

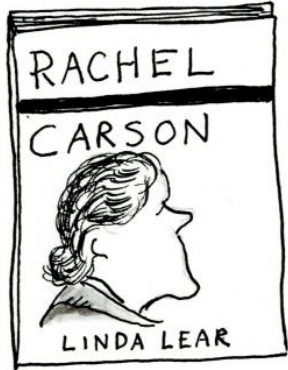
GESSNER '15

RACHEL'S WAR

AND SO IT WENT...



I JUST FINISHED
RE-READING THE ENDING
OF LINDA LEAR'S GREAT



BIOGRAPHY
OF
RACHEL
CARSON.

IF CARSON'S STORY IS A
STUDY IN BRAVERY, THEN THE
LAST ACT IS THE BRAVEST.
JUST AS SHE WAS FINISHING
SILENT SPRING....



...TWO TUMORS WERE
DISCOVERED IN HER LEFT
BREAST...

ARE THEY
MALIGNANT?

WELL, YOU HAVE
A CONDITION
BORDERING
ON
MALIGNANCY.



THIS, AS THE PATHOLOGY
REPORT MADE CLEAR, WAS NOT
THE TRUTH...



LEAR WRITES: "MEDICAL PROTOCOLS BETWEEN A SINGLE FEMALE PATIENT AND HER PHYSICIAN IN THE 1950s AND 1960s MIGHT HELP EXPLAIN WHY (DR.) SANDERSON HAD NOT TOLD THE TRUTH. TYPICALLY, IN THE CASE OF A MARRIED WOMAN, THE PATIENT HERSELF WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN TOLD SHE HAD A MALIGNANCY, BUT HER HUSBAND, HAD HE ASKED DIRECTLY, WOULD HAVE BEEN GIVEN A FULL ACCOUNT."

IN PAIN, CARSON WORKED ON A LAP DESK IN HER BED, FIGHTING TOWARD THE END OF THE BOOK SHE HAD BEEN WRITING FOR 5 YEARS.



IT WASN'T UNTIL 6 MONTHS LATER THAT SHE GOT A STRAIGHT ANSWER

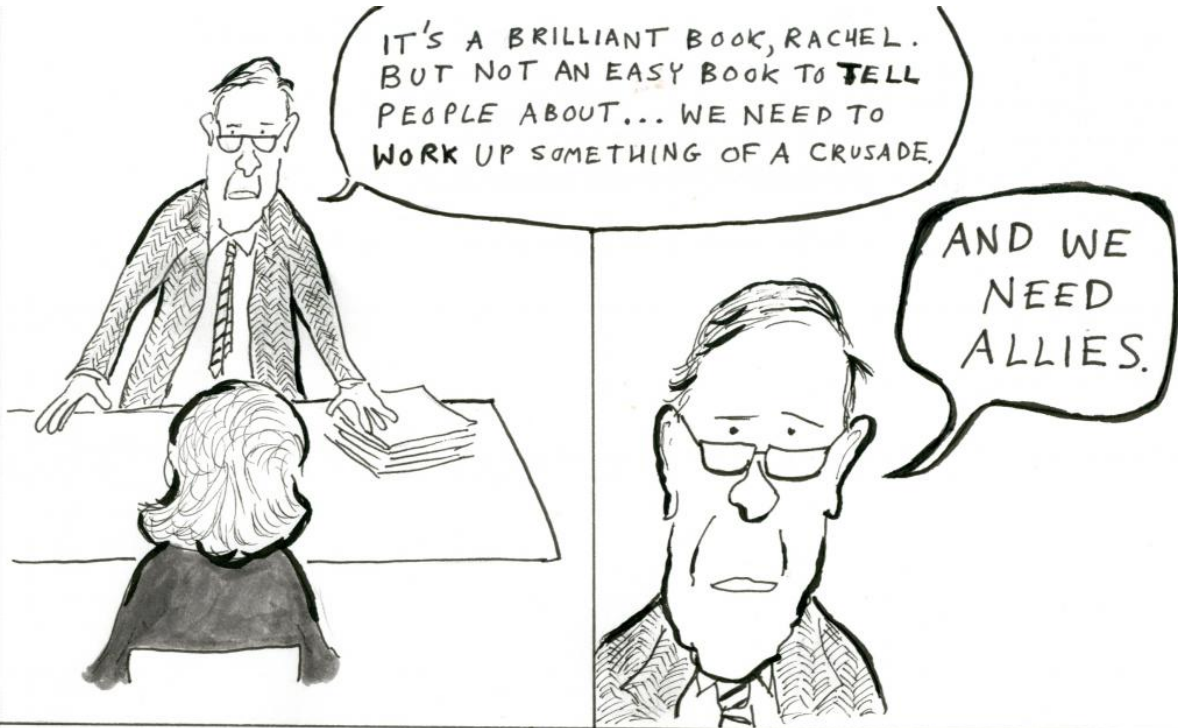


IT'S CANCER AND IT'S SPREAD TO YOUR LYMPH NODES



DESPITE PAIN AND RADIATION TREATMENTS, SHE FINISHED THE BOOK AND DELIVERED IT TO HER PUBLISHER





ONE EARLY, AND VITAL, ALLY WORKED AT THE NEW YORKER.

