

# AOTCJournal

Welcome to the **Journal of the Aware Ones of the Treasure Coast**, a secular humanist gathering, providing companionship, conversation, support, and good times, within honest and objective atheist, agnostic and freethinking values.

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July/August 2020

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\*\\*- Produced by the TC Secular Writers -\*/\*

## INTRODUCTION

**SUMMER SOLSTICE - 2020**

***Calamity or Catastrophe, Crisis or History?***  
***(or simply, "so far so good!")***

Greetings to all and best wishes as we teeter on the edge of the precipice. How close can we get to the tipping point? Are the bridges falling down, yet? First off, do we all have every one of our fingers and toes? Are we surviving the plague and toilet tissue shortage without too much anxiety and embarrassment? I

confess, I cannot recall any time other than the turbulent 60's with the Vietnam war, political assassinations, campus sit-ins and racial strife when I have had such an unpleasant feeling about the uncertainty of what the future will bring. Talk about troubling history!

But, with our current presidential cretin, I have a numbing feeling of being confined in a horrific disaster movie that never seems to end. It is a nightmare like being trapped on a bus careening down a curvy mountain road with no guard rails on the edge of sheer drop-offs, being operated by a certified, narcissistic, cartoon lunatic. Stable genius my ass! Every curve brings a new emergency, every emergency signals a new disaster. Is good news really bad news, every moment another crisis? We have no respite to catch a breath! Worldwide pandemic, worldwide depression, worldwide climate disruption, protests, police riots,



the beginning of hurricane season and an impending circus of a presidential election. Yikes! I am afraid to say anything that might make the situation worse. As it is, so far so good. But then again, when the distraught man jumped off the tallest building in town, every person on every floor he passed heard him say, "so far, so good."

Difficult as it can be, we must do our best to nurture our senses of

humor so we can get through it, if only through being sardonically cynical with dark humor sprinkling our tragedies. The best way to accomplish that is to communicate about it and that's what we

Aware Ones have to offer for this issue. I found it very cathartic to put this edition together and hopefully you readers will benefit from the knowledge that there are others who feel similarly to current events as you do.

Bert Mautz chronicles his feelings and observations of the last couple of months of social distancing. We are also fortunate to have a moving contribution about severe Covid-19 sufferers from Bert's son, Rob, a Covid-19 nurse. Jim Longo provides a compelling mystery narrative set in a Covid-19 ward. Jim also shares his and Barbara's recent bicycling vacation along the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP). I do not know which is scarier. Gale Baker presents a caustic accusation of presidential mendacity and malfeasance. Yashi Nozawa's second part of his poignant memoir of World War II Japan, *The Last Haircut*, presages what disasters we Americans may be facing in the near future as reality disagrees with official lying assertions. Ed Zilloux brings a scholarly discussion on *Evolutionary Behavior*; will we need a balance of good and bad behavioral traits to survive? Dan Vignau educates with a couple of worthy rants about white condescension towards the black experience and the conflict between Capitalism and Socialism from his progressive point of view.

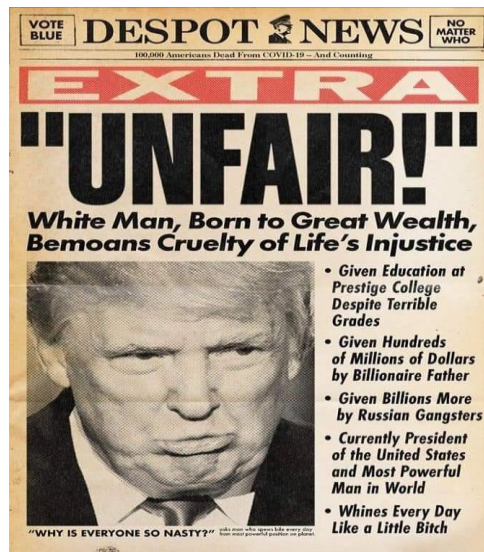
For my contribution, however, (unless you are a New England Patriots addict) not all is dismal and I share my joy of being a Kansas City Chiefs fan after fifty years of mediocrity and playoff heartbreak with the Superbowl champ quarterback, Patrick Mahomes. I am so proud of this kid and after today, I am even prouder for his courageous stand for Black Lives Matter! The Chiefs have always been leaders in racial equality since their formation in 1960. Now, team captains, Mahomes and Tyrann Mathieu have publicly supported the throngs of protestors in the streets demonstrating against the brutal murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer. (They are also leading a voter registration drive in Kansas City).

Mahomes responded in a recent interview to critics who say he should stick to football not racial politics, "We are people too," Mahomes said. "I feel like those people [who say stick to sports] have kids and they understand that their kid could play sports and their kids could possibly be in the same position that we're in. They would want their kids to show their heart and show who they truly are and try to affect the world in the most positive way possible. That's what we believe that we're doing. And so obviously, we know that not everyone agrees with everything that you're going to say. Just know that when we say stuff, we mean it and we care and we want to make the world the best place for our future kids and for generations to come behind us."

Who knows, with this kind of leadership, maybe the NFL will grow a pair and someone needing a quality quarterback will sign the blacklisted Colin Kaepernick who took a knee and lost his job when he pissed off the Donald in 2016. Just wait and see what happens when NASCAR bans the Confederacy's Stars and Bars flag. Push is coming to shove, folks. Reject false narratives about BLM and hope there is some national decency left.

But what more is there to say when MAGA rallies resume and Covid-19 taskforce updates disappear. Amber alert! Dr. Fauci and Dr. Brix. Has anyone seen them lately?

So far, so good. – Virgil



We continue the process of increasing the distribution of this Journal in the hopes of attracting new members. If you are new to the Aware Ones and would like to know more about us please visit our website at <http://www.AwareOnesOfTheTreasureCoast.com>. You are also welcome to

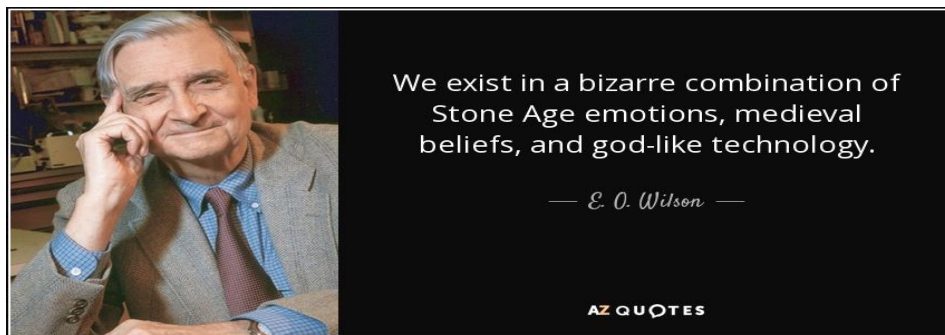
join our table at Importico's Bakery, 555 S. Colorado Ave., Stuart, (currently on Covid hiatus) where we gather every Sunday *around* the hours of 9:30 to 11:00 to share ideas and challenge your mind. Members are encouraged to share and spread what is becoming a very interesting magazine. Outside criticism and interesting contributions are welcomed.

*If you do not want the journal and wish to have your address removed, please email [vmthorp@outlook.com](mailto:vmthorp@outlook.com) for confirmation.*

## AOTC MEMBERS

Joan Auerbach	Stretch Graton
Marsha Banks	Bob Haskins
Ernie Breud	Barbara Lange
Eddie Buitrago	Jim Longo
Rick Burkhart	Yashi Nozawa
Sandra Burkhart	Roberta Synal
Paul Carlos	Lucy Thorp
Gloria Cosgrove	Virgil Thorp
Ray Duryea	Dan Vignau
Marilyn Graton	Ed Zillioux
Gale Baker	Linda Webb
Bert Mautz	Betty Tewksbury
David Dorenzo	

**HISTORY REMEMBERS EVEN IF THE STUPID DON'T**



# MEETINGS & EVENTS



## Meetings

Sunday Coffee – Still in limbo. Reschedule TBA Stuart, 9:30 amish, outside when weather is agreeable and the virus transmutations allow. Or, when the bridge is fixed.

TC Secular Writers – In limbo. Reschedule TBA Every other Thursday, Jensen's House of Brews, 6:30 pm; July TBA, August TBA.

Social coffee and writers' meetings may become regular with "Zoom", a laxative for your mind. Check your e-mail for notifications of virtual gatherings.

## Events

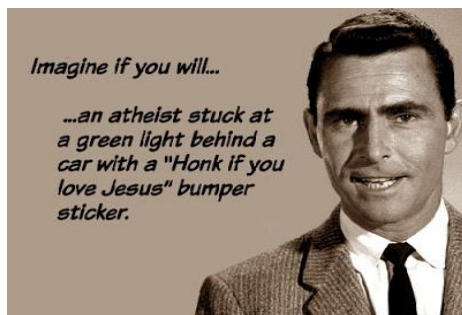
July 1 – International Joke Day.

July 2 – I Forgot Day. If you are having a bad day, just forget it.

July 4 – Independence Day, U.S. 1776

July 5 – National Bikini Day

July 11 – E.B. White born 1899. Read *Charlotte's Web* or *The Elements of Style* and learn correct pronoun case and agreements of subjects with verbs.

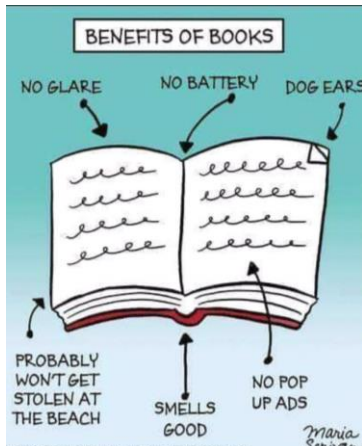


July 17 – Disneyland opens in Anaheim, CA. 1955.

July 20 – Gregor Mendel born 1822. Founder of modern science and genetics, i.e. gene theory of heredity. Linnaeus who?

July 24 – National Tequila Day. Have a pitcher of Margaritas today.





July 27 – Bugs Bunny debuts 1940.

Aug. 1 – National Mustard Day (King of the Condiments). MTV debuted 1981.

Aug. 3 – National Watermelon Day.

Aug. 5 – AOTC Journal 5-5 deadline.

Aug. 9 – Book Lover's Day. Betty Boop created 1930.

Aug. 13 – National Left-hander Day.

Everything left-handed costs more. "Lefties have rights, too!"

Aug. 26 – Women's Equality Day. 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment passed 1920 (women's right to vote approved).

Aug. 28 – Dream Day, 1963. Anniversary of Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial. Google to hear a stirring address.

Sep. 1 – World War II begins as Hitler invades Poland 1939.



## Atheist Conferences

Aug 14-16 – *Skepticon goes virtual!* "Due to the Covid-19 wildness, we're taking Skepticon 12 remote!" – Lauren Lane, Team Skepticon. (<https://skepticon.org>)

November – *Covid Cancels FFRF Convention*. 2020 National Freedom From Religion Foundation convention in San Antonio, TX is the latest victim of the pandemic. Organizers hope for a post-covid celebration next year Nov 19-21, 2021 in Boston Massachusetts. Scheduled headliners include Gloria Steinem, John Irving and Margaret Atwood. [ffrf.org](http://ffrf.org), P.O. Box 750, Madison, WI 53701 for new details and arrangements.

## Thoughts from Daily Ingersoll

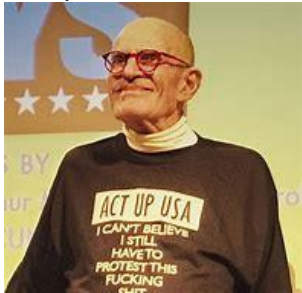


It is contended by many that ours is a Christian government, founded upon the Bible, and that all who look upon the book as false or foolish are destroying the foundation of our country. The truth is, our government is not founded upon the rights of gods, but upon the rights of men. Our Constitution was framed, not to declare and uphold the deity of Christ, but the sacredness of humanity. Ours is the first government made by the people and for the people. It is the only nation with which the gods have had nothing to do. And yet there are some judges dishonest and cowardly enough to solemnly decide that this is a Christian country, and that our free institutions are based upon the infamous laws of Jehovah.

— Robert Green Ingersoll, "Individuality" (1873)

Passings – 120,906+ Americans from Covid-19 as of June 20, 2020, the summer solstice.

