

# WHAT A WAY TO GO

## LIFE AT THE END OF EMPIRE



Written and Directed by TSBENNETT

Produced by SALLY ERICKSON

Edited by TSBENNETT and SALLY ERICKSON

Interviewers SALLY ERICKSON and TONY MAYER

Featuring:

DERRICK JENSEN, DANIEL QUINN, RICHARD HEINBERG,  
CHELLIS GLENDINNING, JERRY MANDER, RICHARD MANNING, WILLIAM  
CATTON, THOMAS BERRY, PAUL ROBERTS, RAN PRIEUR, WILLIAM  
SCHLESINGER, DOUGLAS CRAWFORD-BROWN,  
STUART PIMM, and OTIS GRAHAM

Original Music CHAMBER CORPS

Additional Music by BRIAN HALL

USA~2007~123 mins~Color and B&W~In English

VisonQuest Pictures~ 115 Blue Heron Farm Road~ Pittsboro~ NC 27312

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a feature documentary  
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### ■ Filmmaker's Statements

#### **Timothy S. Bennett, Writer and Director**

Something happens when you read four hundred articles on climate change. And half a dozen books on oil depletion. Something happens when you spend a day Googling "mass extinction", or "dying oceans", or "depleted uranium". Something happens when you spend three long years delving deeply into the present global predicament, and into the economic, political, spiritual, psychological and cultural forces that have brought us to a point in history where we can seriously ponder the extinction of the human species, and the mass extinction of much of the life on this planet. Something happens when you not only look at it, but also allow yourself to feel it - the grief, the outrage, the loneliness, and the fear.

Something happens. Denial fades away. Denial cannot endure in the face of that much information, and that depth of feeling.

After long decades of activism and effort, planetary ecosystems are closer to collapse than they have ever been. I can think of three basic reasons for this. First, we have largely failed to look at the whole thing at once. Second, we've refrained from deeply feeling our predicament. And third, we haven't been asking the right questions of the right people.

*What a Way to Go: Life at the End of Empire* is an attempt to fill in these missing pieces. By looking at as much of the whole as we can, by creating a feeling experience of that whole, and by asking the deep questions of culture, psychology and spirit that lie at the root of our situation, it is our intention that *What a Way to Go* will break through the denial that has us locked in inaction.

**Sally Erickson, Producer**

Since the early 1970's I knew something was wrong with how we were living. Years of psychotherapy, involvement in building and living in an intentional community, and a variety of spiritual practices allowed me to create a life largely outside the mainstream. After twenty years as a psychotherapist, with my children grown, I realized that I had an itch to do something more than alleviate the suffering of individuals in my private practice. There was something bigger, much bigger, that needed to be addressed.

And then I met Tim Bennett who told me he wanted to make a documentary about how we are destroying the planet, what that's doing to us, and why nobody's talking about it.

Over the last three years we joined forces, both personally and professionally, to sound an alarm. The human species is teetering on the edge of extinction. It's time to start talking about that. It is my intention that *What A Way To Go* will provoke lengthy dialogue about what is most pressing at this time in human history. Will we choose to turn away from the culture of empire and instead create ways for humans to inhabit the earth that regenerate and renew the life-support systems we depend on?

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### ■ Data File

**Movie Title:** What A Way To Go: Life at the End of Empire

**Year:** 2007

**Production Company:** VisionQuest Pictures

Director/Writer: Timothy S. Bennett

Producer: Sally Erickson

**Narrator:** Timothy S. Bennett

**Interviewers:** Sally Erickson, Tony Mayer

Interviews - Authors, Academics, Scientists and Analysts:

Thomas Berry, William Catton, Gerald Cecil, Douglas Crawford-Brown, Sally Erickson, Lyle Estill, Chellis Glendinning, Otis Graham, Richard Heinberg, Derrick Jensen, Jerry Mander, Richard Manning, Stuart Pimm, Ran Prieur, Daniel Quinn, Paul Roberts, William Schlesinger

