

INTERVIEW WITH GORDON HENRY

Gordon Henry is a member of the White Earth Chippewa Tribe. Storytelling and writing are his main activities and he currently teaches in the English and American Studies Departments of Michigan State University. During the 1994-95 academic year, Prof. Henry was a Fulbright Lecturer at the University of León. During the month of May, he directed a three day intensive seminar on Native American Cultures at the Center for North American Studies of the University of Alcalá. Only a few weeks prior to the seminar, he was notified as being the recipient of the American Book Award 1995 for his novel, The Light People. This interview was carried out on May 19, 1995 during the seminar.

Carmen Flys: In different conversations, you first seemed to identify yourself as a member of the White Earth Reservation, as a Chippewa. Why? Is this identity the most important in your life?

Gordon Henry: Yes, I think so. In some ways, to me, it is. I mean, it's something I connect with the most important people for me, my parents and their parents. I connect it with my family and my wife and children who are very important to me, too. It's just as important to me to say that I'm a father of three children and a husband, I suppose, but as far as identifying myself, I'm also proud to be a member of the White Earth Chippewa tribe.

CF: You also, when I first asked, identified yourself as a story-teller. That was one of the first things you said, and evidently from reading your novel, it's important. What is the importance of story-telling for you and, picking up from your novel, how does story-telling affect reality and the truth?

GH: Well, for me story-telling is important, I think, because it has the capacity to change a person's consciousness, both the story-teller and the listener. That may not be the way the traditional Native story-tellers perceive it, but I've seen that happen and it has this way of reaching out to people. Parts of the story can attach themselves to another part of the story and to individual lives. The story-teller sees this response in people and realizes that the story has this ability to change the consciousness of people. The second part of the question?

CF: Why is it important for you and how does it affect reality and the truth?

GH: It's important for me because, through most of my experiences as a story-teller in the schools in North Dakota, I came to see the value of creativity in people's lives and being able to tell a story and adapt it to the audience's lives so that other people could relate to them and understand them. I think this is important in many cultures. It can impact the truth; I say impact the truth, I don't think it ever really can be the total truth, of course, or anything like that. Story-telling has the impact of truth. It's able to impact people's lives and say, if nothing else, for some people, "maybe I have a story to tell". And it can change people's consciousness and in that way, change their actions sometimes too, if the story is strong enough. It helps us also, I think, to carry on remembrances of things important in people's lives, which is very much a part of day to day living.

CF: For some writers, and I'm thinking of Rudolfo Anaya for example, story-telling seems to imply somewhat of a healing process and acts as the work of a shaman;

the healing process works both for the audience and for the teller himself. Do you think story-telling has an important role in contemporary Indian life, American life, in society at large?

GH: I think it's got an importance in all three. I think in Indian life, there are many different kinds of stories, of course. There are stories that pass on tradition. There are stories which I think in some ways, as you said, as Anaya said, can help people be healed. For me, story-telling in some ways did that. There was a period in my life when I really needed to re-adjust myself and through story-telling I was able to heal myself in some ways. But the thing is, people don't realize sometimes that they're telling stories. In most cultures, I would say in American cultures, there are always stories going around that they perceive as something different and so the story-telling is always there but never really recognized in some ways as a process and a part of a culture. People do it on a family level, they do it on national levels and although it's not recognized as story-telling, it's there and it's important.

CF: Why do you write? Story-telling is very much an oral tradition, and picking up on that, do you have the fear, such as Native American writer, Gerald Vizenor implies in his works, that the written word may only be dead voices?

GH: Yes, I do have that fear because I think that sometimes when you're writing you feel almost as Vizenor said, that you're kind of alone, almost on some sort of vision quest or some kind of shaman's quest or something like that and maybe that's part of the reason you do it, too. You do it not only to pass on some kind of message or some kind of meaning to other people but you also are trying to find out a little bit about yourself while you write and it's a solitary act. In some ways, I do relish solitude once in awhile and I get it in different ways. One of the ways is writing. And I like seeing the kinds of things that come up through this imaginative interchange with myself, the exchange with myself.

CF: When did you begin to write? You just told me that this is your first novel, *The Light People*, but is this your first attempt at creative writing?