Larry Kramer – 84, Fiery gay playwright,



author of semi-autobiographical *The Normal Heart*, and LGBTQ activist. Kramer helped found AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) during the early days of the AIDS holocaust in 1987. "Our own country's democratic process declares us to be unequal, which means, in a democracy, that our enemy is you," he wrote in 2007. "You treat us like crumbs. You hate us. And sadly, we let you." Of pneumonia May 27, 2020.

Ken Osmond – 76, *Leave it to Beaver's* obnoxious teenager,



"Eddie Haskell", Osmond became a Los Angeles police officer after his child acting career ended. Osmond served in the LAPD from 1970 to 1988 when he was struck by five bullets while pursuing a car thief. Osmond's son, Eric, remembered him as "an incredibly kind and wonderful father." No cause of death was given.





### Coronavirus hero –



Tim Bray, engineer overseeing operations at Amazon Cloud and Amazon VP, resigned over recent firings of workers protesting unsafe working conditions. Saying warehouse workers being fired was "evidence of a vein of toxicity running through the company culture." Bray added in his resignation, "I choose neither to serve nor drink that poison."

Hidden Identity – Who is this pretty lady? Hint: She graduated from Cornell University and was a Phi Beta Kappa key holder. (\*Answer in the last page).



## COMMENTARY

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*aware ones, family, and friends,*

*the following was written by my youngest son, robert.*

*he is a registered nurse (with degrees in psychology and two in business) working the covid 19 floor. obviously, his work terrifies me. bert*



# This is where they come ...to die

By Rob Mautz

This is where they come to die. It hit me all at once, while I sat in the nursing station. Many of the people suffering covid are not candidates for intubation and ventilation. If they get worse, we will not send them to the ICU. Either they do not want it, or it is not a good prognosis. So, they stay on our floor, the third floor, the covid floor. And they either improve or they receive as much oxygen



as we can give them until they suffocate. We are seeing a lot of deaths. At least we are not seeing the young. The young are strong and go on ventilators. We see the tired and old, who lost the fight with diabetes and heart failure, with the thieving fingers



of dementia wrapping around their brains. We see the broken being destroyed by this virus. Many of these people have resolved themselves to this fate. They spoke with the palliative care team; they understand their prognosis. They understand and choose no ventilator, no chest compressions, no feeding tubes. They talk to their family on speaker phone. They say goodbye. And then they slowly descend into a

hypoxic stupor, made comfortable by a morphine drip.

As for me. I cry in my coffee. I cry when I hug my wife. I cry when I put my children to bed. But when I enter the hospital, I have dry eyes. You need dry eyes when death is all around you.



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# AS IF? *CAPITALISM* – GOOD, *SOCIALISM* – BAD!?!?

By J. Dan Vignau

America is a republic, founded by land owning and slave owning men of relative wealth; founded by men who only wanted landowners to be able to vote.

By definition, American democracy is based on belief that “All men are created equal”, one of the first phrases that is taught to us as we are schooled in the American way. It is a totally fictional concept, both in truth, and in practice. There are very few socialist societies – pretty much just indigenous groups – which of course, we believers in the equality of all people have killed through massive genocidal campaigns around the world, for our god; the accumulation of massive wealth.

America's far right thinkers perpetuate the idea of democracy, while simultaneously usurping our workers' constitutional rights, i.e. “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

People forget, or rather are not taught that police departments were formed by governing bodies to save the evil capitalist pigs the expense of hiring thugs to protect their wealth, and to insure that citizens who want Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit



of Happiness, can never have enough of it to have any power of their own.

One of the main points driven into our skulls by the ruling right is that Socialism is inherently evil. We have even had to rename it as Democratic Socialism, because the constant barrage of right-wing memes has infected our minds against such concepts, whether understood or not, as "Socialism". This scares the hell out of our rulers, and rightly so. Jeff Bezos is working hard to become a trillionaire, on the backs of \$600 a week



(before taxes) employees just glad to have a job, even if it means that they must carry around, literally a pot to pee in, mostly two liter plastic soda bottles. Our far-right purveyors of disinformation change laws to allow companies owned by people like Bezos to pay no taxes.



But remember, CAPITALISM GOOD; SOCIALISM BAD.  
CAPITALISM GOOD; SOCIALISM BAD. CAPITALISM GOOD;  
SOCIALISM BAD. *Ad Infinitum.*

When I was in grad school learning about Criminology, (which at the time we 1960's rebels called Radical Sociology) we studied just how much inequality there is in American versus Russian society. The appalling statistic that glared at us was that the supposedly Communist Russian oligarchs made 200 times more than the average worker. Of course, America was ten times better, because our captains of industry, made \$2000 to one dollar for the typical worker. Today, even this pales when we have \$200 a week part-time workers and Mega-Billionaires.

Someone wearing a shirt that says "America Love It Or Leave It" while holding the flag of a group of people who definitely tried to leave it has to be one of the best examples of irony I've ever seen.



Today, fortunate workers who really want to do well supporting families can easily earn six figure incomes, even at jobs requiring little education. Easy for some!

Unfortunately today, a typical worker has no benefits, works two part-time jobs, or at least, has more than one worker in a family unit and earns just enough to barely keep up with bills we accumulate to have the stuff our advertisers tell us we must own ... and must slave away to pay off.

America: LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT!?! As if.





# Stoned Musings

By Virgil Thorp

As I sat in my easiest chair, slightly stoned and slightly worn out from household duties preparing for the Aware Ones' potluck that afternoon. The pot I smoked encouraged a Bob Dylanesque earworm from the past, "everybody must get stoned." I began to wonder if I still have the

energy and effort to endure the task of surviving the clean-up of the current bewildering mess that has been a festering sore on America's ass for almost four years.

The cannabis muse struck my mind with a cynical tickle that we were experiencing total lawlessness or contempt of law and since it was the government, particularly the "ruling party", did I need to continue having respect for the law, or was I free to ignore the law as well?

My mind wandered further. More law or less law? The questions threatened to explode and



while I generally agree with the intentions of having rules and regulations and have adhered with and obeyed traffic, food and drug purity, health ... well, every once and a while in my youth I enjoyed riding my motorcycle without my helmet, perversely relishing the pleasure of having my hair stroked by the molecules of nitrogen and oxygen mixed with various particles of other gases and microscopic solids; eating a few bugs, getting drenchingly wet and shivering uncontrollably after riding through a cold rain that turned to snow this side of Flagstaff, Arizona. Was it the traffic rules or the cold that made me choose to wear my motorcycle helmet that strength-sucking frigid afternoon?

I am sure there have been other times that I flouted rules and laws that made little to no sense. For instance, I refuse to believe there is such a thing as an *illegal* recreational drug. Or, should be, despite the prohibiting consequence of possible discovery and incarceration.

Other than maybe a few erstwhile absurd notions of power and control, I am pretty much a law-abiding gentleman and only surreptitiously masturbate in the privacy of whatever enclosed space or obscuring shrubbery I find myself in. I have a reluctance to sharing my sin out in the open with non-consenting adults. This is totally opposite of a congressional Lewandowski

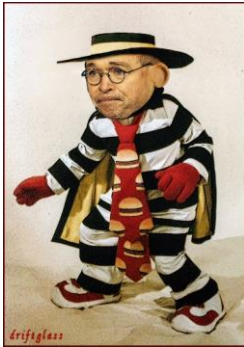


exhibitionistic dick wave by proxy.



Am I doing as the president does? Good for him, good for me? If he can snub the rules, why can't I? Or, should I? I recall back when then President

Lyndon Johnson was photographed in his Lincoln Continental convertible tooling around his ranch with an open container in his hand. He didn't even have his seatbelt fastened! The blatant contempt! The hypocrisy! The horror!



The questions tumble out of my head like a busted appendix and I must ask out loud to no one but myself, is it a-moral or is it im-moral? And to do what? Are some of us blessed with divine right and the rest of us predestined to suppression as their compliant serfs?

Someone's got to be blamed for this circumstance of inequality, but who? Nunez? McConnell? Mulvaney? Roberts? Donald Trump and his *et al* family of grifters, thieves and cheats? Are there others higher up, holding the strings? Don't go there I am warned! Don't use the "R" word! Can a truth be heard amongst the lying obfuscations spewing from the pieholes of Conway, Sanders, Hannity and Giuliani. Tucker, Tomi, Janine, Steve, Candace, Kayleigh and



Kevin, an entire bleacher section of white supremacists, sexual misogynists and Ponzi schemers. All armed with a dizzying variety and amount of placards, flags and slogans that they repeatedly shout – without stammering or stuttering – over and over until even my mind, obscured with self-doubt, starts thinking that, “well, when you put it that way” ...

Holy shit, we are in deep trouble.

"What you're seeing and what you're reading is not what's happening," Trump was quoted as saying in Orwellian-Pompeo pomposity. We are being lectured that there "is nothing to see here, move along." Oh, for only an Obie Wan Kenobi to counter the dark side of the force. "Our only hope!"

Is this what happens when poles reverse? We have flipped into bizarro world where white is black, night is day and left becomes right. Why wouldn't an a-moral person be blatant about the im-moral crimes they are committing?



"I'm doing everything and anything to the United States of America for my pleasure and wha-da-ya mean extortion is illegal. Who says so? Ya pussies! Try and stop me! You better hide, I'm on my way to fifth Avenue with my bible and my gun!"

Picture if you will, a future bank robber entering the depository and making all the tellers, patrons and vice-presidents sign non-disclosure forms. No one would legally be allowed to testify to the obvious crimes. It's Jack Nicholson morphing into Bill Barr as the original Joker. Such is the state of karma in twenty-nineteen. Will there be someone to say loudly and defiantly, "No!" in 2020?



"*L'Etat, C'est Moi*" (trans. I am the state) is what Louis the XIV allegedly said in the seventeenth century as France's decadent Sun King. Essentially meaning that as absolute monarch all things come through him. The state is him, therefore, the law is him. Do I hear the shattering of a social contract? So, when I hear of a president cancelling primary elections, I'm chilled to the bone again, just like on that motorcycle ride so long ago. What sort of treason against the Constitution will we hear today? Will he become more and more deluded and promote himself beyond a stable genius to an angry, old-testament deity? Will someone, anyone step forward, take away the military toys from the pouting tantrum and say "no, you don't get to start a race-war today."

And then, faintly at first and building to a voluble crescendo



speaks a young girl. A 16-year-old, barely a woman, accusing the powerful at the United Nations of greed and exploitation at the cost of her future. "How dare you!" slaps them across the face.

How immature the leaders have been and are stained by their deceitful duplicity as science is denied and veracity is ignored. They have halted human progress to

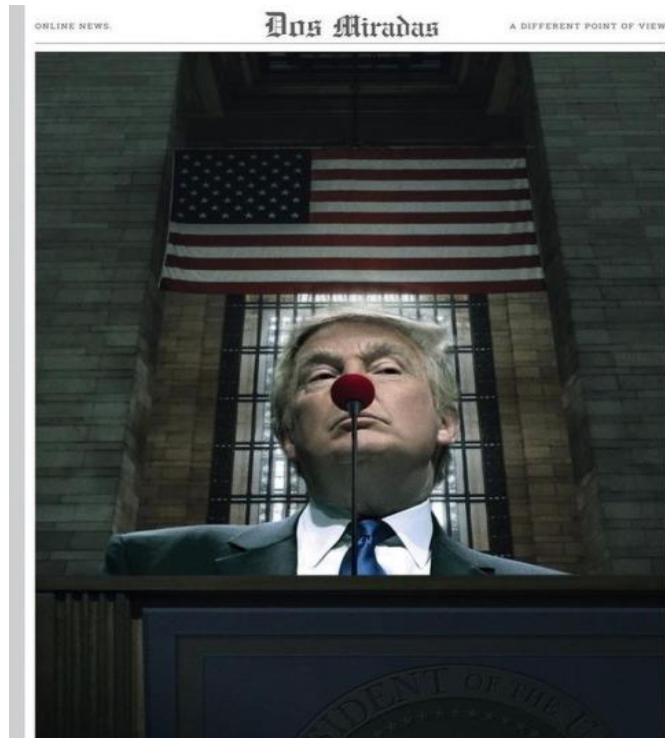
plunder every last drop of petroleum in a gluttonous orgy that despoils the entire planet. Profit and money and "fairytales of eternal economic growth. People are suffering, people are dying, entire eco systems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of the mass extinction ..." the new voice cries with focused purpose. "How dare you!"

