

Climbing the Tallest Tree on Storytelling Mountain Called McKinley at Age 12: Restorying It at Age 79

Ascending and Descending the AI Pokémon Storytelling Mountain

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Figure 1. Neon Storytelling Mountain: tree, lake, floatplane, mountain, and the luminous AI sky.

Abstract

This essay restories a childhood climb of a tall Alaska tree, a fall slowed by living branches, and a later intervention concerning compulsive Pokémon play. It asks how algorithmic environments may work upon free will, habit, attention, and organizational sensemaking. Rather than treating artificial intelligence as a disembodied miracle, the essay follows its storying effects through Tamaraland's multiple rooms, the Ghost Vortex of uncounted influences, and the ENTHINKMENT path of care and critical reflection. The remembered mountain is called McKinley because that is the name in the twelve-year-old storyteller's world; a historical note names the continuing political contest over Denali/Mount McKinley.¹ The story argues for ascent and descent together: participate in technological

¹ **Historical notes.** The mountain is called *McKinley* in the remembered twelve-year-old story because that was the federal name in the 1950s and 1960s. "Denali" comes from the Koyukon *deenaalee*, often translated "the high one" or "the tall one." Alaska asked the

worlds, but return repeatedly to one's inner storytelling mountain, to gratitude, answerability, and the living relations that an algorithm cannot climb for us.

Keywords: AI storytelling; ENTHINKMENT; Ghost Vortex; restorying; Tamaraland

The True Storytelling Prompt

Ken Long's GrowthOD.org prompt asks how AI has shown up personally, professionally, in and around the True Storytelling circle, and elsewhere. My answer begins with five signs: what worked and should be continued; what proved least effective and why; what is immediately useful; the unanswered question; and what surprise unsettled a deep assumption. This is not the main thesis of the chapter. It is the backstory that lets the story do its work.

Introduction to AI Storytelling Mountains

If anyone here, who is under the hypnotic trance of artificial intelligence, is not going to act according to their own free will. You are in the right place. Because our free will is being actively Socially, economically, and psychologically subdued in the great AI revolution.

We are being subjected to AIs, command and control. To the suggestions of an AI chip, you can hold in the palm of your hand. More than that, to the command and control of the AI corporations.

Open AI. Anthropic Microsoft with his co-pilot. There are about 10 of these AI corporations with their various AI products.

It is time to observe them, investigate them. Get academically empirical about them. And the humans, Actions. that comes from the loss of free will, as they form some kind of agentic AI bond of suggestionability.

We begin to move, dress, eat, communicate, think, and act in a kind of a spell. We go through the motions, engaging in activities. Unaware of the loss of free will.

federal government to restore that name in 1975. In 2015, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, with President Barack Obama's support, made Denali the federal name; in 2025, President Donald Trump directed its return to Mount McKinley. The park remains Denali National Park and Preserve (National Park Service, 2025). Don Sheldon (1921–1975) pioneered glacier landings in the Alaska Range, operated Talkeetna Air Service, and opened Mountain House near Ruth Glacier in 1966 (National Park Service, 2025). A separate historical footnote is warranted for breast cancer: radical mastectomy was long the standard, but evidence led to breast-conserving surgery with radiation for selected patients. Contemporary work continues to reduce unnecessary surgery, while never making treatment a simplistic contest between men's and women's suffering (Cotlar et al., 2003).

But do we know our actions come from Our own true storing self awareness, that's true storytelling. Or is it from AI's suggestion system? Of reinforcement.

Of our human behavior. Can we detect we are acting according to subtle brainwashing created by what I call the business storytelling AI revolution. and have written about the many business storytelling mountains. You and I are climbing, hopefully descending, has our very thoughts, Our likes and dislikes, our actions, and inactions.

Come under the spell of the AI corporations, many algorithms. Those algorithms are in Amazon, Google. In the US military, in higher education, in hospitals, the algorithms are everywhere.

In the AI Revolution. After a while, we may not be able to differentiate between AI corporations, influences, and our own desire. Of free will.

Our ways of ENTHINKING. From the book, Boje and Saylor's 2024 subtitled the Enthinkment Path is one foundation in this essay. This working paper. We keep treading the same circumference path.

