the NSA-is me and McCaffrey walking across the headwaters of the Mississippi at Lake Itasca. The shiny yellow figure in the background is commenter John Forde, who hosted us. (Thanks John!)

Today I'm sending bmaz back to the desert and me and Mr. EW and McCaffrey the MilleniaLab are going to continue our yearly NFC North tour. Meaning, we're headed through WI to the Upper Peninsula of MI (Mr. EW already drove through Chicago).

For those of you who haven't been through the

area, it's remote. As in, far west levels of remoteness. Which means I'll be lucky if I find Toobz reliably.

Which means you may not hear from me before Saturday. That either means someone is going to resign (as generally happens when I go off-grid) or Judy Miller is going to release a tell all. If bmaz gets home safely—he's flying Delta, so you never know—he'll enlighten you all in the meantime.

Have fun!

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## **MOUNTAIN PURE “PURIFIED” DRINKING WATER RECALLED FOR MOLD**

As Mark Bittman said when he tweeted this press releasem, “If bottled water is getting recalled we’re all in a lot of trouble.”

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** – May 4, 2011  
– Officials at the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) announced today that test results on a sample taken from certain lots of Mountain Pure bottled drinking water show the presence of biological contamination.

The company has announced a voluntary recall of lots marked with a four-digit time code. The time code is written in military time, and the affected time period is from 2200 through 0400. This is etched into the plastic bottle. Also included is an expiration date code that says either Best By 2-27-2013 MPWA or Best By 2-28-2013 MPWA. These are bottles of purified drinking water in

the 16.9 fl. oz. (506 ml.) size. ADH is recommending that anyone who might have purchased or received any of this bottled water dispose of it or return it to the point of purchase.

**More testing is needed to identify the specific type of mold and its origin,** and that is expected to take several more days. ADH has recommended to the company that they recall the entire lot where this sample originated, and the recall process is underway.

According to William L. Mason, MD, MPH, branch chief for the Preparedness and Emergency Response branch at ADH, it is unlikely that a healthy person would become ill from drinking this water. "People with a weakened immune system might be at higher risk," Mason said. "Anyone who thinks they may have become ill after drinking this water should consult a physician."

**The affected water was found in a shipment of bottled water ordered by the city of Clinton for use during disaster response efforts that are on-going there.** In some communities, including Clinton, public drinking water systems are under precautionary boil orders to help reduce the possibility of diarrheal illness. Residents are urged to boil drinking water for one minute prior to consuming it or to drink bottled water.

"We want to stress that the bottled water recall applies only to the specific lots of Mountain Pure water that are on the recall," Mason said. "We are still saying that bottled water and water that you have purified by boiling is the safest way to provide drinking water in those communities with disrupted water supplies."

This water was distributed because the water treatment plant in Clinton, AR, failed after heavy rains. According to the “Pure Mountain” people, the mold was introduced into the bottles as dust fell into the bottles during “purification.”

He said dust particles got into some water bottles during the capping of filled water bottles as part of the final process known as ozonation, where ozone is used to remove iron, manganese, taste, odors and sulfur without adding chemicals.

The particles may not show up for several days, depending on the temperature at which the bottled water is stored, according to Stacks.

It’s bad enough that we can’t produce eggs or peanut butter without contamination. But it seems somehow symbolic that we can’t manage to bottle water without introducing some kind of contamination.

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## HAPPY EASTER



Hi folks, Happy Easter! It has been a pretty frustrating week on a lot of the fronts we follow here. There are far too many such weeks. Even the one piece of positive news, the reinstating of the charges against the Blackwater Nisour Square shooters, was based on a somewhat suspect decision by the DC Circuit Court and still very well may lead to another dismissal of the charges in the District Court because, quite frankly, it is probably appropriate that they be dismissed due to the monkeywrenching by the State Department and



their demand for *Garrity* statements from the individuals involved in the shooting.

✖ But that was the week that was, now it is Easter Sunday and it is time to relax, eat and have some fun, whether it is a religious holiday for you or just a good chance to chill. Marcy and Mr. Wheel have been enjoying the last few days by moving. You know how much fun moving is! As for myself, after an extremely busy week, the bmaz family went driveabout in Southern Arizona. Thought, just for grins, I would share a little of our trip. One of the places we went to was San Xavier del Bac Mission, which is just due south of Tucson.

A National Historic Landmark, San Xavier Mission was founded as a Catholic mission by Father Eusebio Kino in 1692. Construction of the current church began in 1783 and was completed in 1797.

The oldest intact European structure in Arizona, the church's interior is filled with marvelous original statuary and mural paintings. It is a place where visitors can truly step back in time and enter an authentic 18th Century space.

The church retains its original purpose of ministering to the religious needs of its parishioners.



The current church dates from the late 1700's, when Southern Arizona was part of New Spain. In 1783, Franciscan missionary Fr. Juan Bautista Velderrain was able to begin construction on the present structure using money borrowed from a Sonoran rancher. He hired an architect, Ignacio Gaona, and a large workforce of O'odham to create the present church.

Following Mexican independence in 1821, San Xavier became part of Mexico. The

last resident Franciscan of the 19th Century departed in 1837. With the Gadsden Purchase of 1854, the Mission joined the United States. In 1859 San Xavier became part of the Diocese of Santa Fe. In 1866 Tucson became an incipient diocese and regular services were held at the Mission once again. Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet opened a school at the Mission in 1872. Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity now teach at the school and reside in the convent.