Greta Thunberg, the young Swedish climate activist stood up and angrily accused them, "The eyes of our future are upon you and if you choose to fail us, I say we will never forgive you."



Thomas Jefferson declared that "in the course of human events" there is a duty for patriots to rise up and change a government when wrong is so visible and promoted.

Hateful is more like it but there is a disadvantage of being an



atheist, the faithful no longer consent to heed you. They want a hero; they want a messiah to tell them they are special and it is okay to discriminate against those they fear. And *voila*, that gentle message of a bleeding-heart Jesus is replaced with tasers and clubs and justice withers like a plucked fruit

ignored on the counter.

Today is no longer yesterday and a creeping feeling works its way up from your anus to your shoulders that even though you are discontented, you no longer matter and only the young can be tireless protesters, innocently crusading against injustice with marches and singing and yelling at the fascists. Will they assemble in time? Will the rainbow gathering be enough?

Well, I hope so. I have had my time so someone else must take up the challenge. My aching knees say it is the result of nature



and I am indeed old and weary, and all the television talking heads are looking for the lead that bleeds. Dejection sprouts.

Beware the children's crusade? Sincere yet so gullible. So young, so easily led. So easily influenced by unscrupulous mendacity? Will misery eclipse hope? I have no answer which way the mob will turn and cannot predict a happy future. "God knows when but you're doing it again," the new earworm echoes.



In my weariness do I cynically say, go my children, it is your turn to experience the terror of finding yourself being cannon fodder. Is it all you can do to give up and embrace being cannon fodder? To procreate and make more. To feed the insatiable machine? To be like the gladiators in ancient Rome and fight to the death for the amusement of the oligarchs and shed your blood as they view the spectacle from a sheltered, distant, gated community. They will not suffer, you will. So you respond with more hate and more animosity. The oligarchs cheer with each blow that is delivered. Reality twists perceptions and like a cornered animal striking out at any enemy, you choose to hate the person you've been convinced is your competitor. It's *them* at fault, after all, not you. Not your family, not your race. "If you are not better than a nigger, son, then who are you better than?" Gene Hackman's character, agent Rupert Anderson, explained to special FBI agent Ward (Willem Defoe), what Hackman's father had chillingly said as he described the why, wherefore and source of American racism in the 1988 multi-award winning movie about the 1960's civil rights struggle, *Mississippi Burning*.

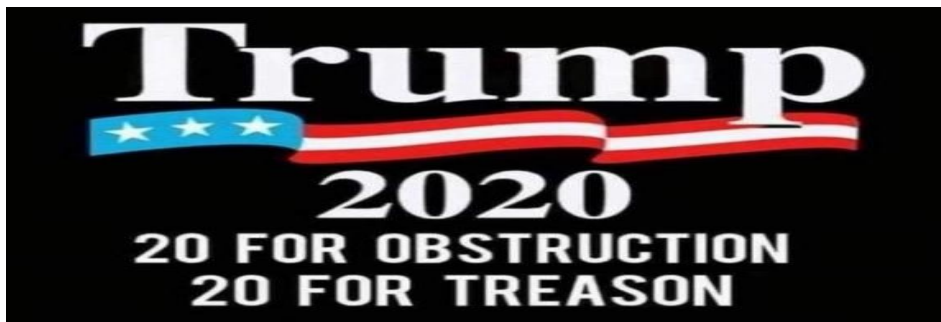
Yes, nuke them until they glow. And when that happens, beg your God to come and take your pain and guilt away as you seek redemption for the sins against humanity you were persuaded to commit. Will you be surprised when those aches and pains

continue? Like the anguish of Lady Macbeth lamenting the damned spots of blood on her hands? I hope so and that is the one thing I maintain a reluctant faith of. Your continued pain of your epiphany of executing an innocent man. Discovering what you've done will obliterate any chance of hope for your redemption. What is the America you want? A dead man choked to death in the street? Is that horrific vision what MAGA really means to you? White supremacy? Revulsion begins and a multitude responds. From city to city, country to country, it is happening. Could this be the movement we prayed for?

But do not despair yet, there is a slim chance the huge orange turd will be circling the toilet bowl which will have to be my optimism as we strain through the evacuation of this multi-national constipation.

Oh my, am I detecting a fresh strength growing in the force. I think I can walk! And if I can walk, I can march. Slowly, of course, but not alone and that will make all the difference. Come, let us march. Every age, every race, every creed, join us and resist the contemptible fascists and their deplorable cannon fodders. Even if you have to limp. Oh man, am I stoned?

All is not quite lost, and I cautiously cling to a forlorn sense of hope as I add another leaf to the table. Obie Wan waves his hand and nods. No, "no Nobel prize for you, pussy grabber." Somewhere from far, far away, I think I hear the lyrics of another Bob Dylan anthem, "Donald Trump ain't yellow, he's chicken."



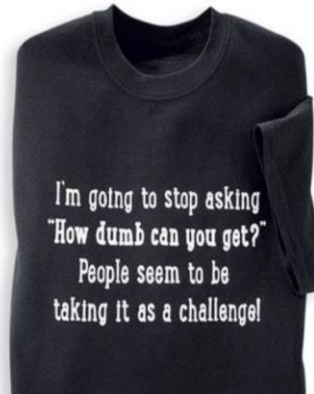
# POV – *Sequester in Place*

By Gale Baker

Now that we have been sequestered at home with little to see but TV, pre-taped movies and an occasional read; we may find it necessary to reflect on better times.

This morning I watched TV and saw what I considered to be a glut of ads for WWE and the hard-core wrestling matches that are touted and so very popular with people including the “Trumpster Dumpster.” They were followed by as many ads about shows with people hurting each other, *Ellen’s Game of Games* etc. as well as those supposed make us believe most Americans want to be Ninja warriors. And these were all ads from my news programs on cable.

Through the years, many of us have graduated away from our old TV



networks, like NBC, ABC and CBS. But some of them brought programming that lingers with us always.



I remember when I was a child; I recall that we had the only television in the area. Once a week on Friday nights, my mother would make a great big tub of popcorn. That was a prelude to a night of whooping and hollering at the B&W TV as neighbors gathered to watch *Friday Night Wrestling*. My father would take great pains to make sure the rabbit ears were properly adjusted. Then it

was off to the mats with stars like Gorgeous George and others. I like the fact that so many people were there. But they were mostly grownups, so I never felt bad about secluding to my corner and playing with my dolls. They really didn't notice me anyway.

Then there were Saturdays when I begged to stay at Mammy and Pa's house. I loved them both but never so much as Saturday nights when they would watch *Your Show of Shows* with Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca. Actually, I watched it mostly with Pa while Mammy snored in her bed [something she also did in afternoons when she was "resting her eyes."]. Back then living rooms were also considered sleeping quarters.

And when WSIX (ABC) came on the air, I found Fred and Ginger and Gene Kelly and so many other wonderful images to inspire my imagination. I even discovered Bogie and Cagney and all the Warner Brothers bad men.



Today I think I am overly saturated with TV. Perhaps America is also. I watch ABC *Good Morning, America* and skip the stuff I find innocuous. I TiVo Ari and Rachel just to make sure I am keeping up on world events as they happen. I used to watch *Morning Joe* but have found it and its pundits so repetitious it makes me yawn. Now I hear nothing but bad news and what a dildo Trump is. This week they started talking about November and the election and what a bloodbath it is likely to be. I am thinking of turning off all news stories and cable TV until all the election is over. I know who I want, and it is certainly not Trump, and the internet has plenty of reliable Health Organizations to tell me what to do to keep safe during the pandemic.



To Rick Scott – In my more than 70 years, I have lived in both so called "red" and "blue" states including both coasts and our middle states where agriculture and "hard" living exists. What I have found is that there are no red and blue, only red, white and blue states. And anyone who thinks differently is an idiot. So where does that leave you??????? I suggest you leave your idiotic opinions on the doorstep and start serving the people of Florida, which is now my home.



To William Barr, Donald Trump and Mitch McConnell – There was the Black Death in the Medieval Dark Ages, and the

Black Lung Death suffered by Coal Miners, and now we have what I call the Black Brain Death suffered by Republicans like you. Are you hoping that only Democrats will die? Or are you just



so isolated in your brain-dead thinking that you can promote dollars and your fat cat supporters over human lives. I believe it is the latter.

To Dems – Every day we are shown what a disaster Donald Trump is; West Point, Meat Packing plants, Opening Schools while not using the Defense Act for important medical supplies and continuing to disrupt

briefings with his wandering outrageous campaign speechifying. Who in the world are those near 50% who think he is doing a good job? Dan, I don't know where you got your info about Adderall and other drugs. Maybe it is a conspiracy theory. Who knows? Someone said on a morning show today [can't remember who, but it was someone in the House] that they didn't know what was in Trump's head. I think I have figured it out. It is either a gerbil on a wheel chasing a KFC thigh or it is a cadre of mice fighting over a Big Mac.

To William Barr – You are a disgrace to the law profession. We are in such a sad time, and you take advantage of it by trying to get rid of a legitimate confession and probe. Does Trump mean that much to you, that you are willing to wallow in his mud?





I have been mourning the loss of Northern toilet tissue from shelves for almost 2 months now. So, okay I'm stuck inside except for those weekly attempts to find some, no luck yet. So, I'm watching a lot of TV, and what do I see? Toilet paper commercials, NORTHERN TOILET PAPER. Now I'm convinced those damned Charmin bears are hoarding it! Especially the little one that thinks he wears underpants!

Another e-message to the WH today – The working poor and middle-class scramble to feed their families. Some are receiving rent or mortgage forgiveness for a period of time. Trump organization is asking for rent forgiveness? Pardon me while I laugh. While actual (not faux) Billionaires throw money at research, testing, and other necessary things to help save our race and planet; what are you throwing? Ah! Tantrums. Don't call the crazy ideas you throw out sarcasm. You don't know the intricacies of that word. I do. I've worked with the best comedians in the world.

If you look at the pictures of the two men [can I call them that?]



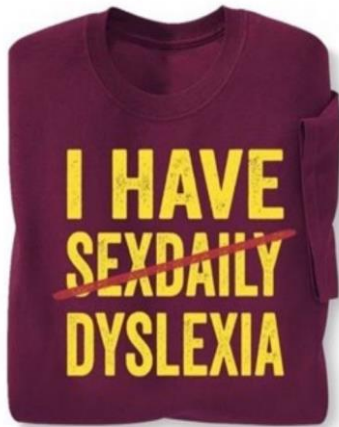
who were arrested for the murder of a young black man in Georgia finally; you will see what personifies racism in America. Fat, bloated hard drinking, bearded red necks with guns who have little to do. I have a few friends in Georgia; some attorneys, doctors, theater producers etc. None are like these. But that is what Georgia looks like to America now.

Well – I finally ran out of old *Magnums*, *Murder She Wrote*s and

*Jags* and *Elementaries*.

So: being a fan of Hugh Laurie – I found an HBO half hour comedy called *Avenue 5*.

If your humor is as warped as mine, you will enjoy the parodies of our present world and political situation about a commercial space ship, its owner [blonde and fat] and the captive passengers who have just been told they can't return to earth for 3 years. Humanity in all its pits and falls.



If you're not into TV at this point, check them out anyway. These 29-minute segments will have you in stitches sometimes].

Where have we gone, but backward?

That a human life is not worth more than a number; that a black man has less right to life than a white; that it is all right to destroy our neighbors and neighborhoods because we are angry?

Is it okay for a policeman to smother a man to death just because he wears a uniform?



Our forefathers thought this country would bring a new meaning to life, liberty and justice for all.

But it has brought more unworthy leaders who exalt prejudice, anger, hatred, and disproportion.

Shame on us for not listening to their wisdom.

Here's my love letter for today to the Defiler in Chief.

I have been listening to your rhetoric these past weeks and have a question and some advice for you. Have you heard the expression, "There is a special place in hell for you?" I suggest

that you get your fire-retardant suit on, because I think there is finally a place for you to be, "special."

And my love letters keep on going.... To Donald Trump, Bill Barr & other Conspirators. Congratulations to you and your whole criminal organization. You have proved that in America you can be whatever you want to be. And boy, did you choose a doozie!



