

# MOURNING THE LOSS OF A GIANT RECENTLY PASSED - SUNSET MUSINGS II

Despite the wall to wall coverage, not just on NBC and MSNBC,



but all the networks, the hand wringing, the eulogizing, the lionization, the body lying in state at the Kennedy Center, and the funeral worthy of royalty, not enough has been said about the recent passing of a giant. Probably because all that bleating was about Saint Tim of Russert. I am talking about a different giant. A giant in my own family has passed. Granpa Pricky.

Granpa Pricky was our 24 foot tall saguaro cactus that majestically guarded the east entrance to Casa de bmaz since at least several decades before Casa de bmaz was built, and our house is almost fifty years old. Just woke up one morning and there it was, keeled over into the road. Saguaros are truly grand and majestic



entities, standing tall as the guardians of the Sonoran desert. Granpa Pricky was not just a centurion, he was a home as well. There are now a couple of homeless woodpeckers. Actually

these peckars don't even peck wood that much. They like to perch on my chimney and wail on the

metal vent cover on the top. Sounds like a freaking machine gun or jackhammer in the house. Very annoying. Metalpeckers.

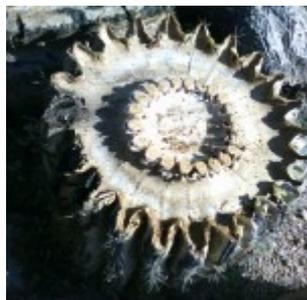
At any rate, an autopsy was conducted. Any and all of these photos can be enlarged by clicking on them.

The whitish material in the center is very squishy. There is simply a ton of moisture in saguaros. And we don't even have the cacti on drip systems; all they get is rain water, and it does not rain that much here. It is kind of fibrous pulp like stuff. People trying to survive in the desert desperate for water cut up that pulp and put chunks in their mouth to suck the water (and there is a lot) out. The cactus does produce a



red, bulbous, pretty sweet fruit that is fully edible and not bad. Granpa Pricky died on June 5. Here is a photo just taken of the same cross section depicted above.

Note how the pulp is shrinking as opposed to the outer shell and especially the spine. The spine is the circle of dowel like looking things in the middle. When you tap on the outer surface of the pulp, which has hardened, you can tell from the sound that there is still simply a ton of water in there. It has been really hot here lately (112 degrees today), this thing is dead and cut up into pieces; yet it still holds that much water. Pretty remarkable. Saguaros have a



relatively long life span. They take up to 75 years to develop a side arm. Granpa Pricky had three arms. The arms themselves are grown to increase the plants reproductive capacity (more apices

equal more flowers and fruit). The growth rate of saguaros is strongly dependent on local precipitation patterns, and saguaros in drier

western Arizona grow only half as fast as those in and around Tucson, Arizona. The night blooming flowers appear April-May and the sweet, ruby-colored fruit matures by late June. Each fruit can contain up to 2,000 seeds. Saguaro flowers are self incompatible and require a pollinizer to supply viable pollen. For more information, see [here](#) and [here](#).

Well, that is the end of the desert discussion for today. If you are interested in knowledge of the desert ecosystem and all its different species, as well as some other Southwest, Pacific and Pacific Northwest ecologies, please visit the site of the Center for Biological Diversity. The center was founded decades ago by a friend, Dr. Robin Silver, and it really is a remarkable organization, the EFF or ACLU of Southwest ecology. Their website is also a superb resource of information.

In closing, a photo of Camelback Mountain in Western Camel Head's



Face/Praying Monk Rock, taken from close to the exact spot of ground where Granpa Pricky once stood guard. In the previous Sunset Musings post, I was forced to use a picture culled from the web that was actually taken at sunrise. This is the real deal taken during "golden hour". Last week was fast, furious, and a bitter disappointment. We got some incredible and fascinating substantive work in this weekend thanks to Marcy's Ghorbanifar Meetings Timeline post. But I also wanted to do a couple of general, and lighter, things to give everybody a chance to vent, decompress, and recharge their

batteries. So, the same rules from yesterday's The Sun Always Rises post are in effect. Chat and comment away on any of the things we do or you want. If there was/is stuff in the news that is noteworthy, give a link and let's discuss it (I haven't even done my daily reading yet). Tomorrow, it is back to the war. FISA is not a done deal until the Senate sends it out in a form that Bush signs. But our backs are to the wall, and the road steeply uphill from here. Got some more effort left in you? I do.

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## THE SUN ALWAYS RISES

 The sun always dawns a new day, and so it has again. The day after a disappointing yesterday. Possibly we get so wrapped up in all the swirling malevolence and scorched trail of destruction by the Administration that is Cheney/Bush, the ravenous corporate robber plunderers, and the feeble enabling Democratic Leadersheep, that we forget that there is still a whole lot that is good, that still maintains, and that is worth feeling warm and fuzzy about and fighting for. Let's all remember that it does maintain and, as Roberto Benigni would say, Life Is Beautiful.