I have talked about in other working papers. Deepening the same rut, following the same cycle of routine, from one storytelling mountain to the next storytelling mountain, without ever exploring the tall, subtle inner storytelling mountain of our own. Shadowy psychology.

Our mind, our body, our sense making, All those enactments, that in the trade is called variation, selection, and retention. I remember it being the only thing that was publishable in the management journal called Administrative Science Quarterly. when I was in a doctoral program. In the mid 1970s.

It's time to stand back from the entrancement with artificial intelligence, to detect, if we can, the AI algorithms, hypnotic effect upon us, and to start to investigate the top 10 AI corporations in the world. And their \$10000000000 sum, a \$100000000 and all want to have a \$1000000000000 As CEOs. You are in a corner.

In some room. of Tomorrowland. See publications, Boje, 1995, starting in Academy Management Journal, and others, with co authors, about Tomorrowland. Take the example of 10 people conversing in each of the Tomorrowland rooms.

And let's say there's only 10 rooms. We can compute mathematically, the factorial number of pathways possible for you and I. to go through a tomorrow land. You just take 10 times 9 times 8 times 7 times 6 times 5. times 4 times 3 times 2 times one.

And calculate that number. I think it was either 720 or 740 million. If I recall correctly, I will ask my ChatGPT to calculate the correct mathematical number right now.

But no, I resist because now I am writing in a notebook. and not interacting with artificial intelligence at all. Having written a notebook, I am now dictating without looking at my MacBook or my iPhone or calling out to Alexa. I better say it's softly.

She is always listening in this tomorrowland room. Even my willpower being the strongest I know, I quit smoking while in Vietnam. Just said, I quit smoking, and I quit.

Well, I went from cigarettes to cigars. And back to pipes, and then eventually, I did quit. That is free will.

But in the AI revolution, and its algorithmic, many influences. The competitions among so many billionaires. It takes over the majority of the cases of our attempts to retain our free will.

The values and customs, so prominent in the AI revolution, do influence us. At least the majority of us. Well, let's be honest.

Most of us. have a range of mental, emotional and physical habits. And patterns that the AI, that you could hold that chip in the palm of your hand, is better at determining patterns than the best chess masters on the planet, the best go, game, Chinese masters on the planets. I dare to say we are under the spell of mass hypnotism.

Ascending and Descending the Pokémon Storytelling Mountain

Just like when I was a Pokémon player. Let me tell you that story. I know it well.

There came a time when my 2nd wife, Grace Ann Rosile, my best friends, a few doctoral students, now professors, and my therapist did a Pokémon intervention on me. They met me in the living room of my home. And said, David, Boje, you have scored 1000000 points.

This very month. In your Pokémon game. You do Pokémon 247 it seems.

Every space and time of your life. While writing your bicycle, you claim to be exercising, but you stop, and even while writing the bike, you click the buttons, and your iPhone Pokémon game, and you have it strapped to your handlebars so you can control the handlebars with one hand, and with the other hand, push the buttons. And take down a Pokémon tower, or what is the name of those?

Pokémon enclaves that are outside of a church. or a senior citizens, center, or a restaurant, or any store, and every business establishment, it seems, has a Pokémon spot for you to gather points, and then you gather a million points in a month. You are on the Pokémon storytelling mountain. And you don't know how to descend.

It is a flame, the Pokémons, you collect. The Pokémon monsters you defeat. You constantly move your score upward.

But yet, as a human being, you are melting, sliding down that slippery slope of the Pokémon storytelling mountain. These two forces, the upward constant force, and the downward movement of the slippery slope. They're in play in your life, David.

In Pokémon, you claim to be healthy, happy, and terrific. You tell the intervention crew that, oh, you're just getting exercise during your radiation treatments, and you're just having done the treatments, learning to walk again by cycling, 1st for less than a block, then 2 blocks, and now you can do several miles.. And you claim that Pokémon storytelling mountain is the only way you can do an exercise.