Just received my COVID-19  
rapid test kit from CHINA!  
soooooo relieved!!!!!! Thanks beijing!!!!



# Condescending Assumptions Are Racist?

By J. Dan Vignau

During every riot, we hear people ask, "why would these protesters destroy their own neighborhoods?" The problem with this question is that its assumptions are that the protesters are the same people as the looters, when in actuality, they are

merely opportunistic criminals who know the police will be too busy to arrest them. The right-wing racists prefer to call the peaceful protesters criminals, because that is easier than admitting that there are inequalities and injustices in our society. Besides, the attitudes of the Dis-Trumpians is the true problem.

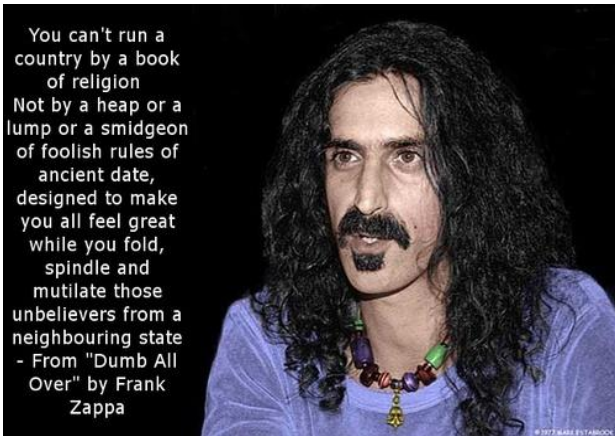
Attributing this hooliganistic theft to the protesting community works to insulate and reinforce the inherently prejudiced Deplorables against all things that are progressive and fair. By portraying the protesters as the evil-left, rather than the criminals, their fragile egos are insulated from the reality of bad cops and helps to maintain the status quo of America as a non-racist country. This insulation is furthered by the right-wing belief that there are only two types of people, good and evil, meaning all we have to do is either lock up or shoot the bad ones.

I am not suggesting that absolutely no protesters are damaging stores and such. I am only stating that it is being

blown way out of proportion by the media, which thrives on sensationalism.

For centuries, politicians have used the ignorance of their easily led sheep to further their quest for power. While precluding any thought or reasoning, classifying people as good or bad, causes, yes causes, the intellectually deficient and their masters from learning and reasoning. This simplistic classification of beliefs insures that highly susceptible voters continue to revel in their ignorant choices of voting based on the memes supplied by the very people who are not only taking advantage of their lack of inquisitiveness, but also provide all of the answers that true simpletons need to justify all of their prejudice.

Simplistic thought patterns are not inbred and are not



necessarily a sign of the lack of intelligence, although a lack of education as to how to reason certainly helps. This duality of good people versus evil people alleviates – rather precludes – thinking that their inherent prejudice or racism is the problem. The

severe bias in the distribution of resources from their own labor, as well as the labor of racial, ethnic, and other persecuted minorities becomes the norm, because voters are bombarded with the thoughts of truly evil people, i.e. their masters who want their votes. How the Republican party continues to convince its voters that they are the party of fiscal responsibility defies all reasoning ability, especially when the statistics plainly prove that the deficit increases when Republicans are in power and decreases when Democrats rule.

Always.

There is only one way for the usurpers of our national wealth can get away with this. It is by convincing the voters to distrust the facts and statistics (liberal media), to give them simple phrases to repeat whenever confronted by facts (fake news), and



most of all to provide a couple of hot issues that preclude all reasoning, in this case guns and abortion (Antifa is coming for your guns and murder your unborn children!). Of course, convincing non-thinkers to believe that minorities are the culprits on both issues helps, especially when the parroting of simplistic slogans can be used to sell even more guns to

right wing fanatics.

I am always astounded whenever an obvious racist begins a sentence with, "I am not a racist, but...." All he is really claiming is that he has not shot or lynched anyone, at least not recently. When Fox News, The Heritage Foundation, and The American Family Council were formed, with the stated purpose of convincing poor people and Christians to vote against their own interest, Ronald Reagan's, "Are you with us or against us?" statement was the mantra. When a ruling elite buys our politicians through campaign contributions, when discrimination is portrayed as justified, and rampantly blind patriotism is seen as the only allowable thought, we have fascism. Yes, Fascism, as in when industry and money markets control the governing process. But that is a topic for another day.





**Hell of a job, Donnie.  
You've managed to  
bring back the 1918  
Pandemic, 1929  
Depression & 1968  
Race Riots  
at the same time.**



**ARTICLES**

# COVID-19 DIARY



How sad it must be — believing that scientists, scholars, historians, economists, and journalists have devoted their whole lives to deceiving you, while a reality-TV star with decades of fraud and exhaustively-documented lying is your only beacon of honesty.

by bert mautz

04.28.20

## Too Mundane Perhaps?

Cannot say the pandemic caught us by surprise. We watch a lot of MSNBC; start the day with Joe and Mika and end it with Rachel. Screaming obscenities at Lyin' Trump in between. We understood, if theoretically that this could be

bad. Had supper with friends at Bonefish on Tuesday, 03.10.20. Attended the E. Ocean church noon Easter concert Wednesday, 03.11.20 and reluctantly decided we need to stay at home until further notice, or the coast is clear. When the NCAA canceled March Madness the basketball tournament, a guy can wonder what is happening to this world.

Our homes are a couple blocks apart, so we had that bit of variety, taking turns hosting supper, happy hour on the sunset balcony. The apprehension of binge shopping, and toilet paper getting scarce led us to some binging of our own including \$800 at Total Wine. The Jim Beam Black and Meiomi pinot, Kim Crawford sauvignon blanc and South African cabernet by the case would not run out anytime soon, and lots of frozen meatballs and tomato sauce, chicken breasts, pork



chops, and coffee ice cream in our three freezers. (Betty's house has two)



That's it. Beginning to take sequestering seriously. Nothing but occasional Publix trips as necessary, and Betty wears mask, goggles, and gloves for those ever more seldom excursions. Boredom was not a problem with television, internet, and *NYTimes* and *Washington Post* daily.

And then the forwarded email letter. Allan Broadbent: husband, father, dentist, jovial personality was on a ventilator with Covid-19. The Broadbent family were stalwarts of the Champaign, Illinois Mormon congregation. Emer Broadbent, the family patriarch was an agriculture economist, specializing in transforming third world subsistence farming into shared markets. A fascinating guy, who, by the way, had me driving at fourteen. Another letter two days later announcing Allan was failing. The third email was his obituary. A peer had died. Killed by Covid-19. This brings the reality of the danger into sharper focus. Joining that gathering of Americans who know a casualty personally.



Robert Alexander Mautz, my youngest son, recently became a registered nurse, working in a Southern California hospital. Robert was assigned to the "Covid floor." We've talked about the rigors of personal protective gear, and the ritualization of changing gowns

between patients. Twelve-hour days caring for elderly and previously ill patients who will inevitably die, minus a few younger survivors transferred to the ICU. The stress on his wife and three small children is huge. His brothers and I fear for his health. Additionally, his brothers have essential jobs, in contact with the

public, coming home to strip in the garage and dash for their showers, hoping to be clean enough.

There are those who explore restaurants, experiencing as many different eateries as possible, offering their critical appraisals to anyone who will listen. Our practice is to revisit a few particularly good ones. We are so familiar that upon making reservations we specified preferred tables. Bartenders, waiters, the folks on the phone know us and our preferences. Being so comfortable takes the gamble out of the experience, allowing people watching, or the surf on the beach to a relaxing degree. It was our custom to visit these favorites four and occasionally five times a week. Now all of this spoiling ourselves is gone. Leaving us to worry, how are those kids mixing my Manhattan, greeting us with reports on their own families, how are they doing financially. Surely, they miss Betty's twenty-dollar bill tips.

The Bonefish Bar on Tuesdays attracts a bunch of regulars. Some of us over a period of ten years, or more. Can become so obsessive about this familiarity to compel arriving before the happy hour door opening and wait outside on benches for twenty to thirty minutes, because you have a favorite bar stool. No kidding, I really like my end of the bar situation, and besides can stand my sticks in the corner, but more enjoy the view of senior patron social dynamics of the entire room and cannot see the over-bar-flat screens.

Safe, lonely, constrained – Kay lives in a senior community. Not assisted living. No healthcare component, but management can make rules for its residents. Closed the dining room. Vetoed all visitors. Forbade inter-apartment visiting. Dinners are delivered. Resident-wide meetings and announcements are conducted on the in-house television network. Friday, Kay received her \$1200 check with Trump's name on it. She understands the limitations imposed by management and withstands loneliness through electronic contact with her extensive network of friends and family.

We are within the highly susceptible population cohort, old and damaged, must take this seriously, so extra vigilant. Social distancing interrupts weekly interactions with friends, no entertaining, "Come on over. We'll open a bottle of red." Trying Zoom, if uncomfortable with nostril views, or suitable backgrounds in our broadcast studio settings; kitchen clutter or living room art on the walls.

Occupied with five minutes outside a WAWA take out this morning observing the customers coming and going. Social research class taught me about the importance of sample size and population generalization limitations. So, acknowledge folks going in for coffee and sandwiches may not be representative, but universal and flagrant disregard for masks, gloved hands for door pulls. Will those sandwiches be eaten with the same hands? Betty wore gloves, and immediately disposed of same upon returning to the car and then applied hand sanitizer liberally. We do not touch the

sandwich boxes with our bare hands and hold the sandwich with doughnut tissues.

Life during shut down; restaurants no more, cooking at home, occasional take out, no social contact beyond phone and internet. Must acknowledge, this sequestering could be worse, could run out of bourbon, but we

Let's Recap	
The U.S. pandemic response team created by President Obama in 2016?	<b>DISBANDED BY TRUMP</b>
The CDC's China-based expert on pandemic response and containment?	<b>FIRED BY TRUMP</b>
U.S. intelligence agency reports warning of pandemic threat in January 2020?	<b>IGNORED BY TRUMP</b>



"I don't take responsibility at all."  
-- Trump, 3/13/2020

"I inherited a mess."  
-- Trump, 3/16/2020

miss being with our friends. Our wish for our extended families and all of our friends, be well. bert



05.08.20

## WONDERFUL WRETCHED EXCESS

Parked below our sunset balcony seats demanding attention. A top down Rolls Royce convertible, white upholstery, rear opening doors, and get this, pumpkin orange doors and quarter panels with silver hood and deck lid. The owners were visiting next door at our neighbors' courtyard table. Had recently researched the twelve-cylinder engine in the Bentley and its curious derivation being a Siamese pair of VW sixes.

The silver haired owner with creased Bermuda shorts appeared, opened the bonnet and retrieved a cigar. I called down, "We've been admiring your car."

"Thank you very much."



"If you don't mind? What engine is under the hood?"

Now he was engaged. Took a couple steps toward us, leaned on the fence, "It's a twelve."

"Oh my, is that the same twelve that's in the Bentley?"

"Oh no, this is a BMW twelve with twin superchargers."





"Five hundred horsepower easy."

"Closer to six, She's very light on her feet, responsive." (six litres, 561 tot. hp., 14 mpg)

"I believe that. It's all about pounds per horsepower. She is stunning. Thanks for answering my questions. Have a good night."

Within moments cigar smoke whisped up to our level.

"What does something like that cost?" she whispered.

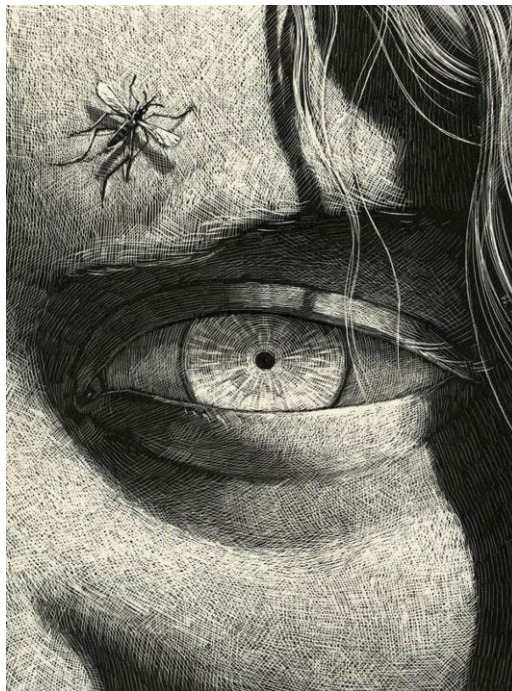
"I've no idea but guessing somewhere over two hundred thousand. Will do some research."

p.s. She was a Rolls Royce "Dawn." Starting price \$351,000, taxes and title extra.

