

DECEMBER, 2006 A.D. by Mari Sandoz, 23 Barrow Street, New York 14, N.Y.
[prepared in 1956 for KETV of Omaha's time capsule that was placed in the
cornerstone of their new building and to be opened and read in 2006]

As I look out over America on the dying end of the year 2006 A.D. I see vast semi-urban regions expanding rapidly along all the old thoroughfares of our country, particularly along the great streams. Here, where only fifty years ago Omaha stood alone, the city has now become the core of one of these newer, far-dispersed industro-residential regions. Its outlying districts have pushed westward to the Platte and up it far beyond the Forks, as earlier the city spread up and down the Missouri. Like the other great rivers of the nation, the Missouri is now one long park area, a clear and constant stream flowing between smooth green banks, their manicured neatness bred into the very grass, their landscaping of shrubs and trees tasteful and changed to fit the season. On both sides of the great park lie the overlapping urban communities that reach pleasantly along the bluffs southward to the clear fine roll of the Mississippi and northward to Sioux City and far, far beyond.

Of course there are occasional restorations along all the great rivers -- selected stretches restored to show how the streams looked to the first white men to reach their wild and sometimes gracious banks.

With the vast increase in population, particularly semi-urban, the problem of long range travel had to be solved, made swift and made safe. By the dawn of 2007 this has been well started, with the fatalities held down to not over one for every ten million passengers carried in the transcontinental high speed tubes. Already passengers from either coast can reach Omaha in less than an hour. Soon the inter-continental tubes will be carrying passengers to Europe and to the blossoming regions of the new Asia with the same dispatch.

There is, of course, still much surface travel through the scattered industrial regions and the intensely cultivated country-side, but in vehicles carrying their own "antagonism fields" that make collision impossible. The incredibly clumsy airplanes of late 1956 have been replaced by automatically sustained craft speeding along controlled air lanes -- craft that cannot fall, and must literally be taken down to reach the ground at all.

Through the unlimited power wrung from the heart of the atom the last fifty years, and from the increased harnessing of cosmic forces, all drouths except the man-made will soon be past. Every water table is within easy reach of our pumps, and a cheap and rapid method of desalting sea water was developed long before 1980. In addition, man has discovered the secret that many small creatures of desert regions have carried within themselves for eons -- the ability to convert the fat of their bodies to water. Now that 2007 is upon us man is at last producing water from many waste products, and soon he, like a new Moses, will be able to produce water from the rock.

Of course most of man's heavy burden of physical labor is being done for him by complex machines watched over by even more complex machines, as was inevitable from the time that one of our fore-bearers learned to extend his arm by a thrown rock. These machines have penetrated to most of the remote regions and soon almost everything that the world can produce will be available to everyone everywhere. There are, however, growing controls upon us that were inconceivable back in 1956. The over-fed population of our country fifty years ago could not be tolerated into the year 2006, not with the burgeoning population of the world clamoring for food, or with the growing realization that man owes his society not only a healthy

body and mind but that he is obligated to preserve both attributes to the age of at least 100 years, within ordinary circumstances. Most circumstances once exceptional have become ordinary, now that cancer and most heart ailments have yielded as polio and tuberculosis and hundreds of other diseases have virtually disappeared long ago. In these great advances education has had an important part. With educational opportunity limited only to the individual's capacities and desires, the society has come to look upon the shirker in schooling as the prominent gangster once was -- as public enemy number one.

The period from roughly 1856 to 1956 has come to be called the Century of Matter, the era of man's expanding understanding and command of his physical world. We, at the end of the year 2006, are in the middle of the Century of the Mind. We have seen the application of man's control over matter during the last fifty years and, much more important, man's advance into the great uncharted and even unsuspected reaches of the mind. In 1956 it was commonly understood that man from conception to birth repeated, by a sort of physical memory, all the large definitive stages of his physical development, from the unicellular creature floating in the sea to the matured human infant. Long before 1956 there were glimmerings of a sort of mental and emotional memory of certain stages of man's development as a thinking being, a consciously cooperating member of a group -- stages perhaps as fixed in the inherited mental pattern as those of his physical pattern. Many thought that these stages of man's mental and emotional existence had left their symbols in the mind as surely as the gill slit and the rudimentary tail of man are the symbols of his long physical sojourn in the sea and in the trees. Long before the opening of the year 2007 it was known that the newborn infant speaks a language he must forget, and that the adult in religious trance or in schizophrenia speaks a gibberish now recognized as from the rudimentary languages of a long forgotten time to which the individual retreats when pressures of reality become too great for his emotional immaturity. Unthinking acceptance or rejection of thing or idea, vulnerability to prejudice and superstition, mob reaction, the sudden plunge into unreason and violence, these are understood a little more clearly through the study of these deep and still not totally identified, or suspected symbols in the human mind.

Slowly but surely, by great medical advance and by the newer explorations into this deepening symbolism the beds of our mental hospitals are being emptied. Yet it is perhaps art, more than any other aspect of our culture, that has really profited from these new explorations. In their true expression the arts have always been rooted in the symbols common to the mind of man no matter what his degree of culture. Now, in the century of the Mind, the arts have taken on new importance, new meaning that promises very much for the future.

But perhaps the greatest advance of the last fifty years has been in the field of international relations. Although this advance has come largely through our increased understanding of what was once called unreasoning mass behavior, it was not unaided by the findings of the bygone Century of Matter. In the past, man's wars have been over monopolies; over, say, hunting regions or pasturages, fisheries, trade areas and routes, gold, oil or whatever monopoly meant greatest power at the time. By 1956 we had already entered the era of a power that could not be monopolized, the absolute power stored within the atom. Fortunately there were a few men who realized this absolute power as potentially absolute destruction. With their unflinching resistance to those who would grasp at the last vanishing control of the old monopolistic era, they gave man the time to see that at last he had stumbled upon an ultimate and universal force, one which, by its very universality, instead of dividing man, drew him together into what he has always been in the eyes of the sages -- one great whole.