But yet you play Pokémon in the airports. You play Pokémon on those little trains taking you from one airport, terminal to the next, you play Pokémon everywhere, David. Unless the car is moving too fast, you play Pokémon as a stop light.

You play Pokémon until that car gets faster than 5 miles per hour, or is it 10? Your life mission has become the, to be the best Pokémon player of any senior citizen in the world. And let's just say that you've achieved that goal.

Ask yourself. What is ascending upward in your life, David? Can you investigate the quality of your ENTHINKING path?

Your sense making, your emotions, what is the quantum frequency of your vibrations, David? Are these quantum vibrations lifting you up, taking you down? Do you know the forces revealing the light in you is being snuffed out?

Can you differentiate between your mindful delusions? The hypnotic speed and pace of the Pokémon game. Your own psychological self deception.

Your rationalizations, your inaccurate thinking. David, are you ENTHINKING at all? As you ascend.

Pokémon storytelling mountain. Does some unexpected sorrow creep in during your gameplay? All of a sudden does your mood turn to psychological depression?

Does an anxiety suddenly overwhelm you? Are you so busy playing Pokémon on that storytelling mountain? You cannot investigate your own inertia.

And what is inertia? What is an inertia that does not allow you to make a move unless you're on Pokémon storytelling mountain. Is that mountain really positive?

Quantum energy vibrations? Or are there gravitational tendencies of inertia? Holding you down, not from attaining the highest score on the mountain of all the senior citizen climbers.

No, not that inertia. An inertia of a different sort. David, you know the difference between sense making an enactment.

It's variation, selection, retention being the primary channel of every organization on the planet, you said. Is storytelling. You said this in 1991, an administrative science quarterly, and you held to that position for 2 decades.

Always applauding Carl White, 1995 sense making book. But then, You had a revelation, a turning point, You reread your mentors, every article, every book chapter, every lecture note you retained in your files, from your PhD program. And with Ronnie Saylers, you published the book in 2024. of the management thought of Lewis Ralph Pondi, Colon, the Enthinkment Path.

Read that book, David. Because you made a transformation. But turn to Tomorrowland, your 1995 Academy of Management Journal publication.

A true achievement in academic scholarship, so they say, But ask this. Are you in one of the Tomorrowland rooms? In a corner?

A little distant from the tin people doing storytelling circle conversations. And does a little guilt, not creep in, a little sorrow, a little depression, as you observe them. Storiing, as you say, is a verb.

You're STORYING dot S I T E website. Talks about it. In that book with Ronnie Saylor's to 2024, you talk about Lewis Pondi's heart of care. that it's a kind of special thinking, this ENTHINKING, where Louis Pondi has a tear in his eye.

A critical reflection on his life. Another tear in his eye when he confesses in his last speech, was it in 1986? And he was, what, 49 years old, dying of cancer, and he faced the Academy of Management meeting audience in a ballroom, and said, I confess, my dissertation was wrong.

My own administrative science quarterly article, was it 1987, was wrong, not just because... as you point out, with Ronnie Saylor's in... 2024 book, the publishers didn't put in the food feedback loop in his famous... episodic storytelling model. But because he had missed read the whole organizational situation, in which, what? Was that misreading?

Reflect upon it now, David. Said the interventionist. Well, they said it before the 2024 book was published.

They said it this way. David. Pondi's lessened to you as an initiate.

Was the following organizations are not places where occasionally there's conflict. They are... places in which conflict is the norm. And Pondi put it more emphatically.

Can you recall the word he used? It's a kind of critical theory assessment kind of word that says human organizations are places of anarchy. That is their norm.

They are not normatively places of cooperation. You have to intervene with storytelling circles with true storytelling work on the true storytelling mountain. Is that not true from the 2021 book with Jens Larsen, yourself, and Lena Brune?

Yes, your earlier working papers this year in 2026. There are many storytelling mountains on the circumference track. And there's a very tall, but subtle inner storytelling mountain.

You're not climbing. Not in any genuine, authentic way. Intellectually, David, I know you understand what's going on. in your own inner storytelling mountain.

Is that not true? Yet you are totally absorbed into playing Pokémon. Now I'm going to fast forward to 2026 and talk about the AI storytelling mountain.