**Interviews - Friends and Family:**

Hannah Bennett, Jack Bennett, Kate Bennett, John Delafield, Stacey Emerick, Andy Erickson, Sarah Erickson, Steve Erickson, Tom Grizzle, Harvey Harman, Nancy Harman, Tui Hayes, Laurel Hopper, Barbara Janeway, Stacye Lanza, Judith Lessler, Barbara Lorie, Kevin Mayer, Tony Mayer, Ray Milosh, Carla Royal, Jim Senter, Sofia Simons, Iain Walsh

**Music:** Original score by Chamber Corps (Chris Rossi and James Hepler)  
"Let's Build a Boat" Written and Performed by Brian Hall

**Genre:** Documentary, Independent

**Keywords:** Culture, Environment, Collapse, Visionary

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### ■ Tag Line

A middle-class white guy comes to grips with Peak Oil, Climate Change, Mass Extinction, Population Overshoot and the demise of the American lifestyle.

### ■ Short Synopsis

Disturbing, compassionate, sometimes humorous personal essay about coming to grips with climate change, resource crises, environmental meltdown and the demise of the American lifestyle. Friends and experts analyze historical, social and psychological factors driving us toward human extinction. Bennett's ruthless assessment challenges the audience to face terrifying times with courage and integrity.

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### ■ One-Page Synopsis

Tim Bennett, middle-class white guy, started waking up to the global environmental nightmare in the mid-1980s. But life was so busy with raising kids and pursuing the American dream that he never got around to acting on his concerns. Until now...

Bennett journeys from complacency to consciousness in his feature-length documentary, *What a Way To Go: Life at the End of Empire*. He reviews his Midwestern roots, ruthlessly examines the stories he was raised with, and then details the grim realities humans now face: escalating climate change, resource shortages, degraded ecosystems, an exploding global population and teetering global economies.

Bennett identifies and calls into question the fundamental assumption that has led to this unprecedented crisis in human history: that humans were destined to dominate the rest of the community of life with the Culture of Empire.

He pushes the dialogue where Al Gore did not go.

Powerful interviews with well-known authors including Daniel Quinn, Derrick Jensen and Richard Heinberg, and noted scientists William Schlesinger and Stuart Pimm, fill in some important pieces. Scathing and humorous use of archival footage is balanced with very human snapshot comments from family and friends.

On *Walkabout*, Bennett ends with an invitation to join him with courage and consciousness on the unexplored shores of a future not yet written.

*One path leads to despair and hopelessness. The other, to total extinction.  
Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly.*  
Woody Allen

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## ■ Detailed Synopsis

*Note: Unattributed italics denote direct quotes from the voice-over narration. Attributed italics denote direct quotes from interview subjects.*

### OPENING CREDITS

#### Voices in the Dark

I'm standing on the ledge. In the darkness the moon rises overhead, Voices. I hear voices. Sadness. Regret. Fear. *Our climate's gonna go weird. Everything is out of balance. We're all fucked. There's gotta be a way. Nothing that I can do. It's gonna change.* The view from the sleeping car. *I just tell myself it's all gonna be OK. It's not a happy thing to think about.*

#### What a Way to Go

A recurring daydream in a fast food drive-thru. Nuclear holocaust and personal embarrassment. *As the icy cold of my overturned Coke™ seeped into my jeans, I'd think to myself, what a way to go...*

*Yeah, I think that we might wipe ourselves off the Earth. Definitely. I feel like that's where we're headed.*

Sarah Erickson, Student

### PART ONE – WAKING ON THE TRAIN

#### Born on the Slope

Middle-class assumptions and cold realities. *I was raised in the arms of an extended rural family. My world was a playground.*

*And I was born into stories. They were all around me. We didn't even know they were stories. We just thought they were the way things are.*

*I was born half way up the population explosion. Rising CO2 levels. Mass Extinction. Oil Depletion. We were moving on up, toward that vast and glorious human*

future. *All we had to do was climb a bit further. But the mountain we were climbing was not what we thought it was.* The stories no longer make sense. Our human impact is destroying the planet.

Back in the 1980s, I began to wake up to that fact, as *news of the ozone hole and global warming first hit me.* But life went on. I had children to raise. There were things to do.

*And at night I slept, but fitfully, clenched with worries, my dreams assaulted by vague rumblings from the future.*

### **Worry Beads – A Nightmare**

The nightmare of our current situation, an intense collage of poetry and image depicting the news of the world. *The monsters we have created. Nuclear weapons, biding their time.* Terrorism and leaking wastes and depleted uranium. Chemical and biological weapons and emerging diseases and mad cows.