05.16.20

## MALAISE

How are you getting along with this semi confinement and overall activity reduction? We have been so constrained for going on two months. Media are suggesting the loss of jobs combined with uncertainty of return to work and financial well-being will produce an inevitable rise in mental health issues.



namely, suicide, domestic battery, child abuse. And I'm not feeling too good myself.

Attempting rational thought as opposed to depressive self-pity, the self-sufficient retiree lacks only for big league baseball and restaurant eating. Cable television, books awaiting attention, computer and phone links to friends and family, boredom cannot in good conscience be claimed. The Zoom.us online audio and visual hook up is being discovered by



businesses as a substitute for meeting travel that may not return when travel is again infection free, or at least infection less likely. Have you tried Zoom.us for social, or family gatherings? How do you feel, on camera, taking your turn, your hairdo criticized?

The administrative branch is now focused on returning to an open and vigorous economy, infection rates and deaths be damned. Previously the *guvmint* told us to stay home, shelter in place, wear a mask, wash your hands frequently. It was comfortable to give over such decisions and behaviors to a higher power, a veritable parental figure, but then the parent backed off, "You can go shopping if you want to."



Daddy wants to get the economy back so he can claim the recovery.

Tuesday, the traffic was noticeably heavier on Federal Highway. Florida is going back to work, whether or not, it is a good idea, or safe from communicable virus spores. So now, we have to decide whether to go out, whether to mingle. Is a Bonefish table safe to occupy? The bar still, is not open for business. Watched folks walking in without masks, while the wait staff all wore masks. Reminded the plague affects us differently across the socio-economic spectrum. Our less fortunate fellow citizens deserve being looked out for. And perhaps those of us bitching about fewer dinners out and about, should cool it, realize we should be grateful to be eating dinner anywhere.

With the uncertainty comes anxiety. I want to return to normal and those fabulous Oysters Rockefeller at Riverwalk Wine and Oyster Bar, downtown, washed down with a New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. But is it safe with the joint's tiny tables, squeezed together? What does being part of a vulnerable population really mean? We are seniors. We are susceptible to infection. Intubation is not a happy prospect. Wear a mask into a restaurant where we intend to eat and drink?

And so, springs the anxiety, the uncertainty, the wishing that parental feel good directive would tell me what is good for me, or not and what I should avoid. If you've listened to Dr. Fauci very often, you have learned that the opportunities for infection are devious, hidden, and avoidable only by isolation. We're right back where this began in March. Stay the hell at home! bert

The devil whispered in my ear "You're not strong enough to weather the storm."



I whispered in the devil's ear "I love your eggs."



05.25.20

## KEEP 'UM WAITING

Arlington National Cemetery, the soldiers representing every branch of the military have been standing at strict attention since before ten o'clock, the appointed hour for the wreath placing. Trump's wife and entourage took their

positions at ten-twenty. They drove over in the same limo. He walks on at ten-thirty. The disrespect is somehow tied to his craving attention, adoration even if he must manufacture it.

Back in 2016 he was doing rallies in hangars so he could taxi TRUMPAIR right up to the huge door before the feverish thousands waiting. And then nothing. In what was to become a predictable practice, his followers, the "trumpsters" waved placards and waited. He would appear ten or fifteen minutes later, redoing his hair, or some such, to then stroll on stage applauding with his stupid ass grin, waving to the throng.

Recently he conducted coronavirus press conferences in the white house press room. Starting times were specified, cable tv poised, the press taking their places, his doctors and experts lined up on stage, and then he would appear, late as usual.

What the hell is he doing; sitting in the plane, giving the hair spray time to set? Standing in the hallway? Chatting with Secret Service, waiting an appropriate number of minutes in the car? Even keeping Melania standing in her four-inch heels. What does a president have to do to get respect?

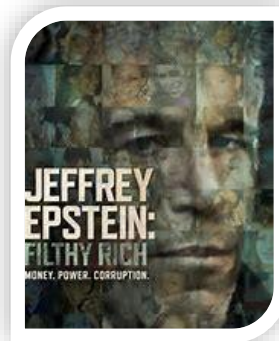
A helicopter ferries his eminence from the back lawn to Andrews Air Force Base where Air Force One awaits. He ascends the boarding stairs, and every time; pauses, turns, and waves to absolutely no one, but has his picture taken, again, bidding the masses gathered to see him off, goodbye.

Why hasn't Joe Scarborough given him a hard time about the disrespect? On air talent regularly have to fill the minutes with pertinent chatter while he keeps us all waiting. bert



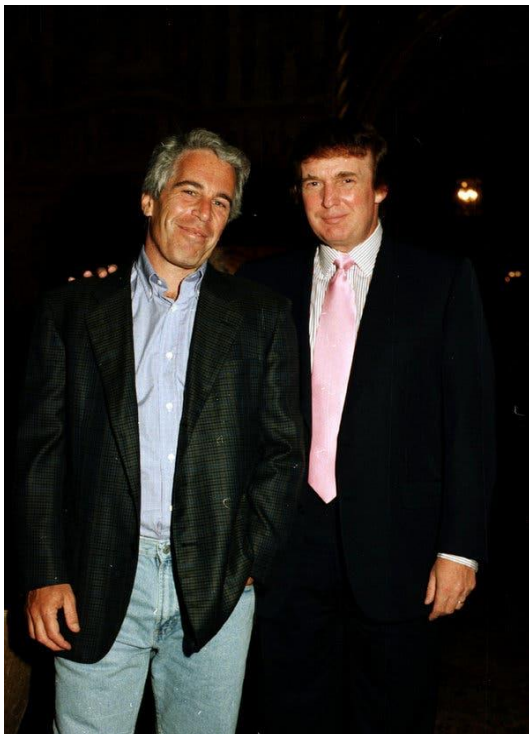
05.29.20

JEFFREY



EPSTEIN

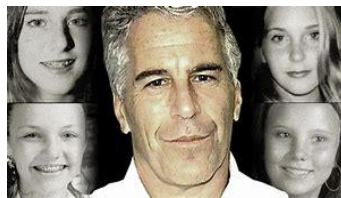
1953 - 2019





The variety and occasional perversity of human sexuality never fails to amaze. Likewise, the obvious health and happiness emanating from a successful partnership/marriage is good for all involved. J.E., as he liked to self-refer preferred/needed children to satisfy him. Mustn't make light of this, but after, what do you have to talk about?

The four part Netflix series, *Filthy Rich*, written by James Patterson documents the recruiting, coordinating, and scheduling of mostly high school age, and often from disadvantaged homes, girls to come to his various homes generally on the assignment to give Jeffrey a massage. The pathetic pervert didn't even enjoy good foreplay, but always paid the kids with a couple hundred-dollar bills.



The story line, the history, is told by several women, years later about their unhappy experiences being used by Epstein. There were hundreds of women/girls who were recruited and "employed." What percentage were unhappy, felt abused? "Abused," is often used in describing what went on in his massage rooms, yachts, planes and lavish homes. Legally, "abused," seems to refer to underage sexual employment. No references are made to physical harm. The term, "he raped me," means different things to the girls/women claiming it happened to them. Never forcefully, cruelly, but certainly unexpected, or without complete cooperation, as their massage proceeded, or Epstein rolled onto his back.



Back to the question of the percentage of "masseuses" who felt wronged. The legal cases made against Epstein leave little question he recruited underage women, initiated prostitution by minors. Epstein's sexual addiction was



allegedly shared with prominent men, Donald Trump, Bill Clinton, and Great Britain's Prince Andrew; renown scientists like Lawrence Krauss and Steven Pinker besides other recognizable faces in all sorts of incriminating and tawdry photographs. Epstein entertained. Beautiful women were always present. They are always smiling in the pictures.

Epstein was brilliant, without moral compass, sophisticatedly persuasive, that is manipulative. Self-made wealthy, with Les Wexner's money. Did he outright steal the money? Or is this some kind of a reinvestment strategy? Many of the wealth transfers happened simultaneously with Epstein acquisitions of homes, airplanes, and the like. Epstein made gifts to Palm Beach county to acquire major equipment prior to suits being filed against him, greasing the tracks for his escapist treatments and soft sentencing.



With little more than this Netflix series, one has to wonder, was it all worth it? Wealth and plentiful, but low-quality sex kept him in court and jail. Epstein assembled

nationally regarded defense teams often led by Alan Dershowitz a Harvard law professor. Still the predilection for underage sex partners was indefensible and he died of questionable circumstances while in custody in the Metropolitan Correctional Center, New York City. (haven't seen last episode on which to form conclusion)

06.02.20

IT'S GOING ON  
THREE MONTHS



Not suffering of boredom. Read the *Times* and the *Post* daily, four monthly magazines, and two weeklies. Buy books from Amazon – haven't cracked yet. Television in three rooms; Netflix and HBO for Bill Maher and Grace & Frankie and of course, movies. And still, "Fuck you, Joe Namath," his insurance ads infuriate me, blurt out my epithet at the flat screen for no rational reason, I just hate them.

These times are maddening, the infection and death daily totals, DOW numbers

plummeting, and now the racial unrest. Some have concluded that the sequestering, social distancing adding up to community shutdowns, on top of forty million unemployed and the social pressures exploded. Triggered by the George Floyd murder by Minneapolis police on video for all to see, set the nationwide chaos loose.



But did the President stepped forward, offering sympathy, promising federal aid, asking for patience – who did those things? Not this President. He takes no responsibility, spurs unrest, promises military responses to rioting. Leadership, or planning a recovery are beyond this administration, only reactionary moves.

Facebook, Twitter, Google social media accelerate every reaction. What were once geniuses of communication and interpersonal connection have turned demonically effective for hurt.

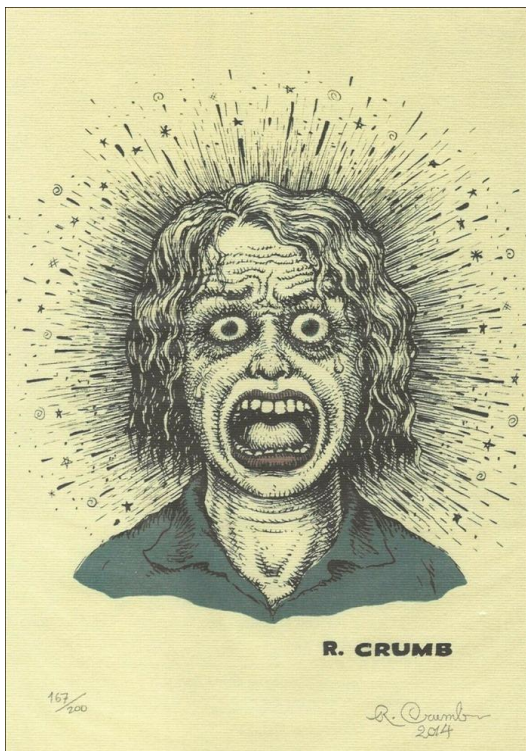
Racism's curse has beset the nation for four hundred years. Throw in the near eradication of native Americans for a "Two-fer" in the original sins for a national foundation for democracy? Have avoided dealing with this history many times. Will that change?



Brings me back to unfortunate, harmless Joe Namath. Infuriating ..... "(you'll) get what you deserve" bert

06.17.20

F.M.T.T. It's all goin' to hell



An overnight multi-car collision on the southbound lanes of the Roosevelt Bridge has somehow – no details reported as yet – so damaged these southbound lanes as to put the bridge in risk of collapse. The lower drawbridge road is also closed to all traffic. Trains seem to be running, though passes beneath Roosevelt twice while crossing the river.

In the best traditions of bridge engineering; greatest span, least material, supporting most load. That is until the equation is violated and then, as seems to be the case here, all fall down. The spanning sections were precast box roadway members spanning between vertical buttresses. What repair work, or section replacement is required, and how it is reached; from below, or above, is a fascinating puzzle. I live a block east of Federal US 1, and three blocks south of the southernmost end of the Roosevelt.