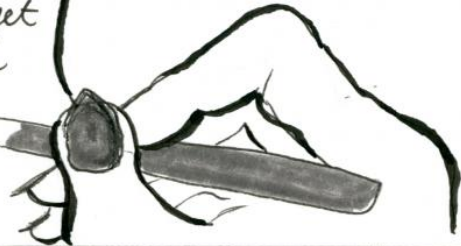


THIS IS WILLIAM SHAWN. IT'S A BRILLIANT ACHIEVEMENT, RACHEL. YOU'VE MADE IT LITERATURE. FULL OF BEAUTY AND LOVELINESS AND DEPTH OF FEELING.

WE'D LIKE TO PUBLISH IT THIS SPRING IN INSTALLMENTS.

LEAR WRITES THAT FOR CARSON THAT PHONE CALL WAS A CATHARSIS. AFTER ALL THE YEARS OF HARD WORK, SHE REALIZED THAT SHE HAD MADE SOMETHING REAL—SOMETHING GOOD AND IMPORTANT.

It was odd—I had not been waiting breathlessly for Mr. Shawn's reaction, yet once I had it I knew how much it meant to me... I had done it!



BUT THAT MOMENT WAS BRIEF. IN SILENT SPRING SHE HAD



ATTACKED THE CHEMICAL COMPANIES. AND SHE KNEW THEY WOULD STRIKE BACK.

IN PREPARATION, SHE GOT THE MANUSCRIPT INTO THE HANDS OF SEVERAL TOP SCIENTISTS...



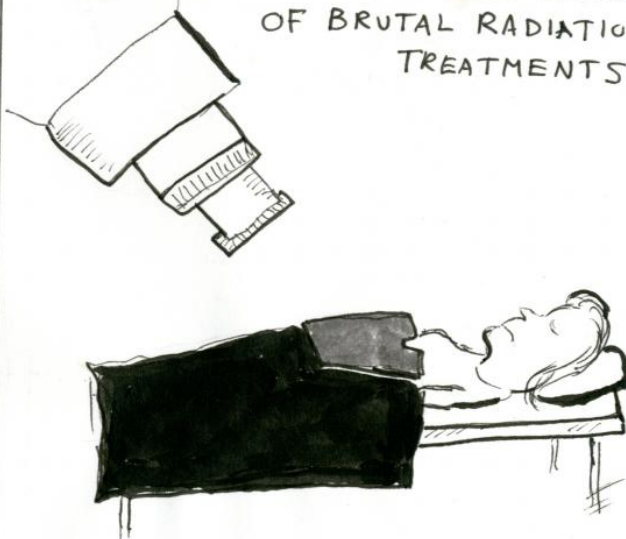
... WHO WERE ALL IMPRESSED.

AND SO, ON THE CUSP OF PUBLICATION, SHE UNDERWENT SEVERAL ROUNDS OF BRUTAL RADIATION TREATMENTS.

NOT AGAIN.

