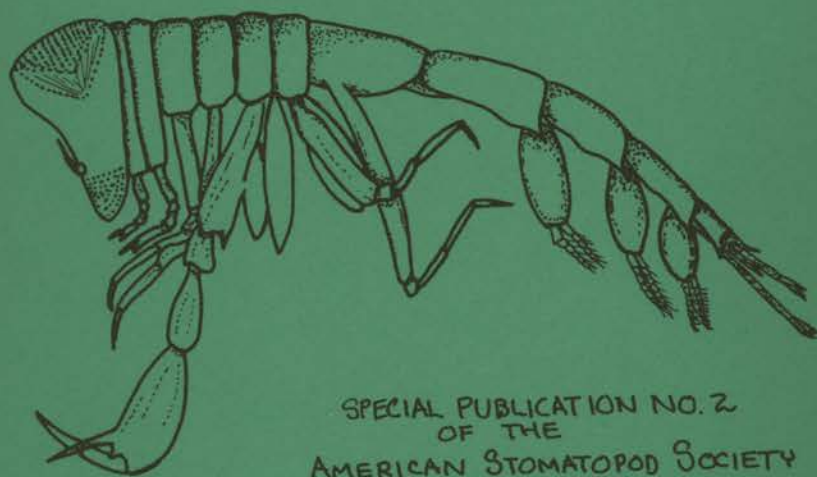


# NATURE'S LAWS

SELECTED POEMS  
OF  
WARREN STAULS



SPECIAL PUBLICATION NO. 2  
OF THE  
AMERICAN STOMATOPOD SOCIETY  
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# NATURE'S LAWS

by  
WARREN STAULS



SPECIAL PUBLICATION NUMBER 2 OF THE AMERICAN  
STOMATOPOD SOCIETY; 1525 G ST. EUREKA, CALIF, 95501

### About the Author

Though somewhat of a recluse since his retirement from academia, Professor Stauls has led an active, if obscure, life. A former student and colleague of Dr. Jerome Tichenor, he has been a member of the Society for the Prevention of Progress and the Poet Laureate of the American Stomatopod Society. Stauls is considered one of the last of the California tide-poolers whose treasures are not sentenced to black boxes or blenders. While his writings may leave something to be desired, the points are made, and herein are offered some of his favorite verses.



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## INTRODUCTION

## NATURE'S LAWS

The dynamic relationships between the components (living and non-living) of the Earth are delicate, but display limited flexibility. The quantitative success of any one component of the system is governed by established rules of compensation for utilized materials; ecological debts **MUST** be paid.

The rules are self-enforcing, infinitely patient, and inescapable. They are, therefore, unbreakable, and allow borrowing to the point of depletion (extinction) of consumable components. But the debt must somehow, eventually, be paid.

Without exception, man is the greatest borrower of environmental commodities in the system. His ecological debt is increasing more rapidly than that for which his presently allotted payments might compensate. Man is running out of creditors.

Man's success as a component of the system is, according to the rules, endangered, first the quality (already?), and then the quantity. This condition (borrowing to excess) is neither un-natural or super-natural, it simply is a result of man's ability to choose.

The outcome, unavoidably, is payment of the debt. The method of compensation is not the concern of the system, but that it **WILL** be paid is the mandate of Nature's Laws.



## SOME REFLECTIONS ON BYGONE DAYS

There was a time when no saws roared,  
And none of the beaches around here was whored.  
I think you would have enjoyed it like that,  
Back in the days when the world was still flat.

The indians paid, without even knowing,  
All that they borrowed, so few scars were showing.  
And for all of their strife it could have stayed just like that.  
The way that it was when the world was still flat.

The sea stroked the shore and the Aleuts' net,  
Where it hung at low tide; and the tribe council met  
To discuss conservation, and problems like that,  
Which they solved, for they cared, when the world was still flat.

But in fourteen-hundred and ninety-two  
Things started to change for me and for you.  
The profiteers came, worse than Bubonic rats,  
And the world was no longer considered flat.

The brand of the fool is killing the land,  
And the boot tracks run down and straddle the sand.  
Now all of the creatures and even their spat,  
Cry for the time when the world was still flat.

So we are in debt, but the bastards say "take";  
Keep bleeding the face of the earth for blood's sake.  
And they don't remember (but you would have liked that)  
The way that it was when the world was still flat.