GH: No, I've written poetry for a long time. I started writing poetry probably when I was about 21, or 23 years old, but I never showed anyone for 7 or 8 years and then I started writing, I guess, seriously, if that's the word, when I went for a Master's at Michigan State University in creative writing. And then I wrote primarily poetry, I mean almost all poetry. And this novel is my first attempt at writing longer fiction.

CF: What inspires you? Are there any particular literary influences or cultural influences that you would highlight? What triggers your imagination? Is it events, is it a thought that you consciously want to put on paper?

GH: There are many things. Sometimes it's an image, you'll see something and you'll think "there's a story behind that image", how did it come to be? For instance, I saw something, I thought it was very strange. We had a ceremony with some people up in Oviedo and I'd never seen this before, I'm sure it's happened, but one of the women who was smoking the pipe had lipstick on so there was lipstick on the sacred pipe, and I thought it was a very strange kind of image that people hadn't ever noticed before. You always hear about lipstick on cigarettes and things, but never on a pipe like that. So that triggers a whole chain of thoughts in me. And also hearing

people talk, like sometimes I'll listen to my brothers talk about some experience and I'll say, wow, that's the voice of a story-teller. I mean, many different things. The literary influences are many. I read these days more philosophy and religious mystical materials than novels. I should read more novels but I don't. I like most American Indian writers who are known in public and in academia. And I also very much admire some of the more well-known Latin American writers. In particular, Carlos Fuentes.

CF: What about your revision process?

GH: I changed. When I write poetry, I write poetry on paper, hand-written and then I type it out and revise that way. With the novel, I wrote it the easy way, I guess you could say, with the computer where you can move things around more easily but I don't think I've really mastered the revision process yet. I think I need to do more revision. Sometimes I push things to print too quickly and I think that's one of the things that I have to work on in the future. But I try to revise in poetry by moving things around and subtracting and seeing. That's my main method in poetry, subtraction rather than addition. And in fiction, my revision process is to go back to what I've written the previous day and revise that right away and go on to the next section. So it's kind of a layered revision process.

CF: As a professor, you're a professor of creative writing, do you think writing can be taught? Or is it a gift? You just told me that you've gone through the creative writing program yourself as a student. I hear a lot of debates on this.

GH: Well, the best thing about creative writing program, I think, is that people, for lack of a better word, write in these programs. A lot of writers, who I think wouldn't take the time out and the discipline to write, learn the discipline of having something assigned to them and having to turn it in, whether they think it's good or not. And I think that's a valuable discipline. You have to find a time to write and you have to keep writing. And that's the value of the program. I don't think you can teach a person to write a good novel in a creative writing class. Some people have that gift in them, some people can do it even if they don't really have to work hard. And it's weird because I think some of the most talented people sometimes don't finish projects. So it just depends on a strange combination of, what I call, writer's discipline, talent and luck.

CF: What has it meant to you to receive the American Book Award for this year?

GH: I haven't even really understood what that means yet. I mean, I'm very honored and proud about it but, it hasn't really set in. In some ways, the book is so far past for me already. I wrote it practically two years ago and it was published a year ago and it came out in paperback this year, but it's something so far behind me already that I'm thinking more ahead now than looking at whatever awards and so forth. I don't know. It's a good thing, but I really don't know how to assess that at this moment. It's just so weird to me to have that kind of experience that I really can't say.

CF: Would you say that maybe, the fact of your being in Spain right now has kind of separated you from the impact of that prize?

GH: Yes, I think that's true of many things. Being in Spain has kept me separate and maybe that's good. I mean, maybe it's just kept me understanding that

these kinds of things are not necessarily the most important things in life. Even though they're honors and they're great things, I think it's kept me from some of those traps of thinking that you have something to give to society. In fact it's just one of those things that other people may value and you value it, too but it's not the most important thing in a person's life. It sounds cliché and all, but I think it's true.

CF: I was going to ask you, about your poetry. You, from some of your comments, also seem to like the haiku, much like Vizenor. And, although you mentioned something yesterday about it, why the Japanese haiku? It seems to be popular with Native American writers. What does that form really give you?

GH: Well, I think, it gives you a form and a structure to work with, but at the same time a kind of poem that I like to write, anyway. Even my other poetry that is not haiku still has this kind of a feeling of imagery, and short, very brief passages of images. You know they're sometimes packed together. And so that's a particular form that I like because it makes you look at a particular space and moment in time and try somehow to apply that to some kind of larger universal feeling, if that's the right way of saying it. That's the reason I like the haiku. It's something brief and arresting, almost, that you have to look at. It's a kind of a little art form in its own way.