Do you know that Pokémon is run by artificial intelligence? GPS systems are AI and throughout the world. It may not have grown so much if it were not for Pokémon.

Restorying: Alaska, Lake Wilderness, and the Tallest Tree

Now, let's do some restorying, spelled R-E-S-T-O-R-Y-I-N-G. HTP colon slash slash davidboje.com/restorying. Go there and study it up. It's your own website.

Recall a time in your life. When you had some little wow moment experiences, David. David replies.

Little-Wow Moments at Age Twelve

I remember being alone on a train at age 12. Well, alone in the sense there was no family or adults traveling with me. There were people on the train.

And I went from Anchorage, Alaska, and boarded another train, as I recall, to Fairbanks, Alaska. I'll have to check the facts on that, because I'm 78 years old, and facts need to always be checked. in my storytelling. I remember on the train, up to Fairbanks, seeing in the ruts, the ditches along the tracks as we whizzed by.

There were jumping silver salmon and some pink salmon, too. And on the train, there were adult fishermen. Gripping in that place between two train cars, where you sit on the little chairs, they gripped their pink salmon and smiled at it.

And smiled at us to communicate. They had won a great prize. I reflect on another little while moment, waiting in an airplane hangar on an air field that had no asphalt, just dirt.

And the weather was storming, and it wasn't a time to fly. And in that little while moment, I was invited into the aviators house with my science teacher, who was... there, taking an earlier train, but, and his son, about my age. And he was a science teacher in Anchorage, on Fireweed Lane, to the North Star school, I attended from age 10 to 12.

And I remember a little while moment of the pilot's wife. bringing us into the hangar for home baked pies. Blueberry, cherry, apple, and peach, as I recall. And we had our choice of the pies.

That was a little while moment in a storm. I shall never forget. What was the wife's name?

What was the pilot's name? You can find it out if you do a Google search, but I'm not doing it while I'm notebooking and now dictating. You can find it because he broke a world's record.

He's got to be in the Guinness book or something. Making the highest landing in the world, in a Cessna plane. You know, difficult to do, but he would regularly do it and fly off stranded climbers from Mount McKinley.

Has his record been broken? I have another little while moment. It is at North Star School, on age 11, and I just won the 1st thing in my whole life.

Second place. And the outdoor ice rink that would freeze up in the winter. And I was second place in the clown race.

I had dressed up as a clown with a wig, and... you know, I had my hockey skates on. I played hockey at age 11 and 12 against 14 year old teams. No, we never won, but a little while moment was just staying in the game.

Throwing myself down the ice, tackling some 14 year old throwing him off his feet. Well, I do regret the time when the referee's son on the opposing team might kind of hooked my stick, not intentionally, I hope. And lifted his son, Feet up, with my hockey stick and head down into the ice.

I got a pencil to you box for that, and I was kind of proud being in the penalty box, like those Canadian players do. And fighting on the ice with 14 year olds, and being but 11 and 12. And wearing jeans sewn by my mother with little pads and them unable to afford regular official hockey equipment. that the opposing team relished in wearing.

There's a certain pride in that little while moment. Another little while moment back in Mount McKinley, at a lake called Wilderness, and you can use your GPS to find it, or you can try to go to... AAA and get a map, if they still have maps these days.

Made of paper. So there was a time in Lake Wilderness, after the pontoon plain by the famous pilot, had landed, and we'd inflated a rubber orange boat. Or raft, or what do you call it?

And paddled to shore some 40 or 50 feet. and climbed onto the tundra, and with machetes made a clearing, because there was no clearing in those days. And a boy of 12 years old, had a little while moment, gathering stones from the lake to make a fire pit, some brush and fallen limbs of trees, dry enough to make a fire. Yeah.

The science teacher did cook blueberry muffins, and they tasted divine. All hot on this summer day. The Mount McKinley range in view, a few cumulus clouds, a lake so clear that as we flew over it, we could see to the very bottom of the deepest part, and the little stones there.

If we weren't moving so fast, we could probably see the fish there. This final little while moment, I'm climbing the tallest tree I could find. I went against the science teachers instructions to not go in the forest alone.

