

Escape From Earth: the Journal of a Planetary Pioneer

Duane L. Herrmann

2018

This is a chapter 1 of the complete 20-chapter novel, shared by the author for posting at Baha'i Library Online at bahai-library.com/herrmann_escape_earth .

Purchase the book at amazon.com/Escape-Earth-Journal-Planetary-Pioneer/dp/1989225187

9 Splendor 306 - A new year, a new century, a new planet, a new life: what a beginning!

I, Haleem Oded Pavel Elger, do solemnly swear that this journal will be an accurate record of my experiences and reflections of our first year here on Makana. So help me God.

That should be clear.

I sent off the message we had arrived safely. I can't say as much for our stuff, but stuff is just stuff. We can find our way around that. I've heard terrible stories of members of some families not making the trip. No one knows what happened to them, or where they are now – except those who just came through as body parts. Those stories are gruesome. We were spared that, thank God!

We knew there would be risks when we decided to come. We didn't tell the children how risky the trip could be. 'I knew we would make it, Dad,' Nestor told me. At nine, he was very calm about it all, living up to his name of 'Wise Traveler.' Leta was cheerful about it all, oblivious to much around her, like any seven year old. She is our little 'Bringer of Gladness.' Berget, thought she is just five, was very serious about it all, especially leaving her kitty behind. She understood and was brave. She's as strong as her name. Helki had her hands full trying to appear

Escape from Earth

calm when she knew than any one of us might not survive. The possibility of losing any one of us was hardest on her.

My concerns were for all of us and making the transit. It's a relief to finally be here. We can be useful here, much more so than on Earth. First, we have to get settled, with what of our stuff that made it through, then we can get to work.

10 Splendor 306 - The housing situation here is cramped, but we'll manage for a while. The winter season is ending. Soon it will be warm enough that we can spend more time outside, even sleep out. I'll be glad for that.

11 Splendor 306 - Sleeping out here is a LOT different than sleeping outside at home. It was warm enough last night, so we tried it. The stars are in different places. I didn't know many constellations at home – Orion, the Big Dipper, Cassiopeia, and a few others. Here, we'll have to make up our own!

The biggest difference, though, are the moons. Yes: moons – plural. There are three of them: Alpha, Beta, Gamma – named in order of their size. They are different distances from Makana, so the size we see them here is not actual. I don't know many details yet; I can just see them. They have different orbits and move with different speeds. There is always some light during the night, though the light from Alpha, reflected, I should say, is brighter than the other two. Gamma is so small, it might just be a big rock! It doesn't cast much light at all.

I wonder what effect the three have on the tides here? Beta and Gamma wouldn't have much effect, I should think. Alpha is smaller than Earth's moon, so it would be less effect too, but the oceans here cover less of the planet and, I think they are more shallow, too. That might affect the creation of tides, too. I don't really know, though, I'm a prairie boy.

12 Splendor 306 - I have assumed, that since the year on Earth starts with the spring equinox, the year here starts the same. We've been assigned a small hut and won't have to sleep outside any longer, but we probably will just because of the space. The hut is tiny. They are rapidly building these huts as fast as they can.

Escape from Earth

My construction skills will come in useful here, that's what I had hoped. Thousands of people will need to come, and quickly, but there is no place for them to stay. Not that they have homes on Earth, but a support system is there even if it is over-stretched. A refugee camp there even with little food is better than starving here in the open. Too many people have no skills for this world.

There are four colonies here. We are in Base Two. Someday I expect they'll get real names, but numbers do for now. Base One is by the sea, Three is in the foothills where mineral deposits have been found. Two and Four are each in river valleys where farming is easier. All are building huts as quickly as possible. We've got to take more refugees from Earth.

The sea level rise at home has been faster than predicted. Millions have already died, others have died in conflicts as they've tried to flee. If a way had not been found to bend space and time a couple decades ago, none of this settlement would have been possible. Makana is the fourth planet that was found, and amazingly Earth-like. It's almost a twin, in size and climate, everything we need.

