**Walls & Barriers**

**A humpback whale releases air bubbles as it swims around a school of herring. The bubbles make a sort of corral fence, because the herring don't try to swim through them. The whale dives and comes up in the middle. With a mouthful. (L. M. Boyd)**

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**The Berlin Wall, erected in 1961 to stop emigration from communist East Germany, cracked November 9, 1989, when the country, again facing a mass exodus – this time through its newly democratized Eastern Bloc neighbors – allowed two-way travel between East and West Berlin. Thousands crossed within hours, and souvenir hunters soon reduced the wall to rubble. Germany reunited the following October. *(Alison McLean, in Smithsonian magazine)***

**On August 13, 1961, construction began on the Berlin Wall. East Germany built the barrier to prevent a "brain drain" of educated young people to the west. The wall stood as a symbol of oppression until November 1989. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

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**President Trump wants the border wall painted black, at an additional cost of at least $500 million. Military commanders and border officials have opposed painting the new steel bollards, calling it an unnecessary expense and a future maintenance problem. But Trump believes a black paint job will make the steel more forbidding and too hot to touch. *(The Washington Post, as it appeared in The Week magazine, May 22, 2020)***

**Only about 650 miles of the 2,000-mile-long Mexican border are now fenced. But to build a longer border fence or wall, the federal government would have to buy or condemn about 4,900 parcels of land -- a process that could lead to years or even decades of court battles. A 2006 federal attempt to condemn 300 border parcels still has 85 cases unsettled. *(USA Today, as it appeared in The Week magazine, October 13, 2017)***

**The U.S. Border Patrol’s budget has doubled from roughly $800 million in 1998 to almost $1.6 billion today. Over the same period, the number of illegal immigrants in the U.S. has tripled, from some 4 million to an estimated 12 million. *(The Wall Street Journal, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 2, 2006)***

**In 525 B.C., the Persians whipped the Egyptian army when a Persian officer lined up a row of cats in front of his troops. The Egyptians thought the cats were sacred and wouldn’t fire any arrow. But the Persians would, and killed just about everything in front of them except the cats. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Don't ever take a fence down until you know why it was put up. *(Robert Frost and/or G. K. Chesterton)***

**There is enough stone in the Great Wall of China to build an eight-foot wall around the earth at the equator. *(James Meyers, in Mammoth Book of Trivia, p. 260)***

**A 3-mile stretch of new border wall in Texas is in danger of collapsing into the Rio Grande because of erosion. President Trump now says this portion of the wall was "only done to make me look bad," but he lobbied for the builder Fisher Sand & Gravel, to get a $1.7 billion federal wall-building contract. *(The Washington Post, as it appeared in The Week magazine, July 31, 2020)***

**The fact is that walls are walls – solid, impervious, hard concrete. But the truth, even the scientific truth, is that walls are nothing mostly, mainly empty space. Walls are made up of particles – the scientists tell us – and those particles are almost as far apart relatively as are the planets. Walls are merely energy dancing on emptiness, more full of perpetual motion than the waves and winds of the sea. *(James Dillet Freeman, in Unity magazine)***

**After watching the Olympic track and field events, one wonders why the four-minute mile used to be considered an unattainable feat. Roger Bannister, the man who ran the first one back in the ‘50s, succeeded where an untold number of that century’s runners had failed. He explained that the barrier for runners was psychological, not physical, and that runners of that time had failed to set their sights high enough. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Don't ever take a fence down until you know why it was put up. *(Robert Frost)***

**President Trump's planned border wall will require hundreds of gates that must be kept open for months every summer to prevent flash floods from damaging or knocking it over, U.S. border officials have admitted. Last week, a section of wall erected to replace an older barrier in California blew over in high winds, landing in trees on the Mexican side. *(The Washington Post, as it appeared in The Week magazine, February 14, 2020)***

