

# Frontiersman

*Facing the truth, however great the cost.*  
January 2006

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## Gods Ourselves

Sam Aurelius Milam III

For most of my life, I've occasionally pondered the distinction between the living and the non-living. Whatever definition of life I devised, I could always think of an exception. Mobility? Some living things don't move. Some non-living things do, although not under their own power. However, some living things also move only under the influence of external forces. Mobility isn't a good distinction. Breathing? Plants and animals transfer gases very differently from one another. Even if you ignore plants and consider only animals, eventually you have to reduce the concept of breathing down to the process of respiration — consuming a fuel and producing waste in the presence of oxygen. A burning log does the same thing. Reproduction? Some living things don't reproduce. Mules and some women that I've known come to mind. The fact is that a general and unambiguous definition of the distinction between the living and the non-living is elusive.

Eventually, I reduced the idea to the simplest form that I could imagine. I set aside all of the many characteristics by which we intuitively decide if something is alive or not. I based a tentative definition on the simplest and most pragmatic feature of life that I could imagine, function. I speculated that if a thing could die or be killed, then it was a living thing. If a thing could not die or be killed, then it was a non-living thing. I thought of the death of a thing as being the termination of its functioning without any disruption of its form. That's handy when considering, for example, prions. They're presumed to be not alive, yet they function. The only way to make them stop functioning is to destroy their form. On the other hand, a man can stop

functioning (die) without any disruption of his form. It seemed like a good distinction.

I recently got into a discussion of the idea with Sir James the Bold and it took only a few minutes for him to notice either a problem with or a startling implication of (take your pick) my definition. That is, my definition applies exactly as well to an automobile engine as it does to a person. Thus, according to my definition, a car is a living thing. At first, I was a little skeptical. Then, I got to thinking about his point. It's a fact that we've long applied the terminology of life to our creations. When an automobile engine stops running, we say that it died. If we want somebody to turn off a light, we might tell him to kill it. We talk about computers remembering things and malfunctioning appliances getting sick. It isn't even a new idea. Science fiction is rife with tales of machines taking over the world, electronic systems becoming self-aware, and so forth.<sup>1</sup> Maybe there's more to it than terminology. It's as if we've unconsciously recognized the existence of life without consciously admitting it. If my proposed definition is valid, and it seems to work as well as any other that I've encountered, then there are many living things on this planet that we haven't previously acknowledged as being alive.

There's a more profound implication of my proposed definition. If it's valid, then it doesn't transform just our understanding of life. If cars can legitimately be thought of as alive, and maybe they can, then we've been creating life for quite a long time. My proposed definition, therefore, goes beyond just the mere understanding of life. It reaches even to our understanding of ourselves. If our creations can be thought of as living things, then we are more than the mere images of God. If we can create life, then we are Gods ourselves. ✍

<sup>1</sup> Also, see my essay *The Lone Raver Writes Again*.

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## Scratch Tape: Wilderness Without Flies

A Movie Review by Sam Aurelius Milam III

During a determined bout of cleaning and sorting, I recently unearthed one of my old Beta VCRs. Delighted, I grabbed at random from my stack of old Beta videocassettes, most of which I've never watched due to the poor condition of my Beta VCRs. Amazingly, the VCR took the cassette. After only a couple of hours of tinkering, I managed to get the machine to work. After that, I sat down for a well-deserved movie break. The cassette was unlabeled and, since it had been recorded and given to me by my good friend SantaClara Bob, I didn't know what was on it. I admit to certain misgivings when I discovered the movie *Mountain Family Robinson*, an ancient Disney flick in the "wilderness family" genre.

My misgivings were well-founded. The movie included most, if not all, of the obligatory Disney "wilderness family" gimmicks. There was the crusty but lovable old mountain man friend-of-the-family, Boomer, who was mauled for about two minutes by a berserk mountain lion and suffered only a small cut on his right hand. There was the obligatory bear chase, where the head of the family, predictably named Skip, gamboled half-heartedly through the woods, looking over his shoulder more than where he was going, while the bear ambled along, obligingly staying just out of reach of its prey. There was the obligatory storm, which nobody saw coming, and the resulting obligatory flash-flood that washed away the goat and all but a few of the chickens, which were heroically snatched from the jaws of death by Skip. There were the obligatory wilderness pets, including a mother black bear who didn't object in the least to people playing with her cubs. There was the obligatory government agent who wanted to throw them off of their land, who's helicopter conveniently crashed and burned within scant yards of their homestead, giving them the opportunity to wade into the roiling flames, drag him from the wreckage, extinguish the forest fire, carry him back into the cabin, bandage him, and call on the radio for help, thereby convincing him that he really didn't want to evict them after all.

Overlaying all of those trite gimmicks and many more that I lack the space to mention was the fundamentally flawed situation. The Robinson family lived in splendid isolation, except for occasional visits by the government agent in his helicopter, a friend who had an airplane conveniently equipped with pontoons so that it could land on the obligatory mountain lake, bringing them things that they needed, visits from Boomer, and a radio who's battery never went dead, with which they could call out for whatever they wanted. The forest in which they lived appeared to be locked in perpetual springtime. At least, they had plenty of time for playing improvised baseball, frolicking with the various wilderness pets, who never clawed them, sailing on the lake on an ingeniously improvised sailing raft, taking picnics during one of which they were chased from their meal by the obligatory daytime skunk, becoming playfully annoyed when the wilderness pets pulled the laundry from the clothes line, picking wildflowers from the endless meadows, without ever giving a thought to what they were planning to eat, come winter. Indeed, they didn't have any herds of animals to slaughter and the goat was lost downstream. They didn't seem to ever hunt game. Rather, they appeared to be on a first-name-basis with all possible game animals. They didn't have fields of grain. The only visible efforts to produce food were the rescued chickens and a small vegetable garden that was destroyed in the storm, replanted, had time to grow another crop before winter, and was harvested only once. Meanwhile, they spent their seemingly endless summer, without any visible source of food, living active lives, filled with energy, hale, fit, healthy, and impossibly clean.