CF: You also mentioned, though, that it seemed to have similarities with some Native American traditions or dreamsongs.

GH: Yes, for me it does, I think. A personal vision or a particular moment that you carry with you. Sometimes you don't write the haiku down right away. And many of the ones that I've written in *The Light People*, had been in my mind for a long time and I finally just needed a form or I found a form to put them all in. So it's very much like dreamsongs, but it may not have the same spiritual significance.

CF: In your novel, you seem to show a keen interest in the thought process and the concept of process as such, the continuance of the narrative.

GH: What I was trying to work with in the novel is different so-called literary forms; trying to apply and incorporate them in one work. I did this for a number of reasons. One is a very shallow reason, it's because I had originally written the novel for my dissertation and I wanted to show the professors that were on my committee the different kinds of forms that I knew about. But I was also trying to work with the thought process, at the most basic level, at how people conceive of these things as all different ways of, and different forms, of telling a story, a particular story that they want to tell. So that's what I was trying to work with. I wasn't doing anything of great sophistication there, I don't think.

CF: What about the concept of process? You mention a lot of that and the way things are continuously changing and developing.

GH: I think that was reflective of my own process. To be honest, there's a lot I have to learn as a writer yet. So I was trying to learn something about writing as I was writing this, in my own process. And I think that's part of what you may be getting at there. It was part of my own process of trying to understand how to write in some ways.

CF: To what extent are the ideas that are explicit in the novel, yours? I don't mean to say strictly autobiographical because I'm referring to some of the philosophical ideas, but are they yours or are they sheer fiction?

GH: Many of them are my own. They're my own in my own particular way of thinking about them, I guess. I don't know, but there are also comments, I think, on what I've heard other people say about the same kinds of things, or what I've perceived other people saying about the same kinds of things. For instance, notions of blood, and what it means to shed blood and to have blood and all that. In that one section, it is a very philosophical section, but I wrote that partly humorously and ironically because people don't really think everything through when they talk about blood. And so I was taking it from a different angle, from a chemical, kind of electro-magnetic angle. And that has to do with that kind of things I've read, too. So some of those ideas are based on what I've assimilated through reading, but others, are my own; it is partly me, too, very much so.

CF: The other thing that called my attention while reading the book is the eruption of reality--a practical, realistic down-to-earth element in the middle of a rather solemn moment-- such as a thought or a ritual and then you have the irreverent children in the middle of the ceremony talking about the deer running in, or when one of the characters is either writing or thinking about something profound, then he becomes suddenly very aware of a physical necessity or something. Could you comment on that? There's a shocking element there, a sharp contrast.

GH: I think maybe that's part of that process aspect that you're talking about, too, because in my own writing process I find sometimes that while I may be deeply engaged in whatever I'm doing, I always come back to this different kind of, what some people would call a separate world, but in fact it is part of the same process, too. You also notice I have a lot of smoking sections in there, a lot of people smoking cigarettes and things like that. Well, this is when I actually started smoking. To get started writing every day, I would have one hand-rolled cigarette and so all these things I think are interruptions but they're not, in many ways they're part of the same reality too. So we see this irreverent moment, when the deer bursts in and breaks up the seriousness of the funeral and these kind of things are just things that happen. They happened in my family and they happened to people in my family. In some ways they are reality.

CF: But usually they don't seem to be included in writing, in the description of a very solemn moment and all of a sudden . . .

GH: May be that has to do with my family life. I come from a large family and it didn't seem like anything could be sustained on one particular level of reality without someone else or something else entering into that reality. I guess it comes back to me.

CF: What about the importance of dreaming and imagining people and things? You speak of "dreaming people" very often, and the need for doing that and you tie it in with memory.

GH: Well, I think that, for me, dreams have always been important. It's kind of cliché, I don't want to sound like the stereotypical Indian person or anything like that, but they've always been important, even a long time ago as a child. People have

told me the kind of things I used to say as a child when I was dreaming and even when I'd tell about my dreams to my family. Some people say, well, you're supposed to keep these things secret, but in many ways I think, it's a part of ourselves that we separate off.

CF: Are you referring to night-dreaming or day-dreaming or both?