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**One cannot say how many invaders were blocked by the Great Wall. Except for brief periods, China was subject to continual barbarian invasions from the north, and was conquered repeatedly. Today, crumbling in many of its parts, the Wall is a useless, if still awesomely impressive, hulk. Like all barriers that nations raise to keep other people out, and their own people in, it failed. *(Lowell Thomas, in Reader’s Digest)***

**The Great Wall of China – 2,500 miles long, stretching over more than one-twentieth of the Earth’s circumference – was the longest continuous construction project in history. It was built over a period of 1,700 years; enough stone was used to build an eight-foot wall girdling the globe at the equator. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts. P. 318)***

**The Great Wall of China looks impenetrable in places, but "I've always found the crumbling remnants to be most compelling," said Will Ford in The Washington Post. For the past nine years, I've been hiking on and off with a group of middle-aged Chinese adventurers who call themselves the Freedom Team, and we spend most of our time roaming backcountry ridges where the authority of the state feels "far away, almost insignificant." In and around Beijing, the mountains are so dense with shrubbery that a trail with a view is "a rare find" -- except atop the wall. On a recent weekend, we clambered up near Beijing Jie, a fork in the bulwark. Our freedom feels greatest at places where the wall has crumbled. In the tourist-crowded sections, the wall has been so carefully refurbished that it resembles Disney World, complete with tickets. But the wall spans thousands of miles, and much of it has been untouched since the 14th- to 17th-century Ming dynasty. Even at the crumbling sections, signs prohibiting hiking are everywhere, though no one heeds such warnings. Villagers have built ladders up the sides and over dangerous drop-offs, and sometimes charge entrance fees. The Freedom Team refused to pay them. We walk about a half-hour on the wall before reaching the Beijing Jie, then stop for lunch. In front of us, the wall "slithers over ridges like a snake, clinging to exposed rock, until it fades away in the distance." Pink blossoms "faintly coat the valleys" below us, and gusts of wind "scour the mountainside." The air feels drier and dustier than it did in the past, probably because the nearby Gobi Desert is expanding, but that won't keep us from returning. Even as the number of Beijing hikers grows, we remain largely outliers in China because the thinking about hiking is that it's "a kind of countryside hardship that people in the modern world were supposed to have escaped." The Freedom team has other ideas. *(The Week magazine, March 27, 2015)***

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**Economists at Stanford University and the University of Chicago estimate that, between 1960 and 2008, 15 to 20 percent of the growth in U.S. productivity came from removing the barriers blocking white women and blacks of both genders in the workforce. *(The Wall Street Journal, as it appeared in The Week magazine, April 12, 2013)***

**When Harvard College was founded in 1636 it was surrounded by a tall stockade to keep out prowling wolves and hostile Indians. *(David Louis, in Fascinating Facts, p. 36)***

**If Trump really wanted a wall, said Noah Rothman in NBCNews.com, he could have had $25 billion to build one last year. But he rejected a bipartisan compromise plan that would have provided major wall funding in exchange for legal status for the 1.8 million "Dreamers." Trump killed that deal when immigration hard-liners objected to it. For two years, Trump and the Republicans who controlled Congress had multiple chances to fund a wall, but "they declined on every occasion." That tells you everything you need to know about the need for "Trump's signature policy proposal." *(The Week magazine, January 25, 2019)***

**The real question is whether a wall would really work, said Jacob Soboroff and Julia Ainsley, in NBCNews.com. Trump has settled on a design that features 40-foot-high, sharp-pointed steel slabs that he deemed "very, very hard to penetrate." But when the Department of Homeland Security tested a prototype of this kind of fence in 2017, it found that the slats could be quickly cut through with a hand-held metal-cutting saw. Smugglers are already using sledgehammers, saws, ladders and other tools to get past existing barriers. All barriers are "mere temporary inconveniences" to anyone truly determined to enter our country, said Kristine Phillips in The Washington Post. The Border Patrol has found hundreds of tunnels -- some a half-mile long -- dug under existing fences to smuggle in people and contraband. So why spend another $5.7 billion for the illusion of border security? *(The Week magazine, January 25, 2019)***