There are bears out there. Of every kind. Grizzly and black and brown.

Wolves, Rome, everywhere. You can hear them howling. In your tent at night.

You can hear them. But I found the tallest tree. I climbed it limb after limb.

It was a big pine tree. I don't know, the variety, the species. I just went up higher and higher and higher.

I must have been 60 feet up. And then I fell. But I didn't fall straight to the ground, and I did get scratched and bruised.

I fell limb embracing me. Stalling the fall, and then another limb grabbing out to me, stalling the fall, as if the tree was alive. Of course, trees are alive, are they not?

But this living tree was saving my life. So, as I fell to the ground, I was in gratitude. Ken Long asked me to tell a story of gratitude, and that is it.

A little while moment of gratitude to a living tree. So, here's the thing, the point of this story of Alaska, mountains, and airplanes, and lakes, and trains, and traveling alone on trains. And the moment when the pontoon plane, the landed us, flew over and would drop.

Oh, package with, uh, the shaped like, um, a cylinder and had a orange ribbon on it, so we could find it. We could hear the plane, so we knew it was gonna be dropped, and it had food and messages, and then this message said, Pontoon. Playing notice, I don't have one today.

It is being repaired. There are holes in it, so your departure needs to be delayed, and David, Boje, your dad says, come home immediately, because, He has a job transferring him from AT&T in Anchorage to I, T&T Corporation. A great storytelling mountain, is it not?

for him to climb, and you, to climb it with him in living in Paris, France, to learn a new language, to have new schools. Say goodbye to your science teacher and his son. And to Alaska, because the time has come.

The Descent from Pokémon Mountain

So how does all of this relate to overcoming the inertia I had on Pokémon storytelling Mountain? Here's the Backstory, the overstory, as authors do call them. I had had a shamanic experience, climbing that tree in Alaska.

Near by Lake Wilderness, seeing Mount McKinley in the distance. Looking out from the tree at great distances and of clearest sky. The cleanest air I'd ever sniffed.

And as I fell that living tree, I had visions. Shamanic visions. Underlying that, because it is critical, you recall it, as I tell you, the next storytelling episode of episodic conflict, as Lewis Ralph Pondi called them.

To overcome my inertia on Pokémon's storytelling mountain, to find a way to restory [HTTPS:// or is it slash slash colon P-R-V-I-E-W.org](https://or-is-it-slash-slash-colon-P-R-V-I-E-W.org). And look there at what are the embankment? No, not in Thinkman, restoring.

Steps, as Grace and Roselle and I call them, steps one can take. You see, Dear readers on Pokémon storytelling mountain. I did not have to think. about all of the radiation treatments I had been receiving and had received.

And after the radiation treatments, I did not have to think about why I could not walk very well, could no longer jog. I used, before the cancer treatments, I could jog seven miles. But in the cancer treatments and after them, I could barely walk.

In fact, there was a time I couldn't even take a few steps without great pain. And as the greatest doctor in the world, the one at MD Anderson, in charge of his specialty, told me, he said, David, I can give you these new medications, not even on the market in, in a series 2 trial. You can sign up for and I can have my colleague, the greatest expert in radiation, who will implant gold chips in your gut. so that the laser, one of the best in the world, can be guided precisely to the point to do the least damage to your body as we radiate.

Your. What do you macallit? Cannot recall the words too close to me, but he wanted to save the bladder.

I can tell you that. And do the least damage. And all the hormone shots that made me have those hot flashes in a few nights, not as many as women do have.

But I got to experience a few, and I was pretty glad for the experience. of femininity. And I did welcome each hormone shot for that very reason. But he, this very famous doctor who is also a professor doctor.

At his university in Houston. and had a very prestigious post at the Anderson Clinic. You had to wait three hours to see the man. In fact, we waited a whole week. without appointment, and we're shuttled off to appointments with a penis doctor, a... another kind of doctor, a surgeon doctor.

And did you know that... two decades before me? That that was the go to method that they learned in medical school is doctors. Just like you geld a horse, geld the man.