## SPRING IN THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

The chill of the morning disappears,  
The clouds have moved to the horizon.  
Blossoms, threatened by the early hours,  
Bask and flutter in a solar-warmed breeze.

Pink and white mostly, fruit on its way;  
Few green leaves yet, they're coming, everyone knows.  
People are part of the situation,  
Almost natural for a change;  
Sweaters are left on the backs of chairs.

The evergreens are passive,  
Waiting for the rest to catch up.  
They stand as sentrys around the  
Bundles of pink and white; they're hardly noticed.  
Not alone, but like us, lonely.

## NUCLEAR REACTORS

Nobody's ever seen an atom

But we all agree with them.

We run our lives accordingly

And meet their every whim.

Most people are also blind

to the balance of life a round,

But we continue to destroy

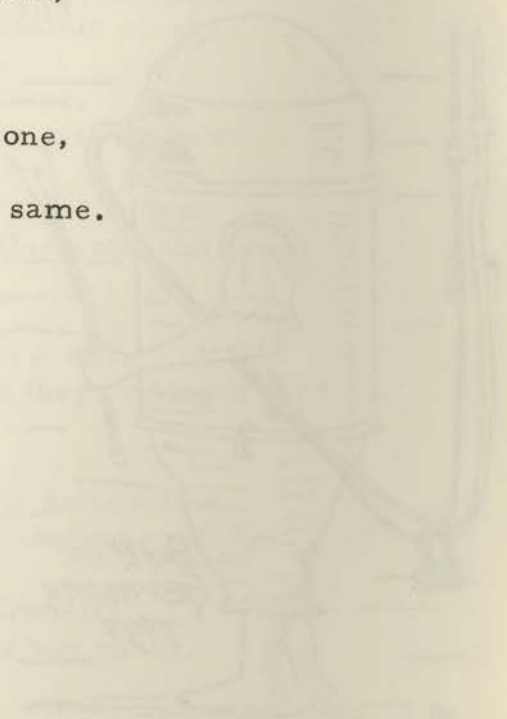
that balance by leaps and bounds.

I guess its like those particles,

Atoms are their name,

Though nobody's ever seen one,

We smash 'em just the same.



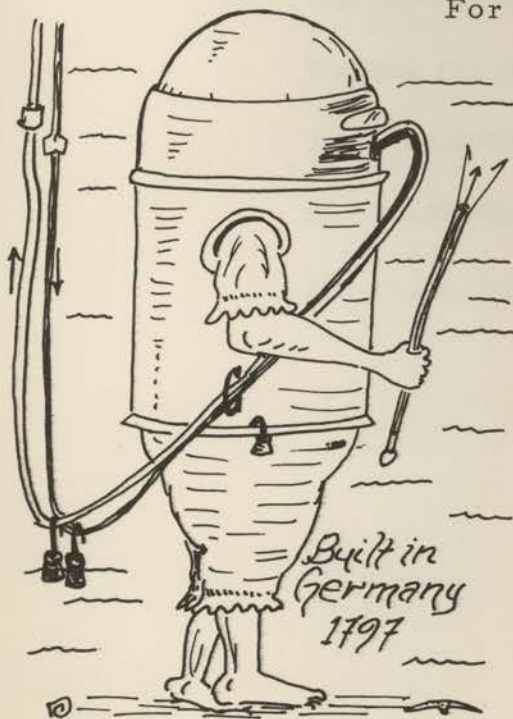


### Relevant Education

A student of 1971  
 Does not go to college to have any fun,  
 If a class isn't relevant  
 It's to him a white elephant,  
 And knowledge for its own sake is done.

So the lowly professor must be  
 an entertainer or soap box M.C.  
 His intentions suspected  
 No longer respected  
 Unless he seeks relevancy.

So after 4 years have been spent  
 The student has much common sense,  
 His knowledge in traces  
 He missed the whole basis  
 For learning what relevant meant.



## Look and See

(To the tune of the late and great "Wabash Cannonball")

CHORUS: repeat after each verse

Look and see the litter, on the great Atlantic shore,  
Have we passed the point of no return - is there no hope anymore.

From across the wide Pacific, pollution everywhere,  
Doesn't anybody give a damn, doesn't anybody care?

