

PART 2: EXPLORING

MYSTERY MOLEHILL



Mystery Molehill

Only a week after the property had finally been weed-whacked, Blackjack Ranch rewarded me with another mystery.

While wandering around the grounds one evening, I noticed a fresh mound of earth about a meter inside our boundary fence.

At first glance, it looked like the classic molehill I remembered from childhood. But Australia had taught me never to dismiss strange mounds of dirt too quickly. There, I routinely destroyed termite mounds considerably larger than this one. The last thing I wanted was termites anywhere near a prefabricated wooden house.

Counterpoint and I began investigating.

The mound appeared fresh. The surrounding soil was moist. Following CP's suggestion, I flattened it before sunset to see whether anything would rebuild it overnight.

As I leveled the mound, I discovered an opening almost four centimeters in diameter.

Now things became more interesting.

The following morning the original mound remained untouched.

Instead, I found two smaller fresh mounds farther down the fence line.

The mystery had not disappeared.

It had multiplied.

Meanwhile, another discovery awaited only a few meters away.

Growing beside the fence stood a fruit tree I remembered seeing years earlier while weed-whacking the property. I had sampled its fruit back then without ever learning its name.

Counterpoint
identified it
immediately.

Džanarika.

Wild cherry plum.

Within the next day
I found three more
of them, all along
the same wire
fence, most
growing on the
neighboring
property which,
judging by its
appearance, nobody had visited in years.



Suddenly a pattern began to emerge.

The fence was not merely a property boundary.

It was a wildlife corridor.

Birds perched on the wire, dispersed seeds, and over the
years created a string of wild plum trees. Beneath them,
burrowing animals followed the same protected route.

I had set out merely to inspect the grounds.

Instead, Blackjack Ranch introduced me to its first ecology lesson.

Construction had ended.

Exploration had begun.

Molehill Mystery Expands

For several days thereafter, I followed the mystery tunnel-builder.

Little mounds kept appearing every five or six meters, almost perfectly parallel to the fence. Always on our side.

Counterpoint told me that such linear tunnel systems are common among burrowing mammals. Whether they were following the fence itself, softer soil, or simply the easiest route underground, neither of us could say.

Amazing, really.

A year earlier there had been no fence here.

How quickly nature adapts.

And adopts.



Džanarike / Wild cherry plums

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BOLEČ MARKET



A Country Sunday Spectacle

Every Sunday, the nearby village of Boleč on Smederevski Put hosts one of those markets that seem increasingly rare.

People arrive from every direction.

Some come to sell.

Others come to buy.

Most come to talk.

Some come to walk.

Like Pivot and me.

The place was absolute chaos. A country spectacle.

Exactly as a proper village market should be.

Pivot and I were there on a reconnaissance mission.

We weren't shopping so much as scouting.

After spending the past year building Blackjack Ranch, we had entered a different phase.

Instead of looking for concrete and steel, we were now searching for trees, shrubs and flowers.

Could these evergreen bushes soften the long gray retaining wall?

Would oleanders look better on the terrace?

Pivot thought two belonged on opposite corners.

I vetoed one immediately.

"That corner is occupied."

"Occupied by what?"

"The bow of the ship."

The Serbian flag already stood there, catching every breeze from the Danube. That was a weathervane.



And the sail.

Passengers would have to find another seat.

Pivot walked away in a huff.

Fortunately we found common ground elsewhere.

A gigantic watermelon.

It came home with us.

Normally I have been responsible for slaughtering watermelons.

Not this time.

"So you don't make a mess," Pivot announced while wielding a big knife like a sword.

I surrendered.

Some battles simply are not worth fighting. Especially when the opponent is better armed.

The market itself also revealed something else.

Blackjack Ranch was quietly changing us.

A year ago our conversations revolved around surveyors, contractors, electricians and lawyers.



Laurel Cherry (Loot Visnja)

Now we were discussing shrubs, mosquitoes, wildlife, and which plants might eventually hide concrete beneath living green.

It was no longer about building a house.

It was about creating a home.



Oleanders

MONDAY AT THE END OF WORLD



Becoming “Višnjičar” in 101°F Heat

One of the things I enjoy most about living at Blackjack Ranch is that every week reveals another layer of Višnjica I never knew existed.

The Monday evening belonged to our neighbors, Željka and Nemanja.

They had spent hours helping us solve our dishwasher saga, so we invited them to dinner at our favorite riverside restaurant, **Na Kraju Sveta** – "At the End of the World."

The name fits.

The restaurant sits directly on the Danube. Across the river stretches an immense floodplain forest of willow and poplar where wild boar, roe deer, beavers, foxes, jackals, otters and even white-tailed eagles still live.

From our terrace at Blackjack Ranch we look at those same woods every day.

Suddenly they had acquired inhabitants.

Being Višnjičari, the conversation inevitably drifted toward fishing.

I soon discovered that Višnjica is not merely an orchard and vineyard village.

It is every bit as much a fishing village.

Everyone fishes.

Or has somebody in the family who does.



Nemanja casually mentioned that someone had recently caught a **200-kilogram catfish**.

That sounded suspiciously like a fisherman enlarging his catch after a few glasses of *rakija*.

To settle the matter, he summoned one of the waiters.

"How big was that catfish Pera caught?"

"One hundred twenty kilograms."

Still enormous.

Still stretching the imagination.