*Patented life, barely tested, quietly tested, let loose upon the land. As if their creators, having looked at the world, managed to learn nothing at all.*

Dying forests dying oceans dying species dying cultures. *And all the while the climate is changing. The balance undone. Tonight on the Weather Channel.*

Oil extraction is peaking. *Watch the bidding war rage from trade floors to battlefields. Watch the Pentagon plan and the Patriots act.*

*We're driving a high-speed train to the end of life, and we're taking the rest of the planet, trillions upon trillions of living souls, along with us.*

And all of this is wrapped inside an insane culture of denials and lies. Finally we awaken, *in the still hours of early morning,* to the realization that our leaders will not find an answer.

*What a nightmare.*

### **Alarm Clocks and Snooze Buttons**

*There has always been a part of me that has suspected that I would see the end-of-the-world-as-we-know-it in my lifetime.* There is an inevitability built into the situation. People have known this for a long time.

*The world looked insane to me, but nobody else seemed to notice, so I buried my thoughts, and muddled on. Deep inside, this was tearing me to pieces.*

Daniel Quinn and Derrick Jensen helped me understand the cultural underpinnings of our situation. Like the German people during the Nazi regime, the people of our culture are trapped in stories. *Stories that threaten the community of life itself.* Stories of separation and greatness and inherent human flaws.

Stories about utility, progress, growth and the one right way to live. Stories of power and domination and control

*I was not alone. There were other people looking at the world situation and seeing what I saw: our present system cannot continue on as it is.*

*But the collapse still seemed far away. There was time. There was hope. Somewhere, there were people taking care of it all. So I lived the stories I had learned as a child and tried to ignore the fear.*

*Then I started to work on this documentary.*

*After three years of research it is clear: the situation is dire. It's as though we've awakened to find ourselves on a runaway train.*

## **PART TWO – THE TRAIN AND THE TRACKS**

The culture of Empire works always to distract us. *What happens when we look where the conjurer does not want us to look? Four aspects of our predicament stand out. Let's look more closely at the train, and the tracks, and the terrain through which we're speeding.*

### **Peak Oil**

*At some point, since oil is a finite resource, you can't keep raising production.*

Paul Roberts, *The End of Oil*

I spoke with Richard Heinberg and Paul Roberts, who have both written books on the oil depletion situation. Our use is profligate, and technological advances cannot trump the laws of physics in order to keep up with demand. As Gerald Cecil from UNC-Chapel Hill explains, when supply cannot meet demand, you have a problem.

Jerry Mander explains how the fundamental structures of this present system cannot exist without cheap energy. Heinberg explains how our current economic system will collapse without continuing growth in energy supply. Harvey Harman and Richard Manning point out how agriculture is highly dependent on cheap fuels. And Ray Milosh points out that resource competition will likely result in more war, exploitation and domination.

*Petrochemicals, fossil fuels, have become embedded in our food supply. If we run out of fossil fuel, that strategy will collapse in a heartbeat.*

Richard Manning, *Against the Grain*

*It's a permanent state of affairs. The fuel crisis will be over in a couple of hundred million years when everything has settled down and there's a lot more having been made from all of us having... you know... been squished back under.*

Ray Milosh, Scientist

## Climate Change

*Scientists used to talk about climate change in terms of centuries. Now they're talking about decades. Now they're talking about next year. Now they're talking about now.*

*We're going to run out of air to burn before we run out of fossil fuels to burn.*

Richard Manning, *Against the Grain*

William Schlesinger and Stuart Pimm at Duke University explain the basics. Greenhouse gas buildup has caused an increase in global mean temperatures. Animals and plants are being impacted by this, sometimes to the point of extinction.

Ran Prieur and Douglas Crawford-Brown explain how the increase in CO2 levels is making the ocean more acidic, threatening planktons and corals and disrupting food chains and oxygen production.

Douglas Crawford-Brown and William Schlesinger explain the idea of tipping points and abrupt climate change and the possible shutdown of global ocean currents. And there are a number of self-reinforcing feedback loops now in operation.