(1)

Chlorinated hydrocarbons - fill our waterways.  
DDT is killing crabs in San Francisco Bay.

The seafood marts are suffering, there's no great lack you see  
But the more we look the more we find, lethal mercury

(2)

Radioactivity...from fall-out covers all,  
And underground explosions, answer protest's call.

The AEC is innocent, they're really not at fault,  
Go out and milk a dairy cow, have a Strontium 90 malt.

(3)

Along the California coastline, the seal herds sun and bask,  
While crude oil gushes terribly from gaping benthic cracks.

The oil firm's PR men, say they are not to blame,  
But those bloody off-shore oil rigs, are killing just the same.

(4)

Germ warfare's really wonderful, the stockpiles grow and grow,  
Near Denver Colorado, its a military show.

They say we'll never use the stuff, not even in a war,  
But if all that is really true, what the hell are they making it for?

(5)

Have you heard about this nerve gas, its really quite a find,  
Screw's up synaptic junctions, what a way to blow your mind.

And if you wear a gas mask, you'll separate from it,  
For now they have an additive that first makes you vomit.

## AN EVALUATION

As the shroud and veil of death hang near,  
With a weariness I cannot lose,  
I think of all I once held dear,  
My values now I'm forced to choose.

With chaos pending for all mankind  
As a vulnerable member of the system,  
Consider now with an honest mind  
The individual's gift to man.

The progeny left is the singular worth  
Of a member and then he is done,  
But not too many upon the Earth  
For the debt must be paid one for one.

It is easy for me to reflect this way,  
For now I wait with silenced breath,  
And I'll leave my debt for others to pay,  
The end of life will be the best.

## HOW COME THE OCEAN AROUND HERE'S SO CALM?

How come the ocean  
Around here's so calm?  
Just stick in a hand  
And look at your palm.

It's an oil slick all right,  
Haven't you heard?  
But who really cares  
About a few dying birds.

See how it glitters  
And clings to the docks?  
But it's killing sea lions  
And it smells like old socks.

And down below all  
Of those grease covered waves,  
The animals sink  
To a watery grave.

We're sorry, big business,  
That your pipe sprung a leak.  
You complain that your profit  
Has been down for a week.

I guess the sacrifice made  
By the beasts of the sea  
Is not as important  
To you as to me.





THE BIOLOGY GRADUATE STUDENT or What its like to be an  
 anatomist, taxonomist,  
 or a natural historian.

Arrogant twerp with 4 years of college  
 Thinking he knows about life,  
 Sits with his Ellen Drew wife  
 in my office and spouts all his knowledge.

He's already planning his Master's degree,  
 Rapidographs sprout from his shirt,  
 Then says with a wink and a smirk,  
 Someone told him I'm known as Simon Legree.

Classical work is quite far from his mind,  
 He's a pollution-solution finder,  
 or a DNA unwinder,  
 Says his zoology professor was unkind.

He's a hot-sho, young, big university slick  
 (Only 5 minutes since he came,  
 already he uses my first name)  
 Say's he shook hands once with Watson & Crick.

Well, we let him in out of academic devotion,  
 So he got his Master's degree,  
 Then went on for a Ph.D.,  
 He's now smarter than we, and up for promotion.



## SUMMER SPERM

There once was a fast swimming sperm,

The first in the vaginal urn.

Said "I couldn't be madder,

Here I am in the bladder,

Somewhere I took a wrong turn".

So with fantastic energy, flagellar,

He reversed his threadlike propellar,

But the bladder contracted,

(Johnstown re-enacted)

He died and the others won't tell her.



HARTSOEKER  
1694

## THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS (2001)

(Drastically modified from the original,  
written by Clement C. Moore 1882)

TWAS the night before Xmas, and all over the Earth,  
 Few creatures were stirring,  
   for lack of live birth.  
 The mist of the fallout hung in the air,  
 Hope was fast fading and nobody cared.  
 The children were nestled midst rubble and dead,  
   while hallucinations swam through their heads.  
 And she on her deathbed and I at her side  
 Watched the trash and slime  
   being washed by the tide.  
 When off in the distance I heard rustling wings  
 The swishing of robes had an ominous ring.  
 I raised up my head to gaze at the sea,  
 Never suspecting of sounds calling me.  
 The bombs being dropped on the new fallen snow,  
   gave a luster of midday to objects below,  
 When what to my tear-blurry eyes  
   should come 'round,  
 But a skeletal face, in a heavy black shroud.  
 From the smile on his face,  
   and the stench of his breath,  
 I knew in a moment, the angel of death,  
 Sometime ago his foremen had come,  
 Now he had appeared to tally the sum.  
 First war, then disease, then hunger,  
   and drought; followed by  
 Pestilence and atomic fallout.  
 To the top of the world, to latitudes low,  
 setting the stage for his final blow.