Before learning about the bridge damage in early morning news, Joe Scarborough was literally screaming about the half a trillion aid dollars that got lost in the shuffle. Has the morning news summary ever been this bad? The virus infections and death rates just keep steaming along. Worst totals in the world, but Brazil is closing on us. The premature reopening of businesses and recreation venues, contradicting Trump's own Covid taskforce recommendations, was just the boost Covid-19 needed to keep on its ravishing infection rates.



The administration's impatience to reopen businesses to bolster Trump's sole surviving claim to success is a snafu, further compromised by diners, shoppers, consumers thinking better of reentering, so growth recovery is not happening.

We haven't been in a restaurant since March, when we typically did three or four a week. Mask, gloves, googles for shopping at Publix. Our favorite liquor store and Sushi joint is on the other side

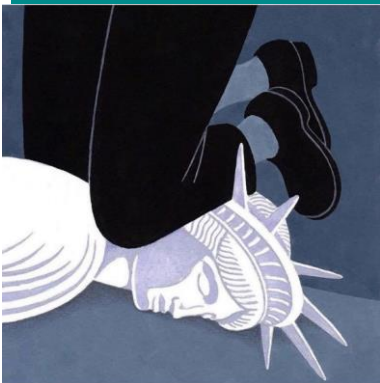
of the two-lane Roosevelt, down from six lanes. Life keeps getting harder.

My son Robert, a registered nurse, works on the "covid floor" of his hospital in southern California. He has three beautiful kids under seven. This virus is personal. I have to be particularly vigilant, due to a lung condition that leaves me so vulnerable, this thing will kill me, no question.

Appears major league baseball will not get its differences settled, so likely no season at all is possible. With an aging and shrinking audience, the question can be asked. Will baseball survive? Will an audience care? Basketball is going to cram an abbreviated season into the fall playing at Florida's Disneyland.



Three weeks ago, four white cops killed by suffocation a black man, all recorded on a young woman's cell phone. No question about this. Minneapolis burned. Within a couple days protesters marched and a few looters wrecked cities in every state. This went on daily for weeks. Marches in European cities also. Cherry on top, Trump enacted a brutal protester clearing of Washington, D.C. park for a photo op. More marches. The country is in turmoil. Twenty million unemployed and miserable.



These stories occupy the daily news talk streaming dawn until Brian Williams round midnight. If Black Bourbon Mannhattans weren't so damn tasty, do not know what I would do. End



GREAT NEWS!

A home Corona Virus test is now available!!!!  
Approved for Canadians too!!! And it's free!!!!

Simply mail a stool sample in a ziplock bag to:

White House. Attn. D Trump  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington, DC  
20500, United States

Share far and wide!



We hate Trump like you  
hated President Obama.

However, we hate  
Trump because  
he is racist.

You hated Obama  
because you are racist.



# Vacationing

## (in the time of Covid)



By Jim Longo

Got off work on Monday morning, packed up the bikes and the gear and headed North. Fifteen hours later we were hanging around D.C.

But when you add Covid to the mix, things just get, weird (or is it scary?).

Let me explain, in my business (pharmacist), the only way to avoid a disease is to assume everyone has it and take appropriate precautions. That is why you wear gloves when giving injections. That's why you should wear two masks in the South, because most people won't wear one.

An example, it was one o'clock in the morning. We were changing drivers. I wanted a cup of coffee before I blew out another tank of gas. I got out of the car. I didn't think twice, after all it was 1 am. I went to pour myself a cup, and an old black gentleman approached. I had no mask on, he sure didn't, he

broke my personal space and in a low voice said, "If you want to wait a couple of minutes, I'll make another pot."

I said, "That's okay," and I scurried to pay, and thought, *what the fuck did I just do?*

On the other hand, there is a good side to Covid-19. We arrived in the D.C. area around 6 in the morning and traffic was sweet, no slow down, no accidents, traffic was like Sunday morning, even though it was the beginning of rush hour Tuesday. I used to drive D.C. traffic every day and, put it this way, on cold and snowy mornings I didn't even scrape the windows. I just got in traffic and by the time we hit the second light, the windshield was clear.

We parked the car at a hotel near Washington National, and packed up the bikes. We decided to not take the tent because I knew Barb would bicycle an extra twenty miles for a bed versus a tent. We rode the ten miles to pick up a rental car and drove it to Pittsburgh airport where our adventure really began.



My sunglasses kept losing a lens. We needed an optician. Tyson Corner was the obvious choice but when we got there all we found was a sign. *Sorry mall closed*. "Google is there an optician open in our area?" It gave us a map to a strip mall around a building. We go to the strip mall, no optician. We stop by a jeweler who was open. Only in D.C. are jewelers an essential service. We knock on the door, gave him the address.

He said, "Go around the front she is probably in the lobby."

Okay we went around front, in the lobby, no optician, I look at the sign. She was on the ninth floor. I went to the ninth floor.

The optician was open, but she and the crickets were the only ones there.

I gave her my glasses, she played with them for a bit. Broke out a baby drill press, placed my glasses in a felt covered vice and drills another hole, puts a new larger screw in, while I waited. Yeah it took fifteen minutes, but it would never have happened, if it weren't for Covid time. FYI, she didn't charge me, and yes, I remember her name. It was *Jimmi*.

We decided to stop at Harper's Ferry to see what part of our ride would look like, and see what facilities were open. More crickets. We decide to take US 30 instead of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. If we started riding the road, without training, we were going to be so fucked.



*She pulled  
the bike out and  
rode back to the  
pub.*

We got into Pittsburgh at 5pm, *effing* rush hour. Yeah there was traffic, but no stoppage of play. We got a hotel near the airport. FYI no breakfast because of Covid. for us that was okay Barb doesn't eat carbs, and I always eat too much. Also, no pool or workout rooms if you do stay in upscale hotels. The first thing we did was wipe everything down with Clorox wipes. You can't be too careful. Dropped off the car rental at the Pittsburgh airport -- not one plane took off and only one other car came in while we were there.

We started biking. There is a bike path for about twenty miles out of the airport, which we stayed mostly flat. On the bike path we were approached by a rider, who showed us a shorter

route. Always the kiss of death, he sent us over the mountain, instead of down and around hugging the river. What's on top of the mountain? A hospital and I thought Barb was probably going to need it. We had lunch on the top. We only got thirty-five miles in the first day and stayed in a Holiday Inn Express.

We got into the hotel room, and there was a vacuum cleaner in the middle of the room. We start wiping the place down. That's when I noticed a brown spot in the middle of the bed spread. Barb went to wipe the ice bucket down, and there was a dirty tissue in it. Needless to say, we got another room. So, we wiped the new room down also.

Thursday we started out. It was four o'clock in the afternoon and a brand-new Comfort Inn was right in front of us, but we knew it was going to rain the next day. It was twenty miles to Ohiopyle, Pennsylvania, and we couldn't get a reservation online, but according to the electronic guidebook, there was a motel, a lodge, and a couple of guest houses.

I biked ahead because Barb was lagging after sixty miles. We tried calling the Lodge. We got the machine. I pounded in at about 12 miles an hour. I found the motel. It was out of business. Lodge didn't call us back, the guest houses rented by the house, not the room. A neighbor to guest house sent us to the owner of guest houses' place of business. The business was closed. It was 6:30 pm. I was expecting to make the AOTC writers' Zoom meeting, but it turned out I had bigger fish to fry. I walked down the street to try the motel again, and a car pulled up.

She rolled down her window. "Do you know somewhere I can eat?"



"Do you know somewhere I can stay?"

"Have you thought about last minute Airbnb?"

"I don't know, I've never done one, but it looks like my only choice."

I got back to Barbara. An African-American woman showed up and asked to use Barb's phone, since her's had no service. It turned out she called one of the guys we just met at one of the guest houses.



*She saw our  
buddy hanging on  
a girl with one  
arm and a six  
pack of beer in the  
other*

We jumped through all the electronic hoops, from taking a picture of me, to a picture of my driver license and of course, credit card info. We decide from

looking at the map. That it was on the other side of the bridge. So, we stood in front of a pub try to find out Airbnb technology. Barb lost the last bit of power on her phone, and weather was coming in, and still no coordinates on our bed for the night. It's 8pm and we received the coordinates. The pub operator we were standing in front of pulls in the table that is blocking the door. I asked, "Any chance I can put an order in for food."

"No, the kitchen closes at eight, sorry."

"What time is it now 8:03?"

A guy offered Barb a beer, but she declined, saying she may still need her wits about her.

He also suggested that we could just sleep under the pavilion on the picnic table.

We said, "We'd rather not."

It was the market back where we came from. When we got to the market it was closed but there were two people in the store. They walked out the side door. We followed them. Our host Jennifer was supposed to send us door codes, but they hadn't arrived. We approach the ladies, they called our host, and took us to the door and let us in.

We got in just as it started raining. I ran down the street to see if the pizzeria was still open, but no luck. Barb reached for her phone to plug it in. It wasn't there. "Oh shit did you leave it at the pub." I said.

"I probably left it where I let the lady use it." She ran out to the door to go to that store front.

Barb came back, "No phone."

"Well you said it ran out of power when we were in front of the pub. It's probably there."

She pulled the bike out and rode back to the pub. She saw our buddy hanging on a girl with one arm and a six pack of beer in the other, Barb yelled in her large black man voice, "Hey man where's my beer?"

The guy released the girl and handed Barb a beer, but no phone. She came back wondering where she left it. I started dinner which amounted to emergency supplies of a Knorr Rice dinner, a hunk of cheese and left-over tomato. Hey but our emergency shelter did have a full kitchen. At some point she picked up her bag and found her dead cell phone. Life was better.



We ate and settled down, drank our half a beer each, and ate our partially hydronated dinner and watch the idiot, our fearless leader on the idiot box. We decide to go to bed. She checked her text messages. I, my social media. We both got messages that we had lost our position at work. Not even a call from anyone in management. Barb's position ended after twenty-seven years from a text from a semi-retired pharmacist, mine from a post on Facebook. We texted management to confirm the news, thank goodness it is all material, but tomorrow it was going to rain.

Needless to say, we got a late start, dressed for rain, and biking in the rain never makes us happy, add to that our work life just went who knows where. On the other hand, we had been climbing ever since we left Pittsburgh, but the Great Allegheny Path, was better than most roads, the grade was always doable, even though we hadn't trained. The weather cleared and we had an early lunch thinking it was now or maybe not later. The weather stayed clear up until 6pm.

Around four Barb was out of gas, and thought she needed salt. Sorry no salt to be had. I continued on and Barb sucked the salt out of one of our Knorr dinners, spitting out the rice. We nearly had reached the Eastern Continental Divide. We decided I'd go ahead to Frostburg to get food, and she would go to the hotel.



I went thru the Savage Tunnel a long lit misty tunnel where it is cloudy on one side and all hell was breaking loose on the other side, but I was on a mission from Barbara. I must get to town to get food. It started pouring. I had already put my rain gear away. Sorry, mother nature, no time to stop now. Besides I'm on the downside. I'm barreled down the mountain at twenty miles an hour, couldn't see through my rain-soaked glasses. No problem. The rain turned to hail, *Fuck that hurt.*

I screamed out a primal scream when I noticed a guy walking down the mountain. "Sorry about the primal scream," I said as I went by. He just smirked.

I got down the mountain. I hit the first Frostburg exit from the trail. There was a runner coming at me in the rain. I stopped and asked him "How do you get to Frostburg?" He pointed down the road. I didn't ask twice. I flew down the mountain. I came to a stop sign at the bottom of the hill. I bore right without stopping. I kept flying down the road when I noticed the houses were getting farther and farther apart. I better ask someone. *Who do you fucking ask in the pouring rain on nearly dark country road?* I thought.

I went by a house, car in front, the lights were on. I climbed up the driveway. No one is in the car, but the door was open, "Hey how do you get to Frostburg?"

*Barb yelled in her large black man voice, "Hey man, where's my beer?"*



He said, "Come out of here, take a left and keep going up the road, you'll run right into it."

I left him. It was dark. No time to stop and put on my back light. I'm on mission from Barbara. By the way, when he said, "up the road", what he should have said, the road was up. It was dark, in the pouring rain. I had been bicycling for sixty-five miles with twenty pounds of gear on my ass. I was dressed in a dark blue microfiber jacket, made of recycled soda bottles, no back light, and my lowest gear wouldn't hold for some reason in the rain.