GH: I'm referring to, yes, both, all forms of that word. And I think they're valuable. I mean, where some people would say, well, I don't want people day-dreaming in my class, or drifting off in my class, I would say, well, if they're getting more out of that day-dreaming than they're getting out of the professor's lecture then, that's a hundred times better. So I really believe in the value of those things. The problem is that they're left unexamined and I don't mean that they should be taken apart step by step, but they've been dismissed by most people; they become those things that we shouldn't really think about or have been taught not to think about.

CF: Even more than dreaming, in your novel you seem to say at some point, and correct me if I'm wrong, that we need to dream people, as if to make them relive, bring back their presence, and almost as if, if we don't imagine them, if we don't dream them, they're lost. They lose shape and their existence.

GH: I think you're right about that. Well, that's my own particular view of it. I mean, I think you're right, that's better than I could express it. In some ways that's what I was trying to say--that we have to keep remembering the people of our families that have passed away. And that's where I see the haiku, too, going back to that; it remembers those moments in time, so that they bring them back and they give them another kind of force. They don't just disappear, I guess you could say, not that anything ever does. I think it helps to remember them as people and even write about them sometimes. I like the way that you put that. I think that's what I was trying to do.

CF: You also seem to draw a lot on perception and the multiplicity of perspectives. Could you comment on that.

GH: Yes, well, that's just my own life. I mean, I've seen things from a variety of perspectives. I travelled around a lot as a child with my family. We were a large family, so I can't help but try to see things at this point from a variety of perspectives. And I think that's what I try to work into my writing sometimes too, a variety of perspectives.

CF: What about your concept of history and time? You have some essays and ideas on that and you definitely seem to be quite critical of anthropology.

GH: History...Well, I think I was coming out against common notions of history in the book. And part of it is current talk nowadays, about revisionist history. My point of view in the book was that all history is revisionist history. I mean, unless you're writing in the exact moment that history occurs, then you're reviewing it or reliving it in some way. And there's always a particular perspective that is involved in doing that and that's what I was trying to get across in the novel. As far as anthropology goes, I feel in some ways, I don't want to say ashamed, but, a little bit more humble about what I wrote there because I think anthropology has been a common and easy target for Native writers for a long time. But I was trying to deal

with more than just anthropology, I think. I was also trying to deal with, very ironically, notions with a lot of the social concerns involved in anthropology, and again, the process as I saw it. I'm not saying that all anthropology is bad or that all anthropologists are bad people. I was just trying to bring a little humor into a kind of discussion that's been heated over the years. And so I chose to do it my way and with my particular process.

CF: A lot of Native American writers seem to be highly critical also of Christianity and churches and yesterday at the seminar Louise Erdrich was mentioned and so forth. Yet, your portrayal, and correct me if I'm wrong, your portrayal of Catholicism and the mission doesn't seem to be wholly negative. In fact, the people, both the priest and the members of the church seem to combine rituals to a degree. While it's a Catholic Mass there are Native American elements in there and it seems to be a rather positive view. Is this due to your personal experience in White Earth?

GH: It was. I was confirmed in a church on a reservation. And it wasn't always a positive experience for me. I can't say that every time that I went to church it was negative and I can't say that I can look at all Christians or Christianity as negative, of course. I think there are many things in Christianity that have helped some Native people and we can't deny them their experience. I don't think it would be fair. And of course, there have been things that have gone wrong in these situations, too. At the present moment, I go to some churches on different reservations with my family when they ask me to go, however, I'm not a regular church-goer or anything like that, but you do see this combination of things. You see the combination of hymns sung in *ogala* and you see the birch branches around the altar and the priest wearing woodland designs and you say, well, they're reaching out to people. We don't know what the motives are for that, but how can we deny the experience of all these older Indian people in the church and say that they're wrong for this. I don't see this as a particularly negative thing.

CF: And you do think the Christian ideas can be combined with a Native American spirituality--that they don't necessarily contradict each other? For some people, that might be considered heresy.