AS faint winds before the wild storm shriek,  
   When they meet with dead branches,  
   brittle and weak,  
 So crept the terrible, hideous crew, and of  
   course, close behind, came the death angel too.







## A SHORT LESSON ON ANIMAL PHYLOGENY

Long ago in some primeval slime,  
 When the protists were already here.  
 A metazoan appeared for the very first time  
 But its origin was never quite clear.

For Hadzi and Hanson have chosen their view  
 From ciliates to acoels, that's best.  
 But Hyman, supported by more than a few,  
 Said, "Gentlemen, surely you jest".

For what then becomes of the poor radiates,  
 Are they degenerate from some higher form?  
 Or is there a polyphyletic mandate;  
 These theories must really be scorned.

Hyman goes on to say flagellates were  
 The metazoan ancestor, hollow,  
 And most of us have decided to listen to her,  
 Then the planula - acoel thought follow.

The bilateria now have appeared,  
 With mesoderm and all sorts of things,  
 It really doesn't matter how you got there,  
 Just believe in one of the kings.

From the flatworms radiation must have flared,  
 'Cause variety looms up ahead.  
 But few have remembered, and fewer have cared,  
 That most of the ancestors are dead.

No matter, trudge on, through the pseudocoels plight,  
 (Thanks to Shapeero the priapulids dropped),  
 And their precursors are certainly nowhere in sight,  
 So why worry from where they cropped.

On to the schizocoels boldly we flail  
 With the spiralling cells of the flatworms.  
 Through segmented worms and torsioning snails,  
 Evolving, evolving, and making up terms.

Let Lempke and Saunders study specifics,  
 We don't give the small groups a nod.  
 Our encompassing schemes are really terrific,  
 We're working with phyla, by God!

Back to the flatworms we gracefully strut  
 To find where the deuterostomes start.  
 How about pouching an anemone's gut?  
 That Jägersten really was smart.

Forget spiral cleavage, that's the protostome's using  
 Get on with a new coelom type.  
 And throw out the lophophorates, they're too confusing,  
 They mess up a theory that's otherwise right.

With chaetognaths and echinoderms branching off well,  
 We near the chordate's haunt.  
 Their three (count 'em) magic traits all evolve swell,  
 Choose anyone's theory you want.

Onward and onward to the top of the pile,  
 Past amphibians, reptiles and kin.  
 Where man sits alone, but the lower forms smile,  
 Shake their heads, and say, "Listen to him".



## decorations

i once saw some men  
leaving the beach with  
several gunnysacs full  
of starfish. i asked them  
what they were going to  
do with them and they said  
they planned to dry them for  
decorations.

i tried to explain how  
long it would take for the  
starfish to replace their  
losses and that the ones  
they had would probably  
smell so bad that they'd  
have to throw them out.  
but they took them anyway-  
all those starfish that were  
alive a little while ago-  
i just about cried.



## LOVE - FEAR - DEATH

The infected talons of death's rage  
 Are scraping at the last window.  
 Past decisions have set the stage,  
 The curtain will fall, I fear, on sorrow.

Death's hand is slowed by hopeless hopes  
 Until the futility is known;  
 Like a slowly fraying, weakening rope  
 That sets the ship adrift to roam  
 A helpless, random, endless run  
 In a loneliness that bludgeons numb.

But it's well the way things are today,  
 In a world that must not care,  
 That we remain afraid to say  
 Exactly what we'd like to share.

It's well, but if things were to change,  
 And death were not so close at least;  
 So my hopes could find their range  
 From that terrible taloned beast.

I fight the feelings off each night  
 From death and what I long to say,  
 For fear of suddenly taking flight  
 In hopes of running far away.