In the middle of this climb, there was a guy smoking on his front porch, and I asked, "Is this the road to Frostburg?"

"Yep," he said and took another a tug from his cigarette.

"Are restaurants open later than eight?"

"I haven't been to town in eight weeks." He said, as I tacked by him using the whole road to climb that hill.



I finally got up the hill, found the town and then a restaurant, but I was forced to order by phone as the woman took my order staring at me fifteen feet away behind the counter. There I was, waiting the twenty minutes. FYI I wasn't cold going up the mountain in the pouring rain, but now I was, so

at 9pm on Friday night I stripped down to my bicycle shorts changing clothes in the middle of Main Street.

I eventually got the food and directions to the hotel. I started going down the hill, and I can't get the bitchiletta into the top rung. I get beeped at. It turned out to be Barbara in some maroon minivan.

When Barbara got down the mountain, she got to the second exit to Frostburg, and saw the hill. She saw a guy from his balcony and asked him for a ride for twenty bucks. Which started an argument with his female partner, and they really started going at it. So, Steve (Barb's new fast friend) thought, twenty dollars from Barbara or an assault charge on his wife. He came down from the balcony threw on a bike rack and took Barb's bike, bags and all, placed them on the bike rack and took her to the hotel. Then he came and found me, doing the same thing with my bike and bags.



We finally got to the room after wiping everything down, washed and tried to dry everything. We tried to eat in between our clean-up work, but Barb found the salad dressing burned her throat. I checked it out, say ahhh, and she had two small cuts on her epiglottis made by sucking on salted rice.

The next day we got an early start. We finished our downward descent to Cumberland. Where we ran into Steve at a light at the corner, we waved. Some guy, who I thought looked incredible-mean, turned out to be the nicest guy and literally ran next to us to show us where the grocery store was. Cumberland was the end of the GAP and the start of the 184 and 1/2 miles of the C&O Canal trail.

At lunch, Barb informed, me that my doable 71-mile day, was actually an 81-mile day. The C&O was not the trail we were

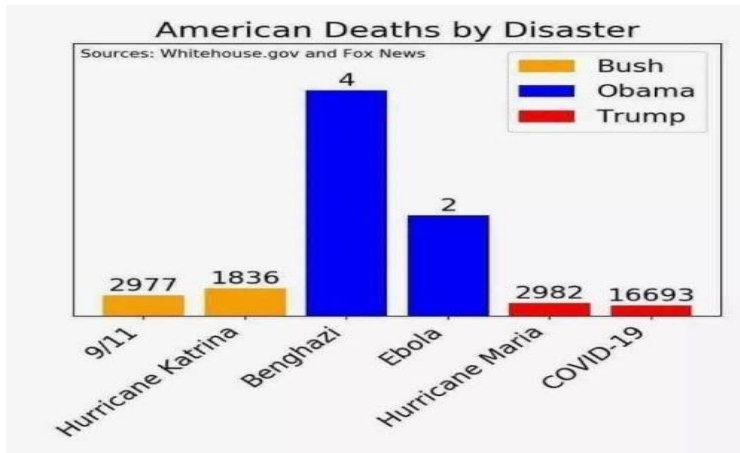


used to. In some places it literally was a path just wide enough for one person to walk on with mud puddles. We averaged only 8 to 9 miles an hour, not because of topography, but the trail conditions. Needless to say, we came in the dark and about 9:30pm. Biking a mud ridden trail in total darkness was new experience. If you are wondering how you handle eighty miles at eight miles an hour, you take it five miles at a time. In pitch black it was awfully hard to find those mile markers.

The coolest thing was the PaPa tunnel. They literally put the Canal thru a mountain. It is a great tourist attraction, and you are on a thin walkway and everybody and their brother was there on Saturday afternoon. Social distancing is unheard of, on the other hand, we were on the Maryland, West Virginia border.

I can't really figure out how to end this. This vacation was filled with way too much "type 2" fun. That is where, while you are doing it, it doesn't seem fun, but looking back, what a great story. Or maybe we can go on vacation in the time of Covid, but do not expect business as usual. Or maybe life isn't about what happens but how you deal with what happens.





**Don't forget  
that while  
Trump's  
corrupt buddies  
are being  
released from  
prison, the  
innocent babies  
he kidnapped  
and caged are  
still locked up.**



**American  News X**





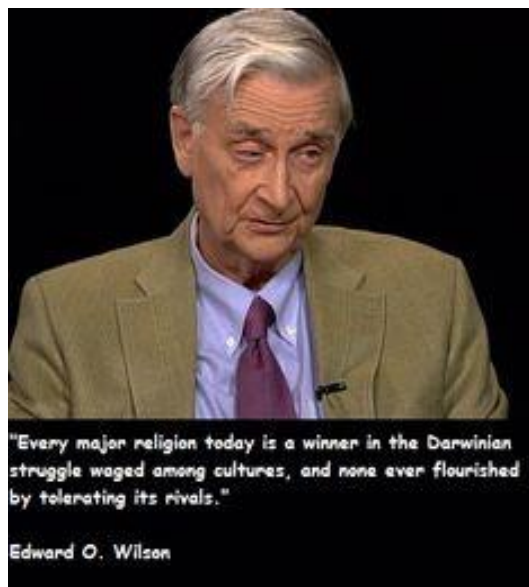
# Behavioral Evolution

By Ed Zillioux

I have wondered how behavior in the human species evolved. What is the natural selection advantage incurred by both good behavior and

bad behavior? If one gives a survival advantage over the other, why do both persist in concert with each other? The world today appears suffused with the latter, but only because bad behavior stands out. There are greater numbers of individual humans in every society that are more good than bad.

E.O. Wilson makes the case, in his recent book *The Meaning of Human Existence*, that "National wars may have subsided... But insurgencies, civil wars, and terrorism have not. The principal driving force for mass murders committed during them is tribalism, and the central rationale for lethal tribalism is sectarian religion."



But good and bad behaviors both exist among non-theists as well as theists. From



the evolutionary perspective, therefore, there are two separate questions concerning the drivers of natural selection of human behavior: that for good vs. bad behavior, and that for religion itself.

Through all of human history, religion has been the glue that held the tribes together. In the early Roman Empire, the philosopher Seneca the Younger realized that "religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false, and by rulers as useful." Today, as in all centuries past, there are many more common

people than wise, as well as rulers, or successful politicians

*"Democracy is a pathetic belief in the collective wisdom of individual ignorance..."*

always ready to play to that commonality. When Abraham Lincoln in the Gettysburg Address characterized democracy as "government of the people, by the people, for the people," he probably realized he was lifting this phrase essentially verbatim from the first English translation of the Bible by John Wycliffe in 1384. A contrary perspective on the "tragedy of the commons" was expressed by H.L. Mencken, journalist and social critic in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: "Democracy is a pathetic belief in the collective wisdom of individual ignorance.... On some great and glorious day, the plain folks of the land will reach their heart's desire at last, and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron." And who said we didn't see this coming?

But back to the role of natural selection in getting us to where we are today.



First, religion: By studying brain mapping, neuroscientists point out that evolution and religion are closely intertwined. This is not surprising, since as the brain develops through the life of an individual, brain mapping would be likely to find similar intertwining with any strongly held predilection. But neuroscience, in my limited reading, tells us nothing about the survival advantage that

selected for the precursors of religiosity in the first place.

*...On some great and glorious day,  
the plain folks of the land will reach  
their heart's desire at last...*

The so-called God gene, hypothesized by geneticist Dean Hamer in the 2004 book called *The God Gene: How Faith is Hardwired into our Genes*, doesn't cut it. The God gene, or VMAT2, produces the sensations associated, specifically, with spirituality as a state of mind. A lot, probably too much, has been read into that, but spirituality could include a belief in God, or gods, or not; it doesn't tell us anything about origins of organized religions, and furthermore, *spirituality as a state of mind* is probably as prevalent in non-theists as it is in theists. Maybe more so, since spirituality in theists is tainted by dogma, which could arguably be the antithesis of natural spirituality.

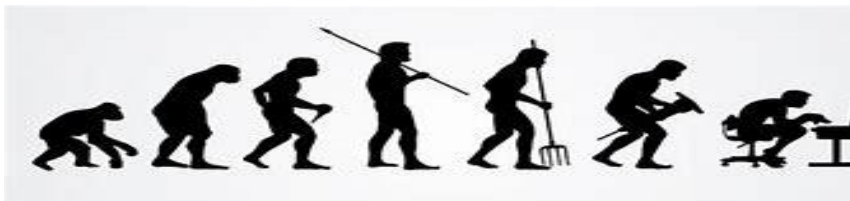
The On some great and glorious day, the plain folks of the land will reach their heart's desire at last formation of tribes in early

*Homo* groups had an obvious survival advantage, since the lone individual would soon be dead meat. It has been pointed out that a religious-type structure would have served a survival function in holding the tribe together. Well, yes, but wouldn't the specter of not being eaten if caught out alone on the savanna also tend to hold the tribe together? There are almost as many examples of banding together in groups to limit predation as there are animal species, e.g., schools of fish, herds of zebras, antelopes, etc.

Let us move on to the second question: Is there selection advantage related to good and bad behavior?

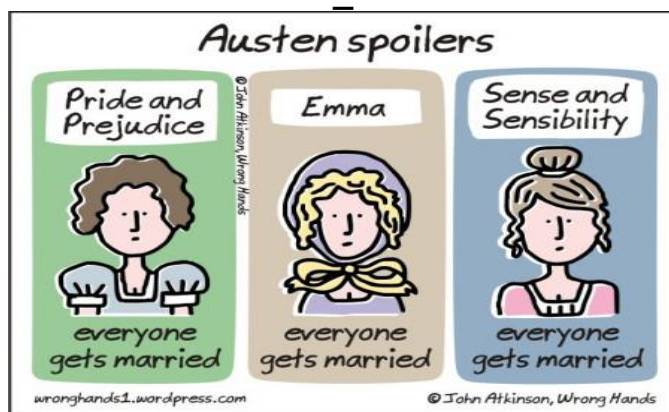
*...and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron."*

This seems to be easier. Competing levels of natural selection works like this: Selfish activity within a group provides a competitive advantage for the individual and this translates into a selective advantage for this bad behavior. On the other hand, being cooperative and altruistic reduces an individual's advantage in competition with other members but increases the survival and reproduction rate of the group. So, the two behaviors, though opposite, are both conserved by natural selection and, indeed, must have been in order for the species to have survived. That is, bad behavior favors individual survival, while good behavior favors group or tribal survival. According to E.O. Wilson,



"individual selection favors what we call sin and group selection favors virtue." The result is the "internal conflict of conscience

that afflicts all but psychopaths..." (E.O. Wilson, 2014). But wait. I do not have any "internal conflict of conscience," so does that make me a psychopath? (or, perhaps more correctly, a sociopath?). I'm really into group survival but way beyond any worries about reproductive rates. I just want to have fun!



## THE WAY WE WERE

# THE LAST HAIRCUT PT. 2

*Awaiting the Divine Wind?*

By Yashi Nozawa

### **Preface**

*This article is part of my memoir covering the period near the end of World War II. My memory of the events took place in a barber shop a few days after the fire-bombing of Tokyo on the night of March 10, 1945. – Yashi*



I had been sitting quietly and listening to their conversation intensely. Something was wrong with these adults, I thought. We were fighting a holy war. Japan was a divine country that was governed by the living god, The Emperor of Japan. Whenever the



divine country had faced serious difficulty in history, the divine force would appear and would rescue us. Throughout more than 2600 years of Japanese history, no foreign power had conquered Japan. In 1274, Kublai Khan, the Mongol Emperor of the Yuan dynasty of China, sent 30,000 Mongol and Korean troops to Japan. They had initial success in occupying a small part of southern Japan, but the divine force eventually destroyed them in the form of a severe typhoon.