**Did the colonists really mount a massive chain across the Hudson River during the American Revolution? The required engineering skill and smithing manpower would seem beyond them. (Jono Mainelli, New York City) They really did. In 1778, the colonists, who then produced 14 percent of the world's iron, forged the Great Chain to prevent a Royal Navy invasion upriver, says David Miller III, associate curator of the National Museum of American History. The chain consisted of 750 links, each two feet long and weighing more than 100 pounds. Soldiers stretched the iron barrier, supported by log rafts, across the river at West Point. They removed it in winter, to keep it from being broken up by river ice, and replaced it in spring throughout the war. *(Katie Nodjimbadem, in Smithsonian magazine)***

**You can't wall off the islands: The Greek government is erecting floating barriers to try to prevent boatloads of migrants from landing on our shores, said Vivian Efthimiopoulou. The first installment is a 2-mile-long, 2-foot-high fence lined with flashing lights that bobs in the waters near the Aegean island of Lesbos. It won't work, of course, The gesture "recalls the Persian emperor Xerxes I," who built pontoon bridges across the Dardanelles for his army to invade Greece, and when a storm swept them away ordered the impudent sea to be lashed 300 times. So the question is whether the floating fence will accomplish its true purpose: to "reassure the public" that the government is doing something about the migrant crisis and that "there's no reason to rise up" in protest. Greeks are understandably upset over the flood of refugees. Some 75,000 people arrived on our shores last year, most of them from the Middle East and Central Asia. That's almost 50 percent more than in 2018, and camps on the Aegean islands are overcrowded and overwhelmed. The floating fence might temporarily ease public anger over migration, but the government must use this time to "speed up asylum procedures, organize quick returns for those whose applications are rejected, and create humane conditions at the hot spots." This isn't a PR issue. Human lives are at stake. *(The Week magazine, February 14, 2020)***

**Like most large cities in the ancient world, Jerusalem was a walled city with gateways that could be closed at night or at times of war for protection. Since the gates of a city were the only way in or out of the city, the large doors of the gateway, which were made of metal and wood (Ps. 107:16; Isaiah 45:2) were secured at night with iron or wooden cross bars (1 Kings 4:13; Nahum 3:13) for the protection of the inhabitants. The main gate of each city was large enough for the entry of chariots and carts. It was carefully designed and built to deter the entrance of enemy soldiers, as this was the most vulnerable place in the walls of a city. The gates were often flanked by towers (2 Samuel 18:24, 33) on which watchmen stood, day and night. We are called to be watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem to pray for this city to become a praise in the earth (Isaiah 62:6-7). *(Clarence H. Wagner, Jr., in 365Fascinating Facts about the Holy Land, p. 155)***

**Keeping Out Refugees: A Munich neighborhood has sparked outrage across Europe by building a 12-foot stone wall to separate a new refugee center from the local population. Neuperlach residents who campaigned for the wall -- which is slightly taller than the Berlin Wall was -- said the value of their homes would plummet if there were no barrier between their properties and the 160 unaccompanied young migrants who will live in the center., "Donald Trump wants to build a wall for Mexico," one couple told local media, "and we in Munich Neuperlach build one to keep us safe from refugees." Officials, however, insisted they were not trying to keep out the youngsters. "This is not a wall against refugees," said city councilor Thomas Kauer. "It is a soundproofing measure so they can play." *(The Week magazine, November 18, 2016)***

**The front between North and South Korea is the most fortified international border on earth. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**L.A. ‘Wall’: The Los Angeles County government recently financed a $160,000 concrete wall, 300 feet long and 10 feet high, around Lindbergh Junior High School, just to prevent stray bullets from entering the schoolyard. The school is next to a housing project noted for violence. *(Rocky Mountain News, January 27, 1989)***

**To build a wall at the Mexican border, the federal government would need to buy or condemn thousands of pieces of private property. A 2006 attempt to build a 700-mile-long fence at the border bogged down over 120 lawsuits by landowners that are still in the courts. *(The Wall Street Journal, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 3, 2017)***

