



The Focused Fire Newsletter - Copyright © Affinity Systems LLC, September, 2015 Issue 29

The Bear is BACK!

The bears
Analogy



Photograph by Natalie Groshek Staley

The bears

Our Phase Four Graphics photography trip to Alaska provided yet another analogy, one addressing recent economic issues. Natalie took the images for this photo/essay under difficult conditions. Collectively, they tell a great and appropriate story.

A fisherman was standing on a rock in the middle of the Chilkoot River north west of Haines, Alaska. It was a productive day for him, with three large Sockeye salmon attached to his belt, providing food for the future.

A brown bear walked up the road and into the river, slowly approaching the fisherman from behind. This bear was not interested in the fisherman, only his riches, and was looking for high-fat content salmon, not red meat.

Natalie caught the moment in the next two photographs.



The man turned, saw the bear, and intelligently and quickly unhooked the stringer, watching his prize catch of fish wash downstream.

Please note the parallel situation depicted on the sign, down to the red jacket and the position of the bear.



Photograph by Natalie Groshek Staley
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A short distance upstream, a weir stretched across the river. As seen in the photo, it functions like a sieve, letting the water pass through while forcing the salmon to the center (marked with the red triangle), where they are counted. This concentrates fish, making them easy targets for the bear.



Photograph by Natalie Groshek Staley
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Ambling up the road to the wier, the bear repeatedly jumped in the water, caught fish, carried them to shore, ripped them to pieces, and ate them. While appearing to be greedy, the bear must store enough fat to sustain life while hibernating through a tough Alaskan winter.



Photograph by Natalie Groshek Staley
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Photograph by
Natalie Groshek Staley

Analogy

The financial bear has returned to the economy. After devouring most of the stock market gains realized during the year, it is hungrily eating our savings and wealth. While the pundits and talking heads differ about the reasons, be it China, the world economy or an overheated stock market, the answer is as obvious as the bear eating the fish. We have lost our sense of priority, survival instincts, and national purpose.

There are a number of reality shows on television such as "Naked and Afraid," and "Alone." In summary, individuals, pairs, or groups of people are taken to remote sites with scarce or difficult to acquire resources, such as water and food. The contestants, with a limited number of tools, must survive for varying periods. They can quit at any time, and the reward varies from very little to significant.

The situation is primal, reducing humans to one level above other animals. Their priorities are safety, shelter, fire, water, and food. The order is dependent upon circumstances. Safety must be first, because an injury without medical care may result in death.

The tests are brutal but survival is situational, and the failure to maintain these five priorities in relation to specific conditions ends badly for the contestants.

The issue, for individuals and governments alike, is establishing the right priorities for our survival. This requires making choices about where to invest time and money. These priorities are determined by situations immediately affecting our way of life and the ability to sustain it, while preparing for the future. In America, this includes taking on significant projects providing long-term benefits. Two examples of leaders able to transform society with big ideas and deeds were President Dwight D. Eisenhower, building the interstate highway system, and President John F. Kennedy, who championed the space program.

In 2008, the bears feasted on our economy. Following the collapse, Americans had the chance to achieve energy independence, build new factory systems, disengage in middle-eastern oil markets, afford a powerful military, and create sustainable food sources. We ignored opportunities to fund big science projects. We could have developed disruptive technological systems capable of sustaining human civilization far into the future. Sadly, even the space program, history's greatest science project and generator of technology, was truncated.

Instead of economic priorities, our government focused on social issues such as health care, immigration, regulations, redistribution, and racial parity, all components of control. While these are important issues, they prevented entrepreneurs from generating more jobs and creating better technological solutions. In the process, the national debt exploded to 19 trillion dollars, making it difficult to negotiate with China, the biggest bear in the forest, and our largest creditor.



Right now, the United States, along with most of the world, is losing the game of survival. While still the world's strongest economy, we continue to downsize, redistribute our assets, and sacrifice opportunities for many demographics. We have all the tools to survive and provide abundance for every citizen, yet refuse to put these tools to work.

The full economic recovery, associated with every other recession, never occurred. At the end of July, the unemployment rate was 5.3% and the labor participation rate only 62.2%. (Department of Labor).

One problem is a lack of situational awareness and understanding of the priorities required to help ourselves survive. The major reason, sadly, is the failure of leadership and lack of vision by both parties. For these reasons, the bears are back. Actually, they never went away, but waited to ambush a society operating with confused survival priorities.



We need to recreate an opportunity economy, one where the bull returns and drives away the bears bent on devouring our future. In other words, activate our survival priorities, and build a sustainable opportunity driven society for current and future generations of Americans.

I am optimistic. The massive science and technological projects needed to sustain humans and the environment are challenges to our leadership, intelligence, and capabilities. We are Americans, and can make it happen.

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***Freedom
And
Opportunity***

**Stop
Redistributing
and Downsizing**

America

***Focused Fire Newsletter
Essays***

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