*We have a lot of carbon stored in the permafrost, and those permafrosts are starting to defrost and when they defrost that carbon is going to be oxidized to carbon dioxide or brought out as methane...and that will be a dramatic increase in greenhouse gases.*

Douglas Crawford-Brown, Director, Carolina Environmental Program, UNC-Chapel Hill

*This may get out of hand and we'll suddenly be looking at a very rapid warming of the planet.*

Stuart Pimm, Doris Duke Professor of Conservation Ecology, Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences, Duke University

*What if we run into a tipping point where we have this kind of accelerated scenario of climate change? We're gonna get our butts kicked.*

Paul Roberts, *The End of Oil*

Climate change may be out of our control at this point. As Richard Manning points out, *global warming is a really severe punch.*

Is it inevitable? Who will we be in the face of this?

## Mass Extinction

*We have black holes in the ocean. There are no fish in places in the ocean. What's happened to the fish? What's happened?*

Barbara Lorie, Teacher and Activist

*We have to live on the planet. So if we're gonna destroy where we're living then that's gonna be a problem.*

Jack Bennett, Writer

As Manning, Pimm, and Daniel Quinn point out, we are living in a period of extinction that ranks with the great extinctions on this planet, driving species to extinction at a rate 1000 times greater than it should be. It cannot continue indefinitely without the whole ecosystem collapsing.

Civilized humans consume 40% of the planet's productivity on land, a third of the production from the oceans, and half of the available fresh water. Most large fish species have been reduced down to 10% of their previous populations. Ten percent. And in addition to consumption, we are now poisoning every square inch of the planet.

*Trillions of people will live in a biologically impoverished world if we don't stop our human impacts now.*

Stuart Pimm, *The World According to Pimm*

Daniel Quinn compares our situation to a brick building in which we continue to knock bricks out from the walls of the lower floors to build ever higher. He compares the loss of 200 species each day to 200 bricks per day. It seems stable. Right up to the point where it collapses.

### **Population Overshoot**

*We're approaching full-tilt, I think, in terms of what the planet can sustain.*

Stacye Leanza, Artist

William Catton explains how it's possible to exceed carrying capacity, but only temporarily, as that excessive population destroys the systems upon which it depends. As important as the total population is the lifestyle by which that population lives, and the damage that that lifestyle does to the planet. *The Earth supports as great a collective mass of ants as it does people. It can do so because ants aren't building 6000 square foot homes, driving two hours to their jobs, buying plasma TV sets, and killing each other with depleted uranium munitions.*

Catton and Otis Graham explain how we Americans do way more damage to the planet than people in many nations. It cannot be sustained for much longer. There are many ways in which our population could be reduced. Richard Manning explains how humans represent a resource to microbes.

Can we meet this issue with intention and create a softer landing, or will we fly blindly toward catastrophe?

*Humanity's never been in this...this is new. This is new. And this is big. And this is not being talked about.*

Otis Graham, Professor History Emeritus at the University of California, Santa Barbara

*Our global population is going to be reduced.*

William Catton, Jr., Professor Emeritus, Sociology & Human Ecology,  
Washington State University

*What choices do we now have? ... What is inevitable at this point? And what remains to be created, if only we awaken to our power? Most importantly, why have we not already awakened?*

*We can't survive apart from the Earth. And...we're killing it!*

Carla Royal, Beyond Therapy

### **PART THREE – THE LOCOMOTIVE POWER**

There are other issues we could have looked at: a long rolling list of them.

*Thirty six years after the first Earth Day, forty-four years after Silent Spring, the planet is closer now to ecological meltdown than it has ever been. If what we want is to stop the destruction of the life of this planet, then what we have been doing has not been working. We will have to do something else.*

*It's time to look more closely at the culture of Empire.*

#### **How Did We Get Here?**

##### **Ancient Origins:**

It seems it began with the development, approximately 10,000 years ago, of our current form of food production, agriculture both catastrophic and totalitarian in nature. This new style of agriculture fueled new levels of population growth, and led to hard work, poor health and more settlement, which in turn led to wealth and inequity, increased levels of conflict, environmental degradation and the rise of a new form of culture based on cities.