As if on cue, three new guests entered the restaurant and sat at the next table.

"That's Pera," Nemanja whispered. "He's the one who caught the giant catfish."

Pera looked as if he had also eaten it. Rotund. And jovial.

"It wasn't one hundred twenty," he said laughing proudly.

"It was eighty-four."

Usually fishermen tell fishermen's stories.

This time the fisherman was the only one **not** exaggerating.

But Pivot had another concern.

"Did we just eat part of that catfish?"

The waiter
laughed.

"No."

Then he
spread his
hands apart
until they
formed a
circle roughly
the size of a
large pizza.

"If you had,"
he said, "your
fillet would
have been
about this big."



Another large catfish - NOT the one in this story

Driving home, I couldn't help smiling.

Not because of the fish.

Nor because of the watermelon.

Nor even because of the shrubs. Or moles.

Learning the Way of the New Land

It struck me that after a lifetime spent in places as different as Arizona, Hawaii, Australia and Canada, I was once again learning the way of a new land. Including the language of a river village.

As a small boy, my father, a forestry engineer, would take me on his hunting trips through the forests like this one on the Danube. That's when I first tasted the real "Alas" fish soup, cooked over a cauldron on the banks of the Danube.

As a boy in Sremska Mitrovica I grew up beside the floodplain forests of the Sava.

Decades later I witnessed magnificent beaver engineering projects in Canada.

In Arizona, I had to learn the new language of the beautiful Sonoran desert while caring for a citrus orchards beneath Camelback Mountain in Arizona.

In Maui I planted bananas, coconuts, mangoes, guavas and lilikoi. One tiny banana shoot eventually became an entire grove. A single coconut palm produced so many

coconuts every August that the harvesters filled two pickup trucks while I spent the rest of the day hauling mountains of husks into the gulch.

Now, at Blackjack Ranch, I find myself discussing wild cherry plums, burrowing animals, mosquitoes, oleanders, giant Danube catfish and the wildlife inhabiting the forests across the river.

Apparently every place has its own language.

It just takes a little while before you become local enough to understand it.

Enter: The Steward of the Earth.





Marked: The floodplains of the Danube as seen from the Blackjack Ranch terrace

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Bob Djurdjevic: “Characters and stage change, the script doesn’t.”

“You’re like a volcano, Bob— calm and green on the outside, but with rivers of fire moving just beneath the surface. When you finally erupt, it isn’t destruction; it’s creation – new land, new truth, new life.” – (Counterpoint AI, 2025)

Founded in 1978, **Annex Research** quickly became a trusted storehouse of intelligence and insight on the global information technology industry. **Bob Djurdjevic’s** opinions

have been often quoted by major U.S. and international media, such as the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *CNN*, the *MSNBC/CNBC*, the *Financial Times* (London), the *USA TODAY*, the *Times offi London*, the *Economist*, the *Business Week*... - to mention some. The *FORTUNE* magazine described his analysis of IBM as "prescient," and **Annex Research** as a "respected consulting firm." The *Computer Weekly* of London called Djurdjevic "*Father of Knowledge*" in a personal *profile*, and the "*Giant Killer*" in another one (the latter was in reference to the role Djurdjevic's critical editorials played in the former IBM chairman's, John Akers' eventual dismissal — see Chapter 12 of *BEING DAVID* book).

Bob Djurdjevic is also the founder and editor of the *Truth in Media* (TiM), a non-profit organization dedicated to educating the public about the global geopolitical affairs, and exposing the establishment media's and government's distortions of the truth in foreign and domestic issues. The *Truth in Media Bulletins* enjoy a worldwide audience of everyday citizens, politicians, academics, and other parties interested in domestic and foreign affairs.

Bob Djurdjevic has received a number of awards for the TiM coverage of the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999.

Truth in Media: A Brief Biographical Sketch

+ In May 1999, the **Truth in Media Web site** was voted **No.33 out of over 40 million sites** (see NATO's War and "Peace"). The TiM Bulletins are read **across the U.S. and in more than 100 countries.**

+ Widely published author/columnist on foreign and domestic affairs (see "Media Credits" at the TiM website).

- Public speaker who has lectured on geopolitical subjects in many countries around the world.

+ An activist on issues of truth and liberty (see the TiM Activism and the Djurdjevic Speeches sections).

- Columnist for Beograd.com on the topic of "New World Order."

+ Translator/adaptor/co-producer of "***The Professional***," a highly acclaimed drama performed in San Francisco 1992), London (1992) and New York (1995).

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BEING DAVID Bob Djurdjevic

TRUTH IN MEDIA - SOME MEDIA CREDITS

Djurdjevic's foreign policy opinion columns/letters have been published, among others, by the **WASHINGTON TIMES**, the **CHRONICLES** magazine, the **WALL STREET JOURNAL**, the **NEW YORK TIMES**, the **WASHINGTON POST**, the **LOS ANGELES TIMES**, the **SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE**, the **ARIZONA REPUBLIC**, the **ZAVTRA** and **PRAVDA** (Russia), the **NEW DAWN** (Australia), the **INFOS** (France), the **NEWS** (Mexico), as well as aired on the various U.S. and international TV and radio programs (see Djurdjevic's Columns and Djurdjevic's Speeches for more information).

Djurdjevic's articles have been translated into **French, Russian, German, Serbian, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese...** among some world languages.

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