It does dull your sexual urge, I will tell you. So, I am not saying I had that. surgical operation.²

I am saying I know a person... very well who had it and told me, David, please don't do it. You will piss yourself uncontrollably and forget sex ever again. My mind reels at the... addiction of..

Pokémon Mountain. I am in gratitude for the intervention team. of relatives, students, professors, friends who did save me that day. But what they didn't tell me is that Pokémon is run by AI.

That I was about to climb the AI business storytelling mountain. And become addicted once again. But these 6 volumes are to save people from addictions and to save myself by climbing inner storytelling mountain, that subtle one that I had kept forgetting to climb since I climbed that tallest tree in Alaska.

Discussion and Conclusion

I boast a bit. When I was 12 years old, and encountered shamanic forces, quantum energy fields of great power. Some other time, I will tell you my journey up Shamanic Mountain.

Shamanic storytelling mountain to be accurate. And how I had to descend because I'm a white boy, not a indigenous, and only the indigenous should climb shamanic storytelling

² For historical context: bilateral orchiectomy—the surgical removal of both testicles—became a recognized hormonal treatment for advanced prostate cancer after Charles Huggins and Clarence Hodges' 1941 studies. It is not the same as prostatectomy, which removes the prostate. Today, androgen-deprivation medicines can reduce testosterone reversibly, while orchiectomy remains one possible treatment in selected cases. Treatment decisions are individual and belong with the patient and clinical team (Huggins & Hodges, 1941; National Cancer Institute, 2024).

mountains, is that not true? So if you want to join me, and climbing, ascending and descending while having your own inner storytelling mountain secure, then join me.

In the business storytelling, Mountain of the AI Revolution. It's simple. Just go to davidboje.com and you'll see 2 big buttons.

Very fancily decorated, artistically, by chat GPT. Thank you. I am in gratitude.

Select one, and you will find some of my other storytelling sites, websites. Press the other and you will go to AI Storytelling Mountain to a storyland like no other. But looks a lot like Disneyland.

And there you will find the old E tickets. I studied Disneyland. I remember doing that article in Academy Management Journal, 1995.

You know, it took me 4 solid years of revisions, 2 different editors, wanted accepted the paper, the second, said, We're not gonna accept a paper, a qualitative storytelling. Are you kidding me? I'm an empiricist.

You will go through reviews with a brand new set of reviewers. And so I did, with the coeditor, with not three, but four more reviewers, and several cycles. And finally, I tackled him, well, not literally.

I tackled this editor in an academy management meeting. I said, Let me go, please, either accept or reject the paper. I've worked on it for years.

And he took me aside in the hallway, like you do, an acting out teenager in a high school, and said, don't you ever accost me? in a formal meeting of the editors of the biggest journals, the most prestigious ones of the Academy of Management. Or I shall make sure you never have a career as a professor again.

Well, I'm embellishing a bit to make this story sound true, because don't you have to kind of embellish now and again to make it come out true to the reader because they're in so many Tomorrowland rooms? Dot dot dot. The end.

Figure 2. The ascent-descent movement of AI storytelling

Movement	Question for the storyteller	Practice
Ascent	What score, status, speed, or certainty is pulling me upward?	Name the algorithmic invitation.
Inertia	What habit keeps the same circuit repeating?	Pause; record the bodily and relational costs.
Descent	What inner story has been neglected?	Restory with another person, place, or living being.
Return	Who is answerable for the next action?	Re-enter technology without surrendering judgment.

Glossary of terms used in this essay

ENTHINKMENT is the path of thought, heart, care, and critical reflection developed from Louis R. Pondy's work and reclaimed by Boje and Saylor (2024). **Ghost Vortex™** names the patterned, often unacknowledged institutional pull—data selection, incentives, labor, policies, and exclusions—that can shape an AI response. **Tamaraland™** names an organization of simultaneous rooms and partial paths: no one visitor sees the whole story. **Restorying** is the practical work of revisiting a dominant or stuck narrative and opening it to relation, counter-story, and possible action. **True Storytelling** asks for lived, answerable stories rather than the smooth performance of a ready-made corporate narrative. The current living definitions and their citation guidance are available in Boje's [Glossary of AI Terms](#).

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