GH: It would be heresy for some people, but I think if you're open-minded about things, and you have to be, that at their core--and I think there is a core to the religious--that most of these teachings are trying to accomplish many of the same things. They're trying to work for the good health of people and the good health of communities. And their spiritual health as well as their physical and mental health. So I don't think that you can criticize that people choose to combine Native American elements into a Christian church service, or whatever. That's something they see as necessary. I don't see that it would be up to me to say, no, this isn't a proper thing to do. I think you have to leave those kinds of options open for people who see that as a possibility or a necessity. And though I've been more involved in traditional spiritual practices in the last ten years of my life, I'm not closed-minded enough to say, at least at this point, that I'm the one who has the answer for other people who might want to try Christianity or try to combine things with Christianity.

CF: What about the importance both in your novel and for yourself of the land, nature, as spiritual? I know it's an important element in the Native American culture.

GH: Well, there's always a kind of remembrance of the land and an interaction, I guess you could say, with certain landscapes. But I am never really sure how, I mean, at least in writing the novel, I wasn't sure how well I was able to get that across. In fact, I feel like in some ways I didn't do a good enough job of getting the landscape of the novel out there, but in another way I suppose I did what I remembered best at the time. That was the idea, I think, in fiction writing. At least for me. It's one of the most difficult things, I think, just to get a good sense of a particular landscape or space.

CF: Do you think that a sense of space or landscape is essential in your identity? Even if, for example, you grew up on a reservation but now you're in Detroit or close to Detroit, I mean, that's a change. There are many people who have gone from rural to urban.

GH: Well, in fact, my time on a reservation was very brief compared to a lot of people. But the strongest memories I have in some ways are there and I don't really know why that is. I think a lot of it has to do with some of the people that were there. And as well, some of the trees and lakes and everything else that are part of the landscape. But some of the strongest memories I have, that keep coming back, are those times when I was on the reservation. So, I don't know if the landscape has a particular deeper significance for me.

CF: You mentioned before the mixing of genres in your novel and you gave a very practical reason, for your professors and your committee. I was going to ask you about the tremendous variety: haiku, novels, theatre, court cases, stories, poems, essays - you've got just about everything thrown in there. Could it be seen as an attempt to break out of the official canon and dialectic?

GH: Yes, I suppose it could be seen that way and I know that this is one of the things that happens when I write; I always resist writing what I think are conventional straight line narratives, if there is such a thing. And so I think, yes, I think you're right about that. I did consciously try to break with what I thought of as different forms.

CF: At times you include ojibway language, in the names and in poems and songs. It seems a kind of repetition of sounds, as if it were picking up on a song or something. I'd like you to comment on that. Is there a conscious code switching or a specific reason for doing so?

GH: Well, there is. I think it helps me to remember in some ways the language that my father spoke when he was growing up and the language that he heard and the language that I very infrequently hear. It helps me to remember and that's why it's in there with such infrequency. If I could write a whole book in ojibway I think I would try it, but I can't do it. So it helps me to remember, to try to acknowledge the importance of remembering names of people in ojibway and certain very common events. There's this one haiku about this is what we will do today and now we will eat,

or tomorrow we will eat or something like that. Just very simple things that people would say and I would try to remember as much as I could of particular names.

CF: What about the importance of language and culture? I mean, we were discussing this yesterday also. Language is so much of culture to people and your language has been more or less lost. How has the extensive use of English affected the Native cultures?

GH: Well, it's affected them in a number of ways, in that between the Native cultures, I think, it's made differences in the levels of communication and ability to communicate. But, I don't know. It's hard for me to really know without having grown up or spoken the ojibway language all my life, to say what the importance of it is. But I'm sure these things are important to culture but in another way, in a very obscure way. Language is also sound and so part of it is getting your ear used to different sounds and intonations and inflections. And that's one of the most difficult things about language I think, and we don't understand how much that may be related to culture and where it may come from. So I think, in my own view, that I'm missing a lot by not knowing the language. But I can't give myself up. I have to do what I can with the language I've been given.

CF: Are there certain words or phrases or things you do know in the language that simply are not translatable, that expressed in one language they're totally different when they're expressed in the other language? Does it bring back a whole different culture or reality and even if you tried to translate it, it just doesn't quite click. You're missing some of the nuances.

GH: Yes, I think that happens, but I couldn't really say how it is. Most of the language I know is the language I've learned in a ceremonial context and so I can translate it very easily to what I've learned, but I learned it backwards. I knew one and then I learned the other so maybe then I don't have a good read on it.

CF: These elements, the language, the mixing of genres, the cultural reference, make your novel a little bit difficult at times for non-initiated readers. When you write, who is your audience? In your mind, who are you writing for, because evidently these things make it difficult for a certain audience. Are you writing for a particular audience?