The movie was too inane to keep. When it was done, I determined to erase it and use the tape as a blank. Sadly, my VCR shuddered, gasped, and refused to rewind the tape. So, there it sits. The best that I could do to assuage my annoyance with the thing was to label it "scratch tape" and put it back into the collection. Now, even that won't do. Since I wrote this article, I have to keep the stupid movie as documentation. There just isn't any justice. 🐉

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## Letter to the Editor

Dear Sam

.... Your article on the tetanus shot, I think two issues ago. While I understood the focus of your article (and the response from someone in the next issue), there was something else in your article that was only a passing point, but I was quite astonished at it. That is, you are so astute and aware of what is going on with the vicious and insane maniacs who presume themselves to be “government” and their corporate cronies as well. Yet you wanted to inject yourself with one of their potions, comparable in many ways to vaccines. I know you must be aware of how vaccines in most cases CAUSE the diseases, and caused essentially all of the epidemics they were pretending to cure or prevent. My understanding is that tetanus falls into this same category. It will cause many diseases, but it won't likely prevent one, especially for anyone already eating right/healthy. So, I was quite astonished at this hidden point buried in your article. I'd be curious as to your response to this. The VAC-LIB organization connected with the Idaho Observer newspaper in Spirit Lake, Idaho is probably the best source of info on all these injection things.

Blessings to you, my friend. —an inmate

*I'll answer you honestly. It didn't occur to me at the time that the tetanus shot might be harmful. I know that some people regard vaccinations as harmful. It might be that they're oversimplifying the situation. I don't have a firm opinion on the subject but I suspect that some vaccinations are harmful to some people but not to others, some vaccinations are beneficial to some people but not to others, and some vaccinations don't have any effect at all on some people but do on others.*

*Generally, I'm skeptical of the results of “studies”, whichever side of the argument they claim to support. In that regard, you might like to read my article “Lies, Damned Lies, and Statistics — Again” (February, 1997). I'd rather rely on my own experience. My experience is that I've had tetanus shots several times in my life and, so far as I'm aware, I've never suffered any ill effect from them. Of course, I might not have contracted tetanus anyway.*

*There are two questions that are more fundamental than that regarding the possible harm*

*that the recipient of a vaccination might experience. One is the idea of choice. People do many potentially harmful things. Why should vaccinations be an exception? Nevertheless, the opponents of vaccinations would prohibit them, thereby depriving people of choice. Prohibition is more dangerous than vaccinations. The other extreme is the plethora of vaccinations that are mandatory, mostly for children. Compulsory vaccination is more reprehensible than the risk of disease. Choice, not medication, is the issue here.*

*The second fundamental question is whether or not we should be trying to artificially prevent or cure diseases at all. We're strong and resistant because people in the past either recovered or died. Our present handling of disease tends to remove that selective process. I suggest my article “Mercymongers” (January, 1995). I'm not necessarily saying that we should let sick people die. On the other hand, our descendants might curse the memory of us because of the legacy of congenital deficiency that we're creating for them.—editor*

## Stray Thoughts

Sam Aurelius Milam III

Guilty Party — Identity theft doesn't happen when somebody obtains your credit card number or your Social Security number. It happened long before that. It happened when the government acquired ownership of your identity.

SWAT Teams — Every home in America should be equipped with at least one RPG and occupied by at least one person who knows how to use it.

Guideline — If you assume that everything that the U.S. government tells you is a lie, then you'll have taken a big step toward the truth.

Whether Report — Why do they talk about clear skies or cloudy skies? There's only one sky. ☞

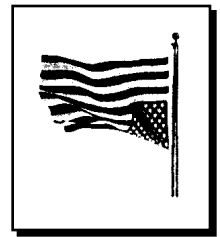
## Lines to Make You Smile

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Sir Donald the Elusive.

- You're just jealous because the voices talk only to me.
- Earth is the insane asylum for the universe.
- I'm not a complete idiot. Some parts are missing.
- Out of my mind. Back in five minutes.
- Procrastinate Now! ∞

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Nation in Distress

Muslim extremists aren't  
destroying our liberty.

The U.S. government  
is destroying our liberty.



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My thanks to the following: Sir James the Bold, SantaClara Bob, Lady Jan the Voluptuous, Al, of San Jose, California, Eric, of Delano, California, and Joseph, of Northridge, California. —editor

### Buck Hunter Shoots Off His Mouth

Dear Buck

What's your opinion of debasement of the money during the history of this country?

—Activist

Dear Activist

We don't have a basement under our house, so I hide my money somewhere else.

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### Frontiersman

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### Headlines for 2029

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Don G.

- Massachusetts executes last remaining conservative.
- Supreme Court rules punishment of criminals violates their civil rights.
- Average height of NBA players now nine feet, seven inches.
- New federal law requires that all nail clippers, screwdrivers, fly swatters, and rolled-up newspapers must be registered by January 2036.
- Congress authorizes direct deposit of formerly illegal political contributions to campaign accounts. ∞

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