**We start the year with a government shut down over a wall -- a wall that is somehow supposed to protect us from the dangers of rapists and murderers, foreign laborers, and Central American children seeking asylum. The reality is that the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States has been falling for a decade. Many of those would be documented, were it not for the careless discarding of a painstaking, bipartisan immigration compromise after "amnesty" became a dirty word in the immigration debate. Meanwhile, in March, 2018, the total backlog of asylum cases stood at about 318,000. With a current U.S. population of 325 million, that means there is one person seeking asylum for every 1,000 residents. The U.S. has been processing the backlog slowly, it's true, deciding on about 40,000 asylum cases each year, with less than half of applicants getting permission to stay. Yes, there are more applicants now, but no matter how you count them, it's not exactly a deluge. Yet none of those facts matters, because we seem to live now in a state of perpetual fear. At this point, everybody understands that the wall is a metaphor. It says Keep out, of course. But it also says, somehow with no shame, that we are afraid. Where once fear was something we strove to overcome -- remember "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself"? -- it is now something many Americans embrace. We are a nation on lockdown, rushing to close the doors to every room and nail shut the entrances to the building. Our children practice lockdown drills in school every month. Yet all the indications are that the biggest dangers do not come from outside. It's just the beginning of the year, and it's an inauspicious start, reminiscent of the scene in every horror movie where the protagonist bars all the doors, turns around, and finds the monster staring right back at him. *(Mark Gimein, in The Week magazine, January 11, 2019)***

**A brick wall and a plate-glass window are made from the same principal ingredient: sand! *(Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 85)***

**You know that original wooden fence strengthened into an earthen wall that ran parallel to what is now New York City’s Wall Street? It was supposed to keep livestock and Indians out. But it didn’t. It never kept anything in or out. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**There is no wall that divides the human soul between its best impulses and its worst. *(Don Winslow, author)***

**Although a wall looks real, solid to sight and feel, a wall is not a wall, is not a wall at all, but particles as far apart as star from star, that whirl from place to place without traversing space. Sometimes I wonder what is what and what is not. Are all the walls that bind Me, only in my mind? *(James Dillet Freeman)***

**In defense of office walls: "Google got it wrong," said Lindsey Kaufman. "Workplaces need more walls, not fewer." Silicon Valley has led the way in "bringing down the dividers," eschewing cubicles and private offices for shared desks and open floor plans. Today, "70 percent of U.S. offices have no or low partitions." Bosses love these setups, because they "maximize a company's space while minimizing costs" and give managers "the ability to keep a closer eye on their employees." Workers interact more, too. But increased camaraderie often gives employers "a false sense of improved productivity." A 2013 study found nearly half of workers in open offices complained that the lack of sound or visual privacy hurt their performance. Other research suggests open office settings "damage workers' attention spans, productivity, creative thinking, and satisfaction." Last year, when the New York City ad agency I work for moved us from private offices to long, shared tables, I "formed interesting, unexpected bonds with my cohorts." But my personal performance "hit an all-time low," because of the incessant distractions and noise. If companies want the open office concept to work, they need to create more privacy areas. What they lose in floor space, they'll gain in efficiency. *(The Week magazine, January 16, 2015)***

**The federal government has obtained only 16 percent of the private land in south Texas that would be required to complete the 500 miles of new border fencing that President Trump promised to complete by 2020. Many landowners do not plan to sell and may take the government to court if it tries to seize the land. *(The Washington Post, as it appeared in The Week magazine, November 8, 2019)***

**Border fence problems: The 600-mile-long fence being built along the U.S.-Mexico border is seven years behind schedule, millions of dollars over budget, and will cost taxpayers $6.5 billion to maintain during the next 20 years, government auditors report. The Government Accountability Office also noted that the infrared cameras used in the virtual part of the fence fail repeatedly, especially in sandstorms or bad weather. The fence was supposed to be completed this year, but won’t be finished until 2016. The GAO said there have been more than 3,000 breaches in completed portions of the fence, which cost about $1,300 each to repair. Border crossers have learned to cut through the fence with tools, climb over it with ladders, or use vehicles to smash through it. *(The Week magazine, October 2, 2009)***