Marcy is going to take a couple of days off to chill, do some gardening, and have a couple of pints of Beamish with Mr. Wheel. Good, she deserves it. She puts absolutely a ton of heart and effort into both this blog and the common effort as a whole. I probably don't have to tell you this, but she does a heck of a lot more than you see on the surface, and we are all better for it. And I can tell you, in fact, I think you all personally know from your own passion, that the constant battle seeps inside of you and can consume a great deal of your soul along the way. Disappointment burns, and sometimes you just need to step back so you can realize the

tremendous value and beauty of all that you are fighting for.

So, I will be minding the store for the weekend. Marcy may drop by, she may not, but trust me she knows we are all here; and I assure you she is having some much needed fun (and pulling weeds from the yard is way fun!), is working on some great stuff, and will be back Monday and raring to go. In the meantime, I will put up some substantive posts here and there and all here should feel free to use this post, and any this weekend, as a free floating discussion forum on whatever is of interest. If there is anything uniquely significant, then we will deal with that too.

Lastly, several people turned off their cloaking devices and delurked in the last couple of days to say hi and relate their thoughts. That is a good thing. If you are smart enough, and passionate enough, to read this blog religiously, you are plenty good to contribute. Myself excluded, there are some of the finest minds available that participate here, and from some incredibly diverse backgrounds. We are all strong and opinionated people, and there are no sacred lambs that cannot be picked apart, not even Marcy, and certainly not me. From the outside looking in, it might seem sharp elbowed, testy and intimidating. But that is true only from the analytical perspective, not the compassionate. Everyone's theories, positions, thought and comments are subject to the scrutiny; as well they should be. That is why this, overall, is the best, most rational, and most elegant blog in the blogosphere. If I do say so myself; and I do. It is because of you. All of you. So if you are a regular but have been hesitant to jump in, hop to it. You will be fine and we will all be better as a result.

To quote the type of leader we could have used in the last couple of days, Jean Luc Picard, "Engage!"

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# DON'T TELL YOUR MOMMA, TELL OBAMA

Well, we got Mr. Obama's reply to all of us. Everybody has a lot to say to Mr. Obama. Here is the place. Now is the time. Trash talk is allowed. I heard the Lakers, er Celtics just won something. Also heard Curt Schilling is done, how the Sawx gonna win without him? And hey circus freak, the French Grand Prix is this weekend. Migny-Cours is the track? Chat away.

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## EW'S TRASH TALK - AGONY IN DEFEAT EDITION

There is a lot going on out there, so consider this a somewhat open thread to yammer at will.

The first item of business is the passing of Jim McKay.

He was host of ABC's influential "Wide World of Sports" for more than 40 years, starting in 1961. The weekend series introduced viewers to all manner of strange, compelling and far-flung sports events. The show provided an international reach long before exotic backdrops became a staple of sports television.

McKay provided the famous voice-over that accompanied the opening in which viewers were reminded of the show's mission ("spanning the globe to bring you the constant variety of sports") and

what lay ahead ("the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat").

McKay – understated, dignified and with a clear eye for detail – covered 12 Olympics, but none more memorably than the Summer Games in Munich, Germany. He was the anchor when events turned grim with the news that Palestinian terrorists kidnapped 11 Israeli athletes. It was left to McKay to tell Americans when a commando raid to rescue the athletes ended in tragedy.

"They're all gone," McKay said.

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McKay was the first sportscaster to win an Emmy Award. He won 12, the last in 1988. ABC calculated that McKay traveled some 41/2 million miles to work events. He covered more than 100 different sports in 40 countries. In 2002, McKay received the International Olympic Committee's highest honor – the Olympic Order.

McKay was simply an outstanding journalist and reporter. Not just for sports, but of any kind; he was that good. His work will live long, and we have all prospered from it. Thanks for all the thrills of victory and the agonies of defeat Jim, vaya con dios.

Now one of Jim McKay's greatest loves was thoroughbred horse racing, particularly the triple crown races.

McKay's first television broadcast assignment was a horse race at Pimlico in 1947. It was the start of a love affair – horse racing captivated him like nothing else.

"There are few things in sport as exciting or beautiful as two strong thoroughbreds, neck and neck, charging toward the finish," he once said.

Today is the Belmont Stakes and Big Brown is going for the triple crown. There hasn't been a triple crown winner in thirty years, and Big Brown is a hell of a horse in what is seen as a weak field. Lets see if he can make it a special day for Jim McKay. I am pumped, and think this may be the year, and Big Brown's biggest competition, Casino Drive, has been scratched from the field because of injury. But Big Brown has a little agony in da feet himself. Got a bum hoof, but the experts seem to think he is good to go. The Belmont sure will test it though, it is one long distance. What do you folks think?

Lastly, F1. Didn't think I would leave F1 out did you? This weekend is the Canadian GP. Round seven of the 2008 Circus. The Montreal circuit is one of the faster tracks; should be a great race. Lewis Hamilton in the McLaren is leading the Driver's Championship standings by a scant three points over Kimi Raikkonen of Ferrari; and four drivers are within six points of the lead, which is unusually tight grouping. The race is at 10:00 am EST and is being covered this week on Fox.