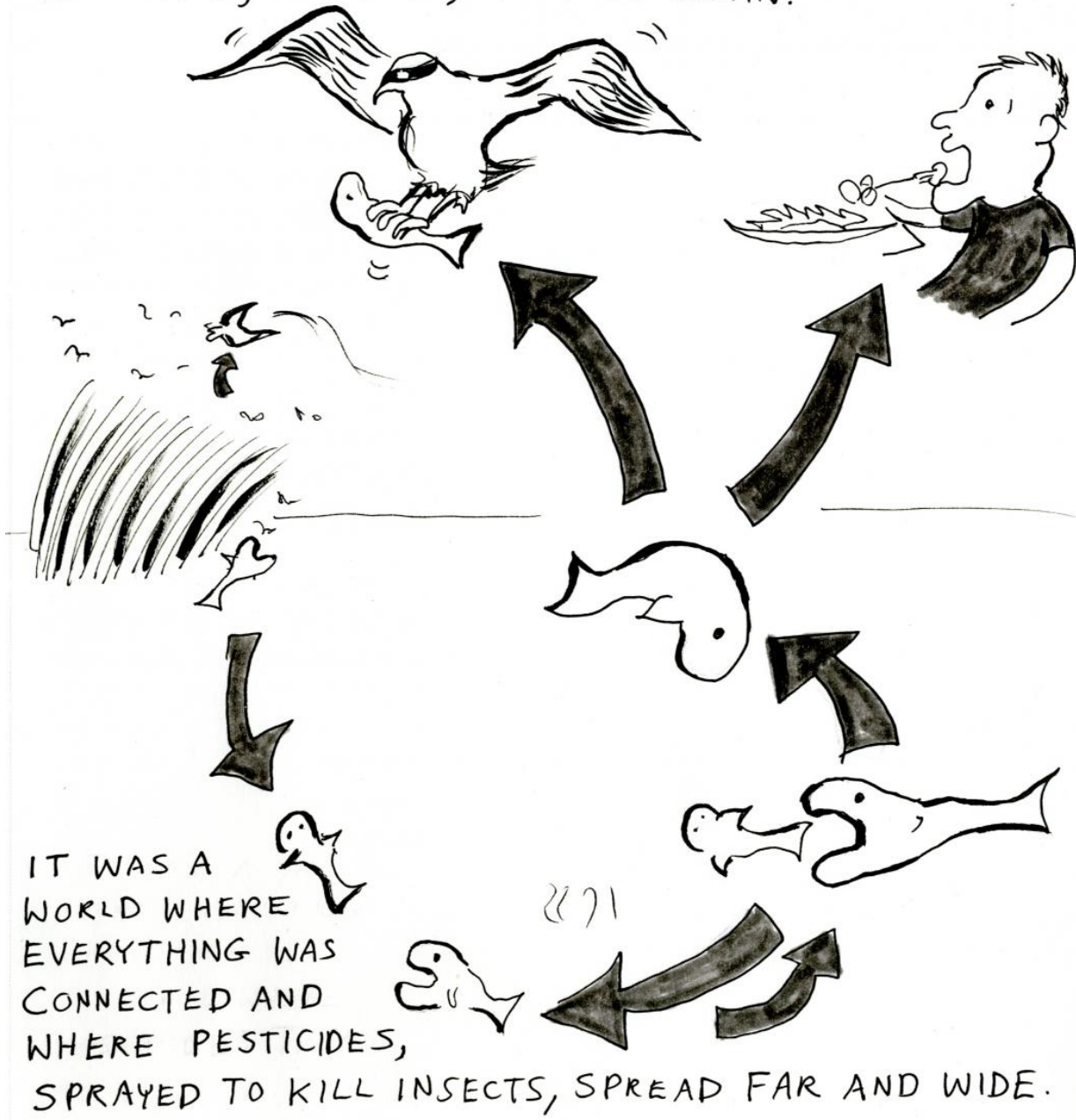


THEN, AS PUBLICATION NEARED, SHE DISCOVERED SEVERAL MORE LUMPS.



BUT THE BOOK EXCEEDED EVEN RACHEL'S HIGH EXPECTATIONS. HERALDED IN BY THE NEW YORKER ARTICLES, IT MADE A HUGE SPLASH.

IT TOLD WHAT FOR MANY WAS A NEW STORY. IN A NEW LANGUAGE WITH WORDS LIKE ECOLOGY, POLLUTION, ECOSYSTEM, AND FOOD CHAIN.





THIS WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE BOOK'S ASCENT, BUT IT WAS ALSO THE BEGINNING OF WHAT LEAR CALLS "A CERTAIN TYPE OF CRITICISM THAT WOULD BE LEVELLED AT THE FEMALE AUTHOR OF SILENT SPRING."

Miss Carson's reference to the selfishness of the insecticide manufacturers probably reflects her communist sympathies.

The "Balance of Nature" is a wonderful thing for people who sit back and write books or want to go out to Walden Pond and live as Thoreau did.. But I don't know of a housewife today who will buy the type of wormy apples we had before pesticides.

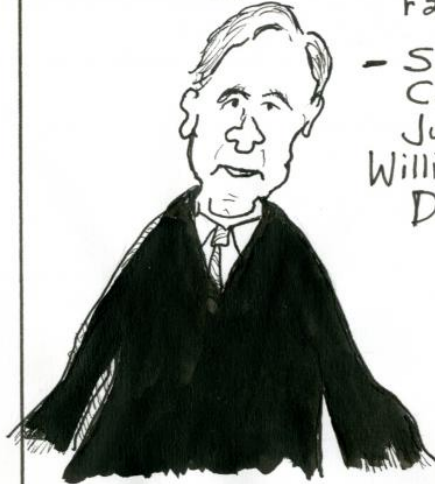


BUT PRAISE FOR THE BOOK
HAD ALSO BEGUN TO RING

"This will be an
Uncle Tom's Cabin of
a book, — the
sort of book
that will help
turn the tide."
— E.B. WHITE



"This book is the most
important chronicle of this
century for the human
race.