GH: I've thought about this and I've told people different things at different times and now that I've been asked the question a few times, I realize that when I wrote, one of the things that most surprised me about *The Light People* is that people read it and they liked it. And to think that they understood some of the things that were going on, and I'm not saying that I was trying to be misunderstood or anything like that, but I didn't see it as a book that most people would like. Because of the way it was structured, because of the different kinds of stories and language, things that you mentioned. But many people have written me, people I don't even know, saying, "I really enjoyed your book." This, to me, was surprising. I think it's an easy enough book to read. You can read it quickly. You can read short passages at a time and put it down and pick it up again for another couple short passages. But I don't think I had any particular audience in mind except the audience of myself. And this is true, I had myself in mind when I was writing, which is a very small audience and I was enjoying

it, so I figured I would keep going. And then a little bit in the back of my mind there was the audience for my dissertation and then maybe some Indian people who would understand the little subtleties of it, people who were interested in American Indian literature. But I had no large audience in mind, that's for sure. It was a very limited audience if I had an audience in mind at all. I was just enjoying what I was doing at a certain point, so I decided to keep doing it.

CF: Turning to some other more contemporary issues that we discussed the other day, I'd like to go back to the idea of the blood quantum to establish identity. I find it heart-chilling, as I told you, it reminds me of the Inquisition, Muslims and Jews, and the words nazism, facsism, purity of blood and racial discrimination. Where is this going to take Native Americans? GH: I don't know. Already we're starting to see little wars popping up between different factions and Native communities in the States. And I say that from Spain, I don't really know the situation since I've been away, since September. But before I left, people were starting to demand the reduction of federal papers for the acquisition of jobs in universities. They passed the American Indian Arts and Crafts Act in the 90's. There were things going on in the Indian newspapers about former members of the American Indian Movement as to whether this or that person was an Indian or were they just agents for the government and things like that. And this is where it's taking us right now, this idea of blood quantum as being a determinant. If you have the blood quantum and it's some way provable on paper, I guess you're undeniably Indian in some way, though you've been culturally wiped and may not have any ties with any Indians at all. So the question is almost too complicated for me to answer. I think though, that it's taken us in some bad directions in recent years. And in some ways it's a reaction to people abusing this whole idea of being Indian and getting a job--well you might not even be an Indian, or never admitted to being one, or something like that, until it helped you get a position in a university. I think personally, that I am not in a position to determine how other people are going to live their life. If they want to live by a lie, let them live by a lie. That's fine with me. I don't think it's up to me to check everybody's blood quantum. If people want to check mine, that's fine. They can find out, the information is there. I don't know. It's a very difficult issue. And I don't think that right now it's being dealt with in a good way. I hope that things change.

CF: Where do you stand? How do you envision yourself? Traditional or with the Pan-Indian Movement or . . .

GH: Like I said, I've been involved in traditional ceremonial life for the past 12 years but that's not a very long time. I guess I'd have to say that in many ways I see myself as a member of a family of the people from White Earth. I do get involved in some Pan-Indian issues, things that I think are important like education and Native rights and things like that but I wouldn't identify myself in any particular way.

CF: You seem, in your novel anyway, highly critical of assimilationists and mainstream United States institutions such as universities. I'm referring perhaps to that professor who didn't want to deal with helping the wing of the bird at the end and then the university rejecting Oskinaway. So you seem to be highly critical of these institutions and their methods of dealing with things. Moreover, you seem to actually

suggest that he should go back to the reservation and that's where he finds an outlet, a positive outlet, by leaving the university and going back to the reservation. Yet, you're at a university.

GH: Well, I think that's true. I wasn't just criticizing the institution but the way that people get locked into certain positions in an institution. So, we cannot deal with a particular kind of bird because our program is only for another kind of bird. When, maybe in these times or at any particular moment, it might be better to consider dealing with another kind of bird at a certain time. So I think it has more to do with static positions in universities that don't seem flexible and even the idea of disciplines, sometimes, I think is what I'm talking about here or trying to get at. That some of these things are inter-disciplinary or extra-disciplinary and so we have to look at them like that and education, I guess you could say, needs to be seen like that. It's a difficult issue sometimes to think that way. Yes, but I'm there, and I'm trying to do what I can.