Let isolated rays of light  
 Please set a course which has some end,  
 Instead of always fight  
 A consuming, fruitless, maddening trend.

God will end this soon I pray,  
 At least then I can stop and rest.  
 For now I wait through night and day,  
 And listen for the sound of death.



## DO YOU EVER THINK ABOUT THINGS LIKE THAT?

I sometimes curl up in a  
Shroud of depression,  
Lingering heavily on filmy thoughts  
of the past.

Wishing for summer afternoons  
And evenings with the kids on my street.  
Lying on our backs in  
the parkway,  
Staring up through the still leaves of  
City planted trees.

The torture of listening for my  
Mother to call me home.

Good friends that could just  
Walk into my house without knocking,  
And I could borrow their stuff whenever I wanted.  
And bad kids that  
Were always in trouble but didn't care.  
And kids that I felt sorry for  
Because their father was  
dead or something.

My father would come home and  
Pinch me real hard and laugh, and  
I'd laugh too and want very  
much to be just like him.

Sometimes I curl up like that  
and almost get lost.

## THE DAMP SEASON

Winter rains bring all kinds of things  
Like mosses and mushrooms  
And less birds that sing.  
And cars that won't start 'cause  
There's frost on the ground  
And friends that come over  
And just hang a round.  
And changes take place  
in the biotic world too,  
The purpose herein  
is to list just a few.  
Like a timber wolf getting  
his winter coat,  
And Arctic ice packs  
closing the moat  
Around northern Alaska  
and the Aleutian chain  
Waiting for spring  
to break up again.  
A pond freezes over and  
the animals die  
Or form a hard case  
and in dormancy lie.  
In canyons that drip  
some plants grow and green  
While Christmas trees fall  
to a commercial axe swing.  
They end up sprayed  
every color but their own  
And covered with junk  
in some middle class home,  
Oohed and Aahed over  
while we tip our jug,  
Then cursed cause dead needles  
end up on the rug.  
We like all the tinsel,  
the tree just a holder,  
Not left in the forest  
to grow any older.  
So winter has beauty  
its not trying to hide,  
But to see it you've got  
to wander outside.

## Ode to Arctic Exploration

Drifting zigzagedly nearer the pole  
On a small piece of ice from Greenland we're told,  
Manned in the spring, '61 was the year,  
With a handful of men earning wages of fear.  
Set loose on its own to wander the ocean,  
Spinning and gliding with no sense of motion.  
Moving north with the winter, locking horns with the pack,  
No sun anymore, all hours are black,  
Except for the curtains of northern lights hanging,  
The man in the radio shack keeps on banging  
His fist on the transmitter, but no one can hear  
The curses of men earning wages of fear.  
We all huddled over the diesel stove's heat  
While outside the snow and the mindless wind meet  
To stab and to slash at the side of the room  
Insisting the warmth is a fiction of doom.  
Outside at regular intervals treck  
All of these men with equipment to check,  
And their faces are clubbed with the coldness of sin  
As each daily fight with the Arctic begins.  
Ice crystals fired against eyeballs and faces  
Till numbness and pain remove all the traces  
Of warmth, then the mind becomes slow,  
Viscous thoughts separate from the snow.  
Working dumbly while nose-drippings freeze turning beards  
Into sparkling ornaments hanging from wierd  
Hunched-over figures with white clouds of breath,  
The vision of bleakness and losing to death.  
Back in the hut returns sharply the pain  
As the thoughts of the men become fluid again,  
Finally forgotten in bottle and talk  
Till 'outside' again says the meaningless clock.  
And the scene is replayed, voices no one can hear  
Tell the story of men earning wages of fear.



## THOUGHT

If I were but with my thoughts

    This place would find me gone.

If the wings of my thoughts were stronger

    I would fly with them to their destination.

I know not where this place I seek is,

    For I am kept now from following my thoughts,

And I lose them as they pass from my mind.

But someday, when I am not bound to the intentions

    By which I must abide,

I will take my intentions, and my happiness,

    And I will call to my thoughts,

For then I may follow them.

    And this place will find me gone.....

## ~ Epilogue ~

Life is too  
short to let  
yesterday  
destroy today,  
but never forget that  
tomorrow  
you may need  
a memory -  
and it will be there.

