

## Al Gore and my inconvenient birthday rose



**BARB GUY**

Every year on my birthday, my mom gave me a brand new outfit and took my picture in the backyard. It's the kind of thing a kid dreads.

We went to live on Morningside Circle when I was 7. The new backyard had a semi-wild rose bush that was blooming on my birthday. That year, and every ensuing year, my birthday photo was taken in front of the copper-orange roses.

In fact, when we moved to the next house and the next, an identical "birthday rose" was planted in each new yard. Like another kid's Christmas tree or summer cabin, the snapshots with the roses mark the annual milestones of my childhood.

When my husband Chris and I bought our house, he even planted the same variety of orange rose in our backyard. We

still call it the birthday rose. What I've noticed in recent years, the last 10 or more, is that the rose blooms before my birthday. Lately, by the time my day rolls around, the rose bush has already shed all its spent, crispy blooms, often a full two weeks prior.

This kind of thing comes as no surprise to Al Gore. He's been trying to get people to notice and care about global warming since long before my roses started to betray me.

God or Nature or Whoever it was seems to have planned things out in a certain way. Plants bloom at a specific time, serving as the food that nourishes a particular animal that just happens to travel past precisely when the plant is in bloom. Without the synchronicity of the plant's and animal's schedules, the animal might die of hunger. Without the insect that travels on the animal, the next crucial plant would not be pollinated for the next animal's perfectly-timed need.

Obviously, I'm no scientist. But I'm convinced there is a system at work (an ecosystem, if you will) and we're mucking it up pretty much everywhere you look.

After just a few minutes, "An Inconvenient Truth," the aptly-named new documentary film

featuring Gore's global warming dog-and-polar-bear-show, will have your jaw hanging open, no matter how much you already know.

Gore has spent the last 26 years teaching people about the consequences of our collective actions and over that time he has developed a well-researched, scientifically ironclad presentation with stunning photographs of our planet. The then-and-now pictures of the world's most beautiful peaks, including Patagonia and Mt. Kilimanjaro, will chill you with how very little chill-power their glaciers have left.

Kilimanjaro is very nearly all brown - the ice is unmistakably melting away. Only it doesn't go away. It becomes water, water that's dangerously excessive and causes polar bears to swim forlornly to exhaustion because there is no ice extending above the surface on which to rest. Or the melted ice becomes water that's the wrong temperature, which can create catastrophic weather patterns, giving us problems like Katrina.

What impressed me when I saw the film at the Sundance Film Festival last January is how hopeful it is. Gore convinces us that it is possible to reverse some of the damage and that small, earnest efforts on our part can contribute to positive change.

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Although he was elected by our nation's populace, Al Gore is not our president, and the guy who is has been pretty tough on the planet since the minute he traded in his pompoms for pump jacks. Under these circumstances, Gore could be forgiven for just looking into the camera and saying, "Well, we're a nation of idiots and that will be our final undoing."

But he doesn't. He's patient with us, he's optimistic, and he stresses that slightly adjusting our daily routines can make a big difference. The movie's companion Web site - <http://www.climatecrisis.net> - has links to some nice educational tools, including "Calculate Your Personal Impact," where we can learn how many pounds of carbon dioxide we generate.

For example, we can see for ourselves the difference in damage to Earth between driving a Prius or a Civic versus an Escalade or an Expedition. (Hint: colossal.)

"An Inconvenient Truth" opened June 16 at the nonprofit Salt Lake Film Society's Broadway Theater in Salt Lake City. With any luck it will play for a few weeks. But, like birthday roses, polar bears and a lot of other irreplaceable things on our planet, it may not be around forever.

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