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**If you took all the stones from the huge pyramid of Cheops in Egypt, you could build a ten-foot-high wall around France. *(Paul Stirling Hagerman, in It’s a Weird World, p. 118)***

**The pyramids in Egypt contain enough stone and mortar to construct a wall 10 feet high and 5 feet wide running from New York City to Los Angeles. *(David Louis, in Fascinating Facts, p. 16)***

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**Razor wire laid by U.S. troops along the southern border is being stolen. The wire, laid as part of President Trump's campaign to ward off asylum seekers, is being stolen by thieves who are selling it for about $2 to homeowners in Tijuana, who are using it to add security to their homes. One customer said her wire supplier was blond, blue-eyed, and "did not speak very good Spanish." *(The Week magazine, April 5, 2019)***

**The real price of Trump's wall: Now we see the "collateral damage" of President Trump's obsession with building a border wall, said The Washington Post in an editorial. Trump is seizing $3.6 billion in congressionally approved military construction funds to build 450 miles of wall in defiance of Congress, using the dubious national emergency he declared at the southern border as legal justification. That includes hundreds of millions of dollars allotted to build and renovate schools for children on American military bases. "Sorry, kids: Mr. Trump wants his wall -- the one it turns out Mexico is not paying for." Planned improvements at the U.S. Military Academy's engineering center have also been scrapped. All told, 127 projects have been effectively defunded in nearly half the states. America's overseas territories and bases have been hit the hardest. Puerto Rico will lose $400 million earmarked for five hurricane repair projects. "More than $700 million was scratched from sites in Europe, mainly for projects designed to protect the continent from Russian aggression." So far, most Republican lawmakers have sheepishly accepted the president's blatant power grab. This sets a terrible precedent. Someday, a Democratic president will seize defense funds or farm subsidies for his or her own pet projects*. (The Week magazine, September 20, 2019)***

**On December 13, 1964, American President Lyndon Johnson and Mexican President Gustavo Diaz Ordaz reshaped the United States-Mexican border in El Paso by setting off an explosion that redirected the course of the Rio Grande River. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

**Ronstadt's life on the border: Linda Ronstadt is a child of the borderlands, said Michael Schulman in The New Yorker. The Rock & Roll Hall of Famer was raised in Tucson, just north of the U.S. border with Mexico. Her grandfather was a Mexican bandleader, and Ronstadt's parents had friends on both sides of the border. In her childhood, Mexicans and Americans would cross freely back and forth to eat and shop and go to each other's weddings, baptisms, and parties. She's horrified by the region's militarization. "I feel filled with impotent rage," says Ronstadt. "I grew up in the Sonoran Desert, and the Sonoran Desert is on both sides of the border. "There's a fence that runs through it now, but it's still the same culture. The same food, the same clothes, the same traditional life of ranching and farming." Ronstadt, who now lives in San Francisco, had to give up singing a decade ago because of a debilitating form of Parkinson's disease. When she was still able, she worked with the Samaritans, supplying food and water to migrants crossing the border. "You meet some guy stumbling through the desert trying to cross, and he's dehydrated, his feet are full of thorns, cactus," she says. "Then you see this Minute Man sitting with his cooler, with all of his water and food and beer, and his automatic weapon sitting on his lap, wearing full camouflage. It's so cruel." *(The Week magazine, September 20, 2019)***

**The same fence that shuts others out shuts you in. *(Bill Copeland)***

**To keep out foreign extremists and refugees seeking work, Saudi Arabia is now building a 600-mile wall along its border with Iraq, and is strengthening fortifications along its 1,060-mile border with Yemen. *(Time.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, February 20, 2015)***

**Smugglers have sawed through the Mexican border wall built in the Trump administration 3,272 times over the past three years, requiring $2.6 million in repairs, according to Customs and Border Protection maintenance records. Smugglers of both drugs and people typically use inexpensive power tools to saw through the wall. *(The Washington Post, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 18, 2022)***

