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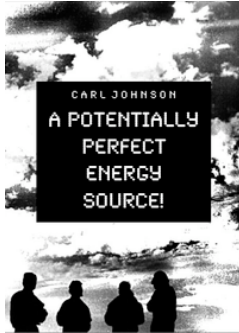
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NEW YORK - THE TEACHINGS OF CARL



I first met Carl years ago—where else but on the Internet—through [his website](#), a vast bazaar of world-transforming ideas inside a frames-enabled online church. His boldface insights and CAPS-LOCK "presentations" made me an instant devotee. Determined to share what I had seen with the world, I took on the futile task of sprucing up his creations for mass consumption. I made a [pamphlet](#) out of his plan to obtain free energy by putting a giant gyroscope on top of the Earth, and I had his theory about the compatibility of creationism and evolution published in my college literary journal. But it was never easy. Inevitably, our instincts clashed.

Once, he tried to enlist me to help promote his plan for bringing peace to Iraq, which involved a meeting around a boulder, a giant cloth, and a pair of empty seats. I was to be the illustrator, but I kept bickering about whether the plan would really work. He didn't end up using my sketches. More recently I offered to help sneak a blurb onto Huffington Post about his blueprint for wind farms that small towns could use to become energy-independent. But the necessary minimum of yellow journalism gave him cold feet. "It has NEVER been my style," he wrote me, "to 'try to twist anything of mine' to try to trick someone into believing that they are anything other than they are." So much for that.



Earlier this year, Carl told me he was dying, and I decided I had to meet him before that happened. So I got on a cross-country Amtrak and made my way from Brooklyn to Thornton, Illinois, home of one of the world's most enormous open quarries, which for years the city of Chicago has had [plans to fill with rainwater and sewage backflow](#). Carl's house, the same one where half a century ago his working-class parents raised him, sits almost close enough to the gigantic hole in the ground to be in danger of falling inside. There he was, waiting for me out front, an aging man in apparently good shape, except for the violent shaking of his hands when he tries to eat.

As we stood together in the backyard, he revealed to me that his deterioration isn't entirely because of natural causes. The people in town have turned against him, spreading terrible rumors, and worse. A self-taught "Christian Pastor," Carl insists he has done nothing wrong. There is a bullet hole in a second floor window. But he can't tell me any more for a few

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Photos by Tony Solis

DOs & DON'Ts



What's a bigger loser than passing out in a stall because you're too drunk? Here's an idea, Jonathan, sneak out and go home. You don't have to say goodbye or explain that you can't hang. Just vanish. It's far more noble than becoming a laugh model for the rest of us.

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Before long we arrived at Starved Rock State Park, one of his favorite places for thinking. Atop the rock where an Illinois Indian fortress was once decimated by an Ottawa assault, he told me about how he cooked up a plan for turning the dam below us into a powerful source of electricity, down to parts and labor. But the Army Corps of Engineers didn't give him the time of day. We went for a long hike, got lost, and almost kissed the ground when we were found again.

Over a couple beers, at the end of a long day of exploring, he delved into his Skunk Works—the handful of concepts that he won't make public. The Starved Rock dam is one of them, since with more plentiful energy people will only become more wasteful. Another is a flying device that he worries could be used as a terrible, terrible weapon if it got into the wrong hands.



I won't say what he looks like, except for the piercing, unwavering blue eyes. Carl insisted that I take no photographs of him. A TV station, he says, once wanted to do a story on his idea to prevent police car chases, but it fell through when he refused to be shown on camera. "So if I happen to look like Robert Redford or Bono"—he mentions the pious rocker a lot—"my ideas will be taken seriously, but if I happen to look like the hunchback of Notre Dame, they will not?"

Very possibly. So, rather than seeking audiovisual fame for his creations, or moving to a friendlier town, he pours his days into the endless plain text of his website—a place where his concepts can stand for what they are.

NATHAN SCHNEIDER
 12/05/2009 in [Religion](#), [Scandinavia](#), [Science](#), [USA](#) | [Permalink](#)

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Who knows, maybe Jesus was crucified on Thursday, but Good Thursday definitely doesn't have the same ring that Good Friday does.

Posted by: Lazarus | [12/05/2009 at 15:53](#)

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