Clicking on any of the images will give a full size view. The upper is obviously the outside of the mission, the middle one a view of the inside of the church portion and the final view more of a closeup of the altar area, which is simply ornate beyond description and beautiful. It is guarded by two huge golden lions on each side, although they are a bit hard to see well in the picture. San Xavier is pretty cool and just about the only place like it still standing this completely in what was referred to in the 1600s and 1700s as New Spain.

The other completely awesome place we went was Kartchner Caverns. Kartchner Caverns State Park is about 50 miles southeast of Tucson, is only about ten miles off of Interstate 10 and is easily accessible. It is one of the most beautiful state park facilities you can imagine. Here is a wonderful history of how the cave came to be a jewel in the state park system in Arizona. One of the key players you will read about is Ken Travous, who was along with us on the tour the bmaz family took Saturday; it was really a special occasion.

In November 1974 two young cavers, Gary Tenen and Randy Tufts, were exploring the limestone hills at the base of the Whetstone Mountains. In the bottom of a sinkhole they found a narrow crack leading into the hillside. Warm, moist

air flowed out, signaling the existence of a cave. After several hours of crawling, they entered a pristine cavern.

The formations that decorate caves are called "speleothems." Usually formations are composed of layers of calcite called travertine deposited by water. The form a speleothem takes is determined by whether the water drips, flows, seeps, condenses, or pools.

Kartchner Caverns is home to:

one of the world's longest soda straw stalactites: 21 feet 3 inches (Throne Room)

the tallest and most massive column in Arizona, Kubla Khan: 58 feet tall (Throne Room)

the world's most extensive formation of brushite moonmilk (Big Room)

the first reported occurrence of "turnip" shields (Big Room)

the first cave occurrence of "birdsnest" needle quartz formations

many other unusual formations such as shields, totems, helictites, and rimstone dams.

The complex at Kartchner Caverns features a Discovery Center with museum exhibits, a large gift shop, regional displays, a gorgeous theater, and extensive educational information about the caverns and surrounding landscape. There are also campgrounds, hiking trails, lockers, shaded picnic areas, a deli, an amphitheater, and a hummingbird garden. It is simply an incredible experience, and I highly recommend it for anyone visiting the Southern Arizona area. Seriously cool.

So, the members of the bmaz family are back home

now, the Wheels are semi-unpacked in their groovy new digs, and all are ready to eat and have happy hour. The best from all of us to all of you, the greatest readers and commenters in the blogosphere. Enjoy!

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## BIFFOS AND BANKSTERS

✖ I almost got distracted from working my yearly post around this picture of Mr. EW and I in Moneygall, taken back in 2008 when Brian Cowen was about to become Ireland's Taoiseach and Barack O'Bama was about to officially get enough delegates to win the Democratic nomination to be President.

But this very worthwhile Adam Serwer post reminded me:

I think we've finally discovered the origins of President **Barack Obama's** un-American worldview (via LGM):

President Obama has officially declared March 2011 Irish American Heritage Month. More importantly the White House also announced that the president would be brewing his own beer called White House Honey Ale for St.Patrick' Day.

Obama, who said he will pay for the beer making equipment himself, has made presidential history by being the first U.S. president to brew beer at the White House.

It seems that Obama is certainly getting in touch with his Co. Offaly, roots although no one is sure if honey ale is brewed in the town of Moneygall (Obama's

great-great-great grandfather is said to have left Offaly for New York in 1850).

I would love to know more. What I know is troubling enough. And one thing that I do know is his having grown up raised by his Irish-American mother, his view of the Brits, for example, is very different than the average American. When he gave the bust back to the Brits—the bust of **Winston Churchill**—it was a great insult to the British. But then if you think about it, his perspective as growing up in Dublin with an Irish mother and grandfather, their view of the Irish Republican Army is very different than ours because he probably grew up hearing that the British were a bunch of imperialists who persecuted his grandfather.

Now, back in 2008 when we were wide-eyed idealists, I found it notable that both Cowen and Obama were making a big career move at the same time. Both of them, you see, are Offaly men (just like Mr. EW, I have to admit), what the Irish affectionately call “Big Ignorant Fuckers from Offaly.” So at that point, I imagined there was some special Luck of the BIFF0, which would put them both in good stead as they moved forward to lead their country.

But it turns out that’s not what these two rising national BIFF0 leaders had in common. Unfortunately, it seems, it was a fondness for banksters.

Rather than make honey ale (!?), I’ve been corning beef for the last 10 days, which my own beloved BIFF0 and I will enjoy with some Guinness. May your Guinness and corned beef bring you the luck of the Irish in the year ahead.

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## ANOTHER DAY AT THE BEACH

✖ This was actually taken yesterday—our gorgeous beach weather has given way to nasty freezing rain (though the freezing rain makes a really cool sound).

But while I'm working on other things, I thought I'd share yesterday's sunshine, dunes, and really cool ice formations.

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## A LOVELY DAY AT THE BEACH

✖ Every year, for the first few Sundays after the Super Bowl, McCaffrey the MilleniaLab starts sulking at about 3:00 because for some reason we won't turn on our weekly football game. (Last year we actually resorted to watching basketball the first weekend after the season ended.)

So we decided to try to tire him out before the sulk hit with a nice walk on the beach (it was a very balmy 39 degrees out).

I'll let you know whether this effectively pre-empted the first post-football sulk of the season or not.