It was given the name, Makana, because it is so Earth-like, it seemed a gift to humanity. Makana means gift, in Hawaiian. With what we've done to Earth, some didn't think the human race deserves a second chance – and certainly not three or four. But, our presence on Makana is not a sure thing. Transport is tenuous and many die. And, a crop failure, or anything of that nature, could easily wipe out our presence here.

The problem is getting here – something about using electro-magnetic forces to stabilize the bend in spacetime. I don't understand it myself, but the need is so desperate, we decided to come.

15 Splendor 306 - I've given a lot of thought to our role here as pioneers and the tradition of pioneering that we are now part of. Humans have always pioneered, whether that term was used or not. The first humans out of Africa were pioneers. That's how Earth was populated. We're doing the same here: Base One, Base Two.

Another similarity of our pioneering with others is that we can't go back. That was our most serious concern, but others have also died far from home. Maybe someday the technology will

Escape from Earth

have reached the point here where people or things can be sent back, but right now it's only short messages that can get through and then not very clearly. We are here for the rest of our lives.

There are five hundred or so people here at Base Two. Base One and Three are a little larger. Three is larger simply because the need to mine and process metals is so great. We're all building huts for newcomers as quickly as possible. As summer comes more settlers can arrive and help us build more for winter, but if there isn't enough food, we'll all be in bad shape during the winter. Earth can't help us with food. Base One might still be able to fish during the winter, I'm not sure about that though. We're not counting on it.

One other crucial project that all the bases are working on is to improve the tracks for transportation between the bases. It's a great advantage that we no longer need hard surface roads. The new, hovercraft only need a reasonably smooth surface to follow. Water is still an obstacle for them and steep surfaces are difficult, but crews are working on those problems. The larger problem is to make the tracks two lanes. Right now you can only pass a vehicle if there is a level, empty space where you happen to meet someone.

Right now there is only one track connecting all bases. From base to base the track forms a rough diamond shape – from Base One by the sea, out to Two and Four in opposite directions, then from them to Three in the hills. A direct route is being cleared from One to Three, then one will be cleared from Two to Four. I suppose Base Five will grow up at that intersection. There's already talk of a refueling station and rest stop there. It will grow into a town.

Fuel has been one of the least problems since the invention of the water separation engine. It took a century of development before it was perfected, but that happened just in time. We have plenty of water here. Not as much as on Earth, but still plenty. The exhaust re-forms into water again, so there is no loss. When this engine was developed, the petroleum wars ceased abruptly. That allowed attention to be focused on the coastal refugee problem. Uncounted thousands had already died, we were so blind!

Petroleum companies fought the development of the engine, reactionary politicians and business opposed any action to mitigate or respond to climate change – and thousands died. Once the

Escape from Earth

petroleum companies collapsed, the world economy was freed to respond to the needs of the refugees and this planet and the others were found, so the future is hopeful.

16 Splendor 206 - Material has arrived to add the room onto our hut, so that is my priority now. It will be a simple room, so it should not take too long, but three rooms will feel more like a home than just two.

I've finished the plans for locating new streets and homes on the eastern side of the base that has been surveyed. We can get a little over a hundred home spaces there. Each new home will also start with two rooms like ours, but they'll have more room to expand than some of the first ones. They were packed close together. The message has gone to Earth that we will be able to accept a hundred more families here. Base Three will be able to take almost as many, though their job is harder given the rougher terrain. Two and Four will be able to take almost twice as many, but getting field spaces cleared and crops planted are their prime priority – and fencing.

The native wildlife here is not large, but fences around the crops have to be sturdy and strong. I don't know much about the animals. I personally haven't seen any. Whatever they are, they are scared of us. They are not very intelligent. No one has tried to domesticate any yet that I know of. Goats and chickens are the only animals that have been brought from Earth. We don't want off-planet animal populations to get out of control.

No native life has yet been found with any kind of high intelligence. That has been a disappointment to some, but a great benefit to us. We're not stealing a planet from anyone like Europeans stole so much of Earth from native populations. The petroleum wars and climate changes have dislocated so many peoples that populations which had lived separately for centuries are now pretty well mixed together. Centuries ago Bahá'u'lláh said the human race was one race, and the human genome project confirmed it, then changing circumstances forced people to accept it. I hope no such problem will develop here.

