

## Sabbatical Report – Spring 2017

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During my Spring 2017 sabbatical leave, I searched for, and found, atomic secrets at Bodega Bay. On two continents, I walked in the footsteps of Charles Darwin, John Steinbeck, and Ernest Hemingway. In England, I traced Charles Darwin's life from cradle to grave, and had a pint in the pub where the molecular structure of DNA was first announced. Across the Thames from London, I straddled the Prime Meridian at the Royal Observatory at Greenwich, from whence all longitude flows. At the college that Darwin attend at Cambridge University, Christ's, I spoke and dined and toured his private rooms, using the flashlight feature on my cell phone to illuminate the dark corners that Darwin haunted as an undergraduate. In Key West, I stood, sweating profusely, in Ernest Hemingway's kitchen, and bathroom, and bedroom, and it was good and true. On the Big Island, I drove a rental car to 13,802 feet above sea level atop Mauna Kea and breathed thin, cool air amid astronomy domes. Along the island's volcanic coast, I rode a rented mountain bike across miles of black *pahoehoe* lava to witness primal, orange-hot molten lava pouring into the Pacific Ocean, emitting clouds of dangerous, acidic white steam and forming new land in what is, for me, effectively my ancestral homeland. In Hilo, vulnerable epicenter of tsunamis at the head of a Venturi-effect-shaped bay, I renewed a 40-year-old college friendship, long overdue. In Pacific Grove, I pulled another kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom visit, this time over the shoulder of John Steinbeck in a place where he wrote one of his most famous books, his 1941 *The Log of the Sea of Cortez*. In Washington, D.C., I spoke to crowds at the Smithsonian Institution and at the Embassy of Ecuador. And in DC I picked up a breakfast coffee at a Starbucks in one of Trump's hotels, perhaps, and hopefully, violating the Constitution's Emoluments Clause. At Bodega Head, I learned of secret 1958 plans to build a bay shore road and split atoms by the seaside, all taking place while Alfred Hitchcock planned and filmed his landmark Sonoma County movie, *The Birds*. Along the way, I gave three radio interviews and ended up for my first time on iTunes. In all these diverse geographies, I learned that civilization exists by geological consent, subject to change without notice. My sabbatical is over, but it will never be over, because the experiences are still with me. My sabbatical is now just time shifted, and that's exactly where I want it. My writing about all these topics now continues.

During my sabbatical in Spring and Summer 2017 I gave sixteen hour-long public lectures at:

Bodega Marine Laboratory, University of California, Davis, July 19, 2017 (second talk).

Northern California Geological Society, Orinda, California, June 28, 2017.

Bodega Marine Laboratory, University of California, Davis, June 16, 2017.

Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute, Moss Landing, California, June 7, 2017.

King's College, London, England, May 24, 2017.

Christ's College, Cambridge University, Cambridge, England, May 22, 2017.

Oxford University Press staff, Oxford University, Oxford, England, May 20, 2017.

Shrewsbury Museum, Darwin's birthplace, Shrewsbury, England, May 18, 2017.

Natural History Museum at Tring, Tring, England, May 18, 2017.

Down House, Charles Darwin's longtime home, Downe, England, May 17, 2017.

Hopkins Marine Station, Stanford University, Pacific Grove, California, May 9, 2017.

National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, April 5, 2017.

Embassy of Ecuador, Washington, DC, April 6, 2017.

Florida Gulf Coast University, Ft. Meyers, Florida, April 11, 2017.

Kapnick Center, Naples Botanical Garden, Naples, Florida, April 12, 2017.

Museums of Sonoma County, my world book launch, Santa Rosa, March 5, 2017.