

2003

*Loren Eiseley Memorial Scholarship*

RETURN THE FAVOR

Blaine A. Petska

Aquinas High School

David City, NE

Loren Eiseley's sense of philosophy was unmatched in the last century, and it will prove to be difficult to find someone with his knowledge in this century. His writings range from analyzing the human race's natural fear of the dark to a time he was able to play with a small fox cub that was too young to know fear. When Eiseley passed away in 1977, America lost a great mind.

In his essay, "The Innocent Fox," Eiseley writes about the time he was walking and found a small fox cub. No other cubs were around, and he figured the parent must have been hunting. In the playful manner shown only by young furry mammals, the fox tried to invite Eiseley to join in. As he lay there, face to face with a fox cub, he recalled the words of a poacher he had heard before, "If there was only one fox in the world and I could kill him, I would do so." Eiseley tried to cut himself off from humanity, for just a moment, to be a part of something different. Few men in this world would do as that poacher claimed he would do, but, unfortunately, there are some who would try to do justify that. The latter is the type of person we need to protect nature against. No species should be destroyed, whether it requires more hunting enforcement or better teaching for protecting endangered animals.

Eiseley writes of many adventures and journeys he took to get in tune with himself and nature. Few can really appreciate nature like he did. A simple walk through the trees can help a person realize how calm and surrealistic nature can be. Jogging around a pond can bring peace to anyone bothered by this turbulent world. All these things may be fading. Brazilian rainforests are being cleared daily, and, unfortunately, most of the people responsible do not have the slightest knowledge of their effect on nature.

Man has come a long way from the times when he lived cowering in caves where he worried how he would find his next meal or if he would be the next meal. We have become the master of nature and should treat it right, lest it rebel against us. If we tear up the forest, we will lose our main source of oxygen. Many blame our pollutants for eating through the ozone. No one knows if we are causing the greenhouse effect for certain, but even the small chance that we are is enough cause for concern. Perhaps someday earth will become too warm to support human life.

Not that we will end up sterilizing Earth: other life would live on and even prosper with the harsh climate we may be creating, but we will not keep our place in nature. Different creatures, bacteria, life we have never even dreamt about will continue without us. But, the future does not have to be this way. Conservation for threatened and endangered animals helps us protect animals that may otherwise disappear forever. Special laws help limit the number pollutants put out by factories and cars. Chemicals harmful to the environment are being restricted. Hopefully, we can save our world while there is still time.

Our place in the universe should be a simple one: we need to live with nature and keep in harmony. Unfortunately, humans have the tendency to leave a mark. Antarctica, one of the harshest climates on Earth, has been explored by numerous countries in the twentieth century. We have left equipment, trash, pollution, and more to prove that we have been there. Space, the final frontier, may someday be closed for a very long time. Debris circles our planet, and if we do not find a way to remove the debris, we be trapped in by a cloud of tiny missiles.

We do not have to solve these problems, but eventually nature will solve them by removing the cause: humans. It may take a long time to both remove us and fix what we caused, but this Earth has been here for billions of years; it has patience.

Loren Eiseley knew human nature. Humans will move into an area and take over. Someday, we may spread to new lands, new planets, new worlds for us to come into contact with. Hopefully, this will happen someday, and hopefully we can respect these new worlds instead of warping them to fit our needs. Perhaps we will need to fix our own problems here before moving to other worlds. Wars wreak havoc on humans and nature alike. If humans can fix foreign relations once and for all, we can focus on maintaining our planet. It is not a war against nature, an attempt to stay on top of the food chain; rather, it should be a mutual support relationship. The Earth raised us to our current adolescent stage, and, while we rebel, nature will continue to support us until we can return the favor.