The rise of cities was key. Since cities exceed the carrying capacity of their local environments, the people in them must, by necessity, beg, borrow, buy, steal and/or fight for resources.

##### **Science and Technology:**

*Using the power of technology, we could break through the limits and laws and rules that kept the community of life in balance for millions of years...temporarily.*

That power went to our heads, but it was based on faulty assumptions about the limits of science and the inherent qualities of technologies. The myth of the technofix held us in its sway, and still does, blinding us to the deeper cultural issues that motivate our actions.

**Disconnection:**

The culture of civilization cut us off from the natural world, and our technology cut us off from our own experiences.

*We can build a culture that sits between us and the world, and it mediates our behavior toward the world. It mediates what we do and what we perceive. If you have a spear it becomes a lot easier... you don't have to kill somebody right in front of you. You can kill somebody thirty feet away. And that distance makes it easier to kill.*

Ran Prieur, *Civilization Will Eat Itself*

*If you've been sent into war with a B2 bomber strapped to your back and an array of high-tech sensors at your fingertips, you can kill Iraqis with no more thought or feeling than you might have wasting the Covenant on your X-Box at home.*

This disconnection left us confused and wounded.

*Our relationship with the universe becomes a use relationship. Now that's disastrous. Just like...to say to another being...human..."you used me"...is about as terrible a thing as a person can say. Now the planet Earth is telling us "you used me".*

Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*

**Cultural Stories:**

All cultures are based on stories. Civilization is based on stories of growth and progress and power, stories of ownership and rights and resources.

*We're in a culture of two-year-olds where we just won't look at the limits.*

Sally Erickson, Producer

*Dominion over the Earth in Genesis didn't mean to leave this pillaged and smoking.*

William Schlesinger, Duke University

Daniel Quinn explains the basic stories of Empire, which tell us that civilization is the best culture ever, that it's the one right way to live, and that it's how we were meant to live. The most dangerous story of all, to Quinn, is the one that tells us that humans are superior to all other creatures.

**Expansion and Colonization:**

Ran Prieur recounts *The Parable of the Tribes* (from a book by Andrew Bard Schmookler), which explains how and why a culture based on power and violence can overrun an entire planet.

Daniel Quinn speaks of how we've forgotten that humans once knew how to live on the planet.

*They were living in a way in which humans could live for millions of years. Tens of millions of years. And that's something. Man, now we're saying "how many decades can we have?" And if we go on living this way it's not many.*

Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael*

### **Cultural Blinders:**

Stories can blind us to our own greatness. Not all human cultures have followed the path of civilization and destruction. *Human capacities and characteristics have always been mediated by the larger society. Always.*

Richard Manning speaks of how our strongest instincts are geared to the immediate, to the tiger that could kill you at any moment. *And yet the Haudenosaunee evolved a culture that balanced those strong instincts. They make decisions based on their impact on the seventh generation.*

As Paul Roberts explains, Empire is rarely able to recognize a limit coming from even thirty years out. So climate change and oil depletion go unnoticed.

When living in a culture that cannot look long term, processes such as exponential growth, population dynamics and unintended consequences are all difficult to see.

### **What Keeps Us Trapped Here?**

*It isn't working out the way we've been taught to think it will. Why do we keep destroying the planet? Even now, when the evidence that we are doing so is overwhelming?*

### **Systems and Structures:**

*We're trapped in an economy that must grow or die. And of course this is an absurdity because we have physical limits.*

*We're assaulted by corporately controlled media that keep us delusional. We're misled by TV and the glorified images that betray the lies of our lives.*

*There's a great line by Zygmunt Bauman. He says that rational people will go quietly and meekly into a gas chamber if only you allow them to believe it's a bathroom.*

Derrick Jensen, *Endgame*

*And I've lost all hope that my government is capable of looking clearly at the situation.*

*Much of our educational system leaves us totally unprepared to question the dominant culture. We need to turn people into machine parts.*

*Questions are not encouraged.*

*If your experience is that your food comes from the grocery store and that your water comes from a tap, you will defend to the death the system that brings those to you because your life depends on it. If your experience is that your water comes from a stream and that your food comes from a landbase, you will defend to the death that stream and that landbase because your life depends on it.*

Derrick Jensen, *The Culture of Make Believe*

Who would create such systems?