We've been warned not to go alone too far from the base. Some of the animals can kill and there are some dangerous plants. One is the Blood Dripper. It's the size of an Earth tree, but it's more like a giant fern. Multiple stalks come from the ground and grow high enough for us to walk under. That is the danger. The tips of the fronds develop round red balls which eventually drop

Escape from Earth

down. They are some kind of acid which kills the undergrowth. It also burns human skin. One little boy was looking up when one fell on his face. He was blinded. That happened early on, so all newcomers are warned.

What a place!

We can see creatures flying in the air. Most are brilliantly colorful so they are an entertaining attraction. I don't know if they should be classified as "birds" or "insects." Maybe there's no way to differentiate on this planet. I've seen a few specimens that have been killed, but no one has yet been able to devote their time to a study of them. They're just one aspect of the many unknowns of this planet.

There are lots of little crawling bugs, so much so that every exterior door has to have a lip along the bottom to prevent them from crawling into the building. People quickly learn to pick up their feet when they walk here. Some complain when they stumble over the lips until they are shown a video of a house full of the crawly things. That shuts them up! No one wants a bed full of them!!

And there is a common creature called a "millimonster." It has a tremendous number of little legs, like a millipede back home. Mature, they are about nine centimeters long and a bit thicker than a large man's finger. They have a stinger on their snout which can inflict a great deal of pain and swelling. They are aggressive critters and use the stinger to dominate other life forms they encounter, even us.

Their bodies are segmented and move forward like inch worms. Their back legs move forward creating a hump in their middle sections. The hump moves forward through the sections and the thing moves. Fortunately, as their segments move up and down in a hump, they make a creaking noise and we know they are approaching. The sound gives us time to try to kill them, but you have to be careful about where you do that. They squish easily, but black goo comes out and it stinks and is difficult to clean off. It's best to kill them before they come inside!

What a planet!

Escape from Earth

18 Splendor 306 - Good News! We've finally found two other Bahá'í families here at Base Two. There might be others, but don't know yet. When we left Earth we were given the names of other Bahá'ís who had left Earth for Makana.

Most of the people we've met here had heard of Bahá'í before leaving Earth, many even knew of someone who was Bahá'í, but no one knew of any Bahá'ís here.

19 Splendor 306 - The electrical wiring is installed and connected, so we can begin to use the room while I do the interior finishing. We have a new room! It has a new front door, two small windows on each side of the door and a window on each side wall. In the back of the room is the door to the other two rooms. The new room more than doubles the size of our house. I can truly call it a house now!

The former first room can now be walled off from the original door to give the children some privacy. The original door was set in the corner so it could easily be walled off. I should back up a bit. We actually have four rooms. I hadn't counted the bathroom before. It's not much larger than a closet. It has a tiny sink just inside the door. Beside the sink and filling most of the room is the shower on one side of which is the shower. You can sit on the toilet and shower at the same time. It seemed odd at first, but for those who can't stand up, a sitting shower is necessary, and if you have a small child or baby, you can hold them on your lap and both get clean at the same time. It works rather well, just takes a bit of getting used to.

The bathroom was directly opposite the former front door. The door to the back room, our bedroom, is beside the bathroom. So a wall from the former front door to the bathroom will make a small hall. When the children are making noise in their room we'll be able to shut the door. I moved the former front door, to use for the door to their room. We don't need a door shutting the new, main room from the hall.

The new room will have three uses. One side will be the kitchen (a hot plate on a table didn't count as a kitchen before), dining area in the middle (we used to sit on the children's bed and hold our plates, the kids sat on the floor), and lounge on the other side. We have no furniture, but I can build most of it. Living on a new world where there has been no civilization, one quickly learns to adapt.

Escape from Earth

When I mentioned the children's "bed" that referred to their sleeping pad on the floor which, when they are not sleeping, is rolled up against the wall. Rolled up, it makes a place to sit in reasonable comfort. Helki is making some pillows to help the room be more comfortable. She wants to hang some curtains even though the window frames aren't finished. The room will look nicer. Welcome to home!

H.O.P.E.