**Two California professors have installed three pink seesaws across the U.S. - Mexican border wall running between Sunland Park, New Mexico, and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, allowing children on both sides of the border to play together. Ronald Rael of the University of California, Berkeley, one of its designers, said the "Teetertotter Wall" vividly illustrates that "actions that take place on one side have a direct consequence on the other side." *(Agence France-Presse, as it appeared in The Week magazine, August 16, 2019)***

**Ears to You: Thin walls are a complaint in many apartment buildings. One night when I lowered the volume on our living-room television set, I heard a neighbor call out, "Hey, I was listening to that!" *(F. Barrette, in Reader's Digest)***

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**The Trump administration has asked to build a 30-foot-high concrete or see-through wall at the Mexican border that is sunk 6 feet into the ground and would require at least an hour to cut through using power tools. *(Associated Press, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 31, 2017)***

**The Trump Administration hasn't built a single mile of new wall along the Mexican border since taking office. So far, the government has only built 51 miles of steel fencing to reinforce or replace existing barriers, a rate of about 1.7 miles per month. *(WashingtonExaminer.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, August 2, 2019)***

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**Tunnel to asylum: A group of 376 migrants, mostly from Guatemala, gave themselves up to border officials last week after tunneling under a steel border fence about 10 miles from the nearest port of entry. The group of asylum seekers, which included 176 children, was the largest ever detained in the Yuma area. "In my 30 years with the Border Patrol," Anthony Porvaznik said, "I have not been part of arresting a group of 376 people. That's really unheard-of," A long line formed while migrants, reportedly with the help of smugglers, dug seven holes in the sandy soil underneath the fence, and then waited on the U.S. side for agents to process them. Border officials said the fence is meant to stop vehicles and would need a concrete base to subvert tunneling. An additional, 350-plus Central American migrants gave themselves up to border officials in New Mexico in the following days. *(The Week magazine, February 1, 2019)***

**U.S. border officials have discovered a tunnel over three-quarters of a mile long from Tijuana, Mexico, to San Diego. The tunnel had a rail track, electricity, and a ventilation system. Border agents have found 200 tunnels since 2003, but this is the longest ever. *(USA Today, as it appeared in The Week magazine, February 14, 2020)***

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**Ajo, Arizona: Unprotected border: The Trump administration is ramping up construction of border fencing despite Arizona's stay-at-home order, drawing protests this week from locals as workers pour into their towns. More than 100 organizations signed a letter urging the White House to halt the project, saying it risks spreading coronavirus to communities like Ajo, where just one small clinic provides medical care. The town has been deluged with workers, who have filled motels, rental houses, and RV parks, In February, Customs and Border Protection announced plans to replace more than 91 miles of border barriers in Arizona, on top of 197 miles of new fencing under construction nationwide. Ajo resident Maria Singleton, 57, counted 22 construction trucks passing her house one morning. "The administration's priority is to get the wall done," she said. "The rest of us might as well be damned." (*The Week magazine, April 10, 2020)***

**An Arizona lawmaker wants to tax pornography and use the proceeds to help build President Trump's border wall. The bill from GOP state Rep. Gail Griffin would require tech companies to install porn-blocking software on internet-connected devices which users could disable by paying a $20 fee to be used for wall construction. *(The Week magazine, February 1, 2019)***

**Wall Street’s name stems from colonial times, when a wall was built around Lower Manhattan to protect cattle from Indian raids. *(Russ Edwards & Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Digest, p. 98)***

**We construct borders, literally and figuratively, to fortify our sense of who we are. *(Frances Stonor Saunders, historian)***

**I’m not sure on which side of the prison walls the worst people are to be found. *(Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)***

**Work has been completed on 30 miles of new wall on the U.S.-Mexican border, far short of the 500 to 600 miles Trump vowed to build in 2018. Only 5 miles of the new wall consist of primary barriers; the additional 25 miles are secondary barriers that sit behind primary ones. *(Bloomberg.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 25, 2020)***

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