**Disconnection and Delusion:**

*We've gotten lost in a hall of mirrors. Everything we see, hear, taste, touch and smell comes from humans and machines. That gives us an inflated sense of self and a warped sense of reality.*

We've begun to lose our sanity in the solitary confinement of cities and civilization. We end up believing that humans are superior. Out of that sense of superiority, Empire has conquered the world. But that conquering has wounded the conquerors themselves.

*If you look at the people who have been assimilated into Empire, and if you look at the Imperialists themselves, you find an incredible dissociation from reality.*

*Chellis Glendinning, **My Name is Chellis and I'm in Recovery from Western Civilization***

Dissociated from the natural world, we do not defend it. As Richard Manning explains, we've caged ourselves in cities, and like any animal in a cage, we've become psychotic.

The disconnection is everywhere. In the crib. In the television. In our lack of community. In our social settings. *Our economy thrives on this. The stores are filled with bandages for the wounds of Empire.*

**Abuse and Addiction:**

Derrick Jensen considers the dominant culture an abusive system which leaves its members suffering from complex post-traumatic stress disorder.

*Everything within an abusive family structure is set up to protect the abuser. Everything. And by the same token, everything within this culture is set up to protect the rich. That's what this culture is about.*

*Derrick Jensen, **A Language Older Than Words***

We identify with this system, at the expense of our own lives, and the life of the planet. *Over the years I've begun to break my own identification with the dominant culture.*

We can also view the culture through the lens of addiction. Our deepest needs never get satisfied, but we stay trapped in an endless search to meet those deep needs in the only ways this culture allows. After centuries of this, it looks like we want to hit bottom, simply to end the nightmare.

**The Response So Far:**

Lost in denial, trying to hit bottom, we fail to see the cause of our pain, or the fact that this culture is killing everything. We fantasize about Somehow, with no clear idea how to get from here to there. Our voices of helplessness and

resignation fill the night sky. We don't know what to do. It's going to take a catastrophe. *There's no way to stop the train. Fuck it. Might as well go out and party.*

*With resignation this profound, it seems as though there is little left to do but to make the prison as comfortable as is possible.*

*It all adds up to this: this culture is not only killing the planet, it is destroying us as human beings.*

*The train plunges forward at blinding speed. Charlie stole the handle. So who are we going to be?*

#### **PART FOUR - WALKABOUT**

***"If we don't change our direction, we are likely to wind up where we are headed."***

**Chinese Proverb**

The people of Empire have no clear idea where we are, and no clear vision of where we want to go. *Born and raised in captivity, we're now so institutionalized that few of us can even see the prison bars. But we all know our cell numbers.*

Daniel Quinn reveals the Secret Plan: this culture will not stop until it destroys everything. And as Richard Heinberg points out, we have been so infantilized by civilization that we can no longer survive without it.

***"One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly."***

**Woody Allen**

*The American lifestyle is unsustainable. That means that it can't be sustained. It's coming to an end.*

Science, as Thomas Berry points out, gave us the power to run the universe, but not the wisdom. We've forgotten that we're part of the living community, says Quinn.

*If we don't figure out what our place in the universe is, we're not going to have a place in the universe.*

**Kevin Mayer, Artist**

***"I didn't say it would be easy. I just said it would be the truth."***

**Morpheus, The Matrix**

Those who write about the world situation feel compelled to add a Happy Chapter at the end. But I can't do that. I have *no list of quick and painless fixes, no plan that will keep the train rolling forever on this track. I see no way for that to happen. If there is going to be a happy chapter, we shall have to write it together, with the rest of the community of life, on the pages of the living world.*

Otis Graham dreams of his grandchildren blaming him for this mess.