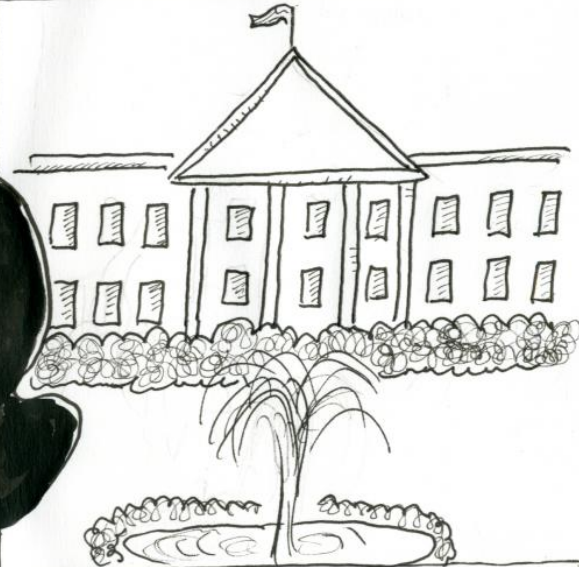


— Supreme
Court
Justice
William O.
Douglas

AND THEN EVEN HIGHER PRAISE

AS PROOF THAT HER MESSAGE
WAS GETTING OUT...

RACHEL WAS EVEN
MENTIONED ON PEANUTS,
CHARLIE BROWN.



RACHEL WAS INVITED TO
THE KENNEDY WHITE HOUSE.

BUT DARK CLOUDS
WERE BUILDING...

SHE FAINTED WHILE SHOPPING. THEN X-RAYS REVEALED THE CANCER WAS SPREADING.



STILL TRYING TO HIDE HER CONDITION, RACHEL PERFORMED BEAUTIFULLY ON ERIC SEVAREID'S CBS REPORTS.



BUT SEVAREID AND HIS CREW COULD SEE THAT SOMETHING WAS SERIOUSLY WRONG.

AND THEN THE PESTICIDE COMPANIES UPPED THEIR ATTACK.

I'M AFRAID WE HAVE A DEAD LEADING LADY ON OUR HANDS.

WHY IS A SPINSTER WITH NO CHILDREN SO CONCERNED WITH GENETICS?

SHE'S PROBABLY A COMMUNIST.

HER ARGUMENTS ARE BORN OF HYSTERIA... SHE HAS OVERSTEPPED HER PLACE.

SHE'S A FANATIC DEFENDER OF THE CULT OF THE BALANCE OF NATURE.



AND SO IT WENT...



SPINSTER!

ALARMIST!
HYSTERIC!



COMMUNIST!

CAT-
LOVER!
LESBIAN!
(IMPLIED)



NATURE
FREAK!
PEACE NUT!



BUT WHEN SHE TESTIFIED IN THE U.S. SENATE, THE WATCHING

PUBLIC DID NOT SEE A HYSTERIC. LEAR WRITES: "SHE HAD BEEN READY FOR THIS FOR A LONG TIME."



LEAR CONTINUES: "THOSE WHO HEARD RACHEL CARSON THAT MORNING DID NOT SEE A RESERVED OR RETICENT WOMAN IN THE WITNESS CHAIR BUT AN ACCOMPLISHED SCIENTIST, AN EXPERT ON CHEMICAL PESTICIDES, A BRILLIANT WRITER, AND A WOMAN OF CONSCIENCE."

FEW KNEW THAT SHE WAS ALSO A DYING WOMAN IN GREAT PAIN. BUT AFTER HER TESTIMONY, AND ANOTHER ROUND OF RADIATION, SHE RETREATED BACK HOME TO HER BELOVED MAINE COAST.



THE NEXT YEAR WAS FILLED WITH PAIN AND LONELINESS.



THE WORST MOMENT WAS WHEN HER CAT JEFFIE DIED

BUT IT WAS ALSO A YEAR OF VINDICATION.



There is little doubt that Rachel Carson opened our eyes to the dangers of pesticides.

AS CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT BEGAN TURNING HER WARNINGS INTO LAWS.

SHE WOULD NOT LIVE TO SEE D.D.T. OUTLAWED, BUT THE PROCESS HAD BEGUN. TIME WOULD WASH AWAY NAMES LIKE "SPINSTER" AND "ALARMIST," AND ANOTHER NAME WOULD TAKE THEIR PLACE: PROPHET.



THERE IS NO SENSE IN DENYING THE TRAGEDY OF RACHEL CARSON'S LAST YEARS. BUT IT WOULD BE FOOLISH TO DENY THE TRIUMPH.