*I think they're going to look back and shake their heads and say: "What happened to those people? How did they lose sight of such basic things?"*

Sally Erickson, Producer

***"The time of the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves!...We are the ones we've been waiting for.***

**An unnamed Hopi Elder, Hope Nation, Oraibi, Arizona**

*There is a new story arising in the world: the story of The Great Turning, a turning away from a culture of domination and death, and a turning toward a culture that is life-sustaining and life-renewing.*

*We get to choose. Who are we going to be?*

*I don't think life for most Americans, despite our affluence, is all that it's been cracked up to be. And people are afraid to talk about that. They're afraid they're the only ones who are experiencing deep dissatisfaction.*

Sally Erickson, Producer

***"Be bold, and mighty forces will come to your aid."***

**Basil King**

*Is this who we are? Are we destroying the planet, as Dmitry Orlov asks, just to be somewhat more comfortable for a little while?*

*I think we are much more than we've ever been allowed to believe.*

*What does a life well-lived look like?*

Harvey Harman, Sustainable Designer

*As all of this starts to shift and change and disintegrate and collapse there's the opportunity, in fact, to come back to ourselves. To grow up, fundamentally, as people and as a culture.*

Richard Heinberg, *The Party's Over*

*We're in a time of initiation, folks. We can do this, but only if we choose to. Only if we lay down our weapons in this insane war against the world. Only if we surrender control, and move back into relationship.*

*We can have unlimited growth. Growth in relationship. In self-awareness and spirit and love and community and connection. All of life is on our side.*

*Is civilization what we want?*

*What does it mean to dismantle civilization? What it means is depriving the rich of the ability to steal from the poor and to destroy the world. I can't give a better definition than that.*

Derrick Jensen, *Endgame*

*There's no real reason why the entire country of the United States couldn't face reality. You just have to drop the idea of capitalism. You have to drop the idea of corporations running things. You have to drop the idea of economic growth. It could be done.*

Jerry Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred*

*There was a great tradition among the Cheyenne dog soldiers... They would get a tanned rope, called a dog rope...and a picket pin that's used to stake horses to the ground. They would attach the picket pin to the sash, the dog rope, that was attached to them. And then in battle they would drive the picket stake into the ground. And that was done as a mark of resolve. Because once it's driven, you can't leave until either you're dead or you're relieved by another dog soldier or the battle's over and everyone is safe. So the question I ask people is...where will you drive your picket pin? Where will you stake yourself out and say I'm not going to retreat any more?*

Derrick Jensen, *Endgame*

***"And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom."***

Anais Nin

*It's time to be thoughtful and learn what's going on. A paradigm shift will require that we question our deepest and most fundamental assumptions. And that will require that we take our current worldview gently in our arms and hold it while it breathes its last.*

*It's time to be truthful: the dominant culture is destroying us. What would happen if we let ourselves feel our feelings about all of this?*

*Our feelings are the swiftest path back to our forgotten selves.*

*It's time to surrender to the fact that we cannot solve this on our own. It's time to ask for help, to listen to the wisdom of the land, and the community of life itself, and then speak our truths in our own lives.*

*It's time to act with great intention. There is much work to do to re-localize, power down, scale back, and heal both ourselves and the land. Find your work and do it. But what about that speeding train? Do we wait for it to crash, and hope that it doesn't kill everything? Or is it possible to stop that train before it hits the end of the line?*

*We humans once knew how to live on this planet. A few still do. And that's the good news. It can be done. We can do way, way better than Empire.*

*"One does not discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time."*

**Andre Gide**

*Let's jump off the train and build a boat ... a lifeboat, an ark, a galleon of adventure and imagination destined for unknown lands. Build it now. The ice is melting. The waters are rising. We're going to have to let go of the shore.*

I don't know if I'll survive the crash of civilization. What I do know is that I have a choice in how I meet it. I'm going to show up in the world, and tell my truth. And I'd love it if you would join me.

*Together, we will set forth, to find that new land.*

*What a way to go.*

**END CREDITS**

[www.whatawaytogomovie.com](http://www.whatawaytogomovie.com)

# WHAT A WAY TO GO

## LIFE AT THE END OF EMPIRE

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a feature documentary  
by TSBennett and Sally Erickson

### ■ Who's Who?

**Fr. Thomas Berry, PhD**

Historian and Geologist

Author of *The Dream of the Earth* and *The Great Work*

**William Catton, Jr. PhD**

Professor Emeritus, Sociology & Human Ecology, Washington State University

Author of *Overshoot: The Ecological Basis of Revolutionary Change*

**Gerald Cecil, PhD**

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**Douglas Crawford-Brown, PhD**

Director Carolina Environmental Program, University of North Carolina at  
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Author of *Mathematical Methods of Environmental Risk Modeling*

**Sally Erickson, M.Ed.**

Producer, What a Way to Go

**Lyle Estill**

Vice President of Staff for Piedmont Biofuels, Pittsboro NC

Author of *Biodiesel Power*

**Chellis Glendinning, PhD**

Psychologist and Activist

Author of *My Name is Chellis and I'm in Recovery from Western Civilization*  
and

*Off the Map: An Expedition Deep into Empire and the Global Economy*

**Otis Graham, PhD**

Professor History Emeritus at the University of California, Santa Barbara

Author of *Unguarded Gates: A History of America's Immigration Crisis*

**Harvey Harman**

Sustainable Designer/Developer at Walk Softly LLC and Earth Renewal Shelter

**Richard Heinberg**

Core Faculty member of New College of California  
 Author of *The Party's Over: Oil, War, and the Fate of Industrial Societies*,  
*Powerdown: Options and Actions for a Post-Carbon World* and  
*The Oil Depletion Protocol: A Plan to Avert Oil Wars, Terrorism, and Economic  
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**Derrick Jensen**

Environmental Activist and Author of *A Language Older Than Words*,  
*The Culture of Make Believe*,  
*Endgame, Volume 1: The Problem of Civilization* and  
*Endgame, Volume 2: Resistance*

**Jerry Mander**

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 Author of *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* and  
*In the Absence of the Sacred: The Failure of Technology and the Survival of the  
 Indian Nations*

**Richard Manning**

Journalist and Author of *Grassland: The History, Biology, Politics, and Promise  
 of the American Prairie* and  
*Against the Grain: How Agriculture has Hijacked Civilization*

**Stuart Pimm, PhD**

Doris Duke Professor of Conservation Ecology, Nicholas School of the  
 Environment and Earth Sciences, Duke University  
 Author of *The World According to Pimm: A Scientist Audits the Earth*

**Ran Prieur**

Writer and Blogger @ [www.ranprieur.com](http://www.ranprieur.com)  
 Author of *Apocalypsopolis* (uncompleted novel), and  
*Civilization Will Eat Itself* (zine)

**Daniel Quinn**

Author of many books including *Ishmael*,  
*The Story of B* and  
*The Tales of Adam*

**Paul Roberts**

Journalist and Author of *The End of Oil: On the Edge of a Perilous New World*

**William Schlesinger, PhD**

James B. Duke Professor of Biogeochemistry  
 Dean, Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences, Duke University

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### ■ The Filmmakers

**Timothy S. Bennett, Writer/Director** is an artist and filmmaker who has lived in North Carolina for nearly two decades. Born and raised in rural Michigan, he began his inquiry into environmental and cultural issues in the late 80s. His academic background is in anthropology, religion, education and film. He is the father of three grown children.

*What A Way To Go* is his first feature-length documentary. His talent for "big-picture thinking," along with his ability to see through the taboos, denials, and orthodoxies of the dominant culture, combined with his poetic writing style, makes for a documentary experience that is both compelling and informative.

In addition to writing and directing *What a Way to Go*, he edits an email distribution list of current articles and commentary on the state of the environment, resource™ depletion, global politics and the economy, and cultural insanity.

**Sally Erickson, Producer** is an artist, psychotherapist, community organizer, and organizational consultant. She was born in Washington State where she developed a love of, and commitment to, the natural world. Experiences during the last five years of wilderness vision-questing have deepened that commitment. She has lived in rural North Carolina since 1979. Sally is the mother of two grown children. She brings maturity, insight, organizational development expertise and inspiration to *What a Way to Go*.

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### ■ VisionQuest Pictures Company Profile

VisionQuest Pictures is a partnership owned by Timothy S. Bennett and Sally Erickson. It was formed in 2003 to produce documentaries on the most critical environmental, political, and social dilemmas of our time.

*What a Way to Go: Life at the End of Empire* is their first feature-length documentary production. It was funded largely out-of-pocket, aided by local community-based fundraising events. This is a venture that walks its talk, fueled with great intention, artistic vision and urgent integrity.

VisionQuest Pictures is located in (still mostly...for now...) rural Chatham County, North Carolina.

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