The second time was in 1281. Kublai Khan sent a much



larger force of 140,000 to conquer Japan. The Japanese fought courageously for seven weeks. Then the divine force intervened again and destroyed all the invaders. Kublai didn't abandon his ambition – he planned a third invasion. For the third time, the divine force intervened. Kublai died before he

finished organizing the third invasion. His successor then abandoned the idea of invading Japan. During the two invasions the miraculous divine winds, typhoons with unprecedented strength, arrived and destroyed the entire fleet of Kublai Khan's ships. If it happened only once, it could be a coincidence, but it happened twice, and if we count the premature death of Khan, it happened three times. It had to be divine intervention. So, we called these special typhoons "*Kamikaze* (divine winds)." To deserve divine intervention, we must believe in our gods and be willing to sacrifice ourselves for our sacred mission. At the time of

Yuan's invasion, all Japanese people, regardless of their positions, wealth, or social status, prayed and believed in divine intervention. Historical records show that from the Emperor at the top to peasants in remote villages at the bottom, everyone, including warriors who fought against Mongols, sincerely prayed and believed in gods. To win this war, we need a similar degree of belief and devotion. If these non-pious, defeatist people exist, divine intervention might not happen, I thought.



No, no, that is unthinkable. Japan would not be defeated. Japan under the beastly Americans is inconceivable. I am willing to die for my country. But my devotion and sacrifice might be in vain if these non-believer adults still exist. I have to say something.



"Excuse me, sirs," I said.

"Yes, Yashi," Yamazaki-san replied.

"Can I say something without violating the code of respecting elders?" I asked.

"Go ahead, we both are neighbors and not too formal, unlike your father," Yamazaki-san said.

"I was told many times in my school and home that Japan was the sacred country and protected by gods, so that Japan would win this war. But you gentlemen are saying that Japan might be defeated."

I thought that the defeatist attitude was the real cause of our weakness.

"If we believe in our divine intervention, we will win this war, despite recent setbacks," I said.

"Ha, ha, ha! I am sorry to laugh at you, Yashi. I know you are an intelligent, honest boy. Yes, you should believe whatever your teachers and parents said. However, there are two sides to everything: the official, *or formal side*, and the realistic, *or practical side*. Japan is a divine country. It is an official statement. Let's think about that. Americans also think they are fighting for their god. They also believe that they will win this war with the help of their god. So, this war is a fight between two gods. Which god is stronger, you might ask? But I think if a god is a real god, then He doesn't want to fight. If either god is the real god, which many believers claim, then we would never have had any wars. War doesn't help anybody, except for a small number of kings, emperors, and some rich people. So, if there is a real god, then there is no war. Remember about two years ago, the American airplane raid in Tokyo?" Yamazaki-san said.

*I was told many times in my school  
and home that Japan was the sacred  
country and protected by gods, so  
that Japan would win this war*

"Yes, I remember that. I thought it was a practice air raid: shiny dots and a couple of small white puffs in the blue sky. American planes had dropped some bombs, but there was almost no damage. I think only one or two small factories were damaged. My father went to the bombed site to inspect the damage, and he got me a piece of melted glass as a souvenir," I said.

"Yes, that's it. Do you remember what had been said about air raids before that incident? Or were you too small to remember?" Yamazaki-san inquired.

"Yes, I remember clearly. Before every victory announcement by the Imperial Supreme Command, there was martial music, with lyrics saying,

*'Our sky is like an iron wall,  
No enemy airplane can ever break through.'*

The same music accompanied even the announcement of the air raid. So, I was puzzled by the discrepancy between the music and the contents of the statement," I said.

"They stopped playing that music the next day and never played it again. Nowadays they play music with the following lyric,

*'Everyone, all hundred thousand of us,  
Will become a fireball,  
All fireballs attack*

*Americans,*

*Until everyone would die.'*

Let's think calmly. We would win the war if all of us became fireballs and attacked Americans until everybody died. Then what's good about it? We won the battle, but nobody survived. You may not

remember, but this war was started to save us from misery under imperialism, which was imposed by Americans, British, and other Western colonialists. We do not want to die. We want to live happily. We started the war to live happily ever after, not to die. Yes, we expected some of us might die for the war, but we expected the majority of us to survive. That is the reason we supported this war. Now the government is saying that we should all die to save

am willing to die for know that my family don't want to sacrifice

country, or the Emperor, or whatever it is," Yamazaki-san reasoned. "Yashi, you are young, so you may not understand what I am saying, but watch out for what we call the authorities. They always say something convenient for them, and they are



never concerned with poor people like us. The last thing they worry about is slum residents like your family and mine. They tried to lure us into sacrificing ourselves for their sake."

He continued, "I had two uncles who went to the Russo-Japanese war: one was killed and one wounded. The surviving uncle told me that the battle at Port Arthur was like hell. The Russians had fortified bunkers at the top of a hill, called Hill 203. Japanese soldiers tried to take over the hill by attacking from the foot. There was nothing to hide them from the Russians who shot machine guns from the top of the hill.

Japanese soldiers at first attacked in the old style. Machine



gun bullets swept down all soldiers just like mowed grass. So, the next line of soldiers hid behind the dead bodies, then crept toward the hilltop. As soon as they exposed their position, machine guns killed them all. The only way they could move was by

creeping. Even so, once the Russians detected any movement, they rained machine gun bullets down the hill.

*War doesn't help anybody,  
except for a small number of kings,  
emperors, and some rich people*

You might not know that at that time, Japanese soldiers did not have any steel helmets. So creeping soldiers were shot in their heads, and they instantly died. As a result, dead bodies of Japanese soldiers covered the battlefield. Then new soldiers could move forward, hiding behind the pile of fallen soldiers. When they got to open ground, machine guns shot them. Then the next



soldiers could go ahead another few inches behind the newly killed bodies. Dead bodies of Japanese soldiers covered the entire battlefield. Each Japanese soldier could move only an inch at a time, disguised by a dead body.

Eventually, the pile of bodies killed reached the top of the hill. So, some soldiers finally successfully silenced the machine guns with grenades and occupied the top of the hill. That was the way General *Nogi* won the battle and received his glory, which was standing on thousands of corpses of peasant soldiers.

"The wounded uncle came home after he got a medal and a small pension. But his wound was so severe that he couldn't do any more farm work. So, he tried to retire with his meager pension alone, but it was not enough.

"Furthermore, his landlord took away his tenant farm, and the whole family was always at the edge of starvation. So, my father had to take care of their family, too. The real rage of my uncle was not against the miserable life after the war, despite that he had a very tough life. His real anger was directed toward businessmen, capitalists.

"Whenever he told us this story, he always showed his rage with his tears. It was his experience on the battlefield. It was not the severity and cruelty of the battlefield, but his meals. When they were sacrificing their lives, they received canned food from the homeland. When they opened the cans, they discovered that the contents were not food, but sand and gravel. That incident angered and demoralized soldiers. Some businessmen in the homeland had made a profit by selling sand and gravel as food





for soldiers. Boxes with these cans were clearly marked with the logo of a reputable trading company, which is still prospering.

"Ever since then, our family never trusted these big guys. If there is a god, the god is not for us poor people. The god is for rich people only. You cannot count on the god if you are poor. Yashi, you are the only son in your family. So, do not think about sacrificing yourself for the country and the Emperor. Your duty is to support your parents. If you died, nobody would take care of your parents when they got old," Yamazaki-san concluded.

"Young man, how old are you?" the gentleman in the barber chair asked me.

"I am twelve and a freshman in the middle school, sir," I said.

"You are still too young to understand these things, but Mr. Yamazaki is right. Whatever the establishment says, you must not believe it. They always tell their official line. Reality is different. This world is a world for rich people, not poor people like us. I had a sister who was only two years younger than me. She used to work at Toyo Spinning Co. on Main Street. You know which company I am talking about, don't you?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, I know the company. Last year my mother went there for a fire fighting drill to extinguish a mock fire in the factory," I said.

*Reality is different.  
This world is a world for rich  
people, not poor people like us*

"That's typical. The establishment wanted to save the factory in the case of fire, before saving our homes. Slum houses are not worth saving. That's beside the point. My sister was living in the company dormitory with 300 other girls who came from the countryside like my sister. She wrote to me regularly. She said the factory work was hard; she had to work from 6 am to 8 pm every day. When the girls finished their work, their supervisor took them to the dormitory for sleep. The company supplied

meals, of which the taste was terrible and the amount insufficient. The company subtracted meal costs from their pay. Furthermore, the cost of the workers' meal was twice as much as outside the company.

"They locked all dormitory doors every night. The company said that the lock was for the protection of young girls, but in reality, it was to prevent the escape of girls from the hard work. In the morning, the supervisor took them to the factory. So, they were virtually prisoners of the company. The company gave a day off only twice a year. If girls had saved enough money, they could visit their home in the country, but most of them never had enough money to go back.

*The company said  
that the lock was for  
the protection of young girls*

"In the Great Kanto Earthquake, a fire broke out in the factory. The supervisors hastily gathered all girls, brought them to the dormitory, and locked them up there. In the night, the fire in the factory jumped to the dormitory. Many girls tried to escape the fire, but all doors were locked, and all windows were barred. Most of the 300 girls were burned to death. Only a few survived when help arrived and unlocked the doors. My sister was one of the victims. I was also working in the factory as a maintenance man. I protested the death of my sister and requested compensation. I wanted to build a tomb for my sister. But the company refused any payment and threatened to discharge me. I was forced to withdraw my request."

He continued, "I understand that the company couldn't collect any insurance money from the factory fire, but they did collect insurance from the dormitory fire and life insurance from the dead girls. The reason was that the factory fire was an act of

god, due to the earthquake, but the dormitory fire was not directly related to the earthquake. They rebuilt a better factory from these insurance payments, instead of compensating families of the dead girls. So, the present factory was built with blood money. They make military uniforms, and their business is booming. The owner of the company is getting richer and richer. I am still not able to erect a tomb for my sister. When I injured myself in the factory, they threatened to fire me again. I begged them to keep me, and they agreed to keep me with half the salary. The only good thing to come out of these incidents was that I was exempted from conscription, because of my bad arm.

*but in reality,  
it was to prevent the escape of  
girls from the hard work*

"Yashi, you may think we are whiners and complainers, but it is not easy to climb out from the bottom layer of this society. The present society was built by the rich for the rich. If you have any chance to climb out of this slum and become one of the leaders, please remember us poor and be compassionate toward the poor," he said.

"Yashi is living behind my store in the low- cost tenant apartments. He was the brightest boy we ever knew and is the hope of our neighborhood. He successfully passed the entrance exam of the Metropolitan middle school, which is famous as the gateway to future leaders of the country. There is a small chance he might be one of our leaders in the future, even if it might be a very remote chance. Well, we talked too much, but how does this look," Yamazaki-san holds a portable mirror at the back of the gentleman's head.

I quietly sat down on the barber's chair. Yamazaki-san started to cut my hair without asking anything. He knows my choice or no choice. All students of the Metropolitan middle school were required to have skintight short hair. I was accustomed to

skintight short hair. My mother used to shave my head with a razor to save haircut cost. My razor-shaved head would take quite a while to re-grow hair. Now she is working, so she has no time for my haircut.

"Where will your family go after the demolition of your house?" Yamazaki-san asked.

"Somewhere near city hall. My father found a suitable house to rent. The new house will be much more convenient for him since he works at city hall," I said.

"Yes, there are so many empty houses nowadays. After the March 10 air raid, everybody is leaving Tokyo. We also will leave for the countryside next week," Yamazaki-san said.

*The present society  
was built by the rich  
for the rich*

Mr. Yamazaki was my haircut. In the end,



quiet during most of he said.

"Here you are.

You will be able to

maintain the regulation hair length another month or so," Yamazaki-san said.

I said, "Thank you, sir. I believe my hair cut is ten *sen*, isn't it?"

"Yes, that right, but keep your money. You are my last customer, and we may never meet again. Good luck in your school and never, never, consider killing yourself for the country's sake or otherwise. Your parents need you, and you are the only person who can take care of them. Goodbye, Yashi-chan" Yamazaki-san said.

"Thank you, sir," I said and quietly opened the heavily taped glass sliding door.

The outside air was crisp, and the darkness of the early spring had already set in. I was so confused and unsure about all the conversations and advice. I am still a loyal junior subject of

the sacred country of Imperial Japan, who vowed to sacrifice my life for the sake of the Emperor.

I thought if I died for my country, my parents would be proud of me.

would take  
I am  
be responsible  
of them. It  
teachings in  
wrong. They  
that filial duty  
responsibility,  
taught me  
essential duty  
subjects is  
Emperor. If  
promised me  
take care of  
then there  
problem.



However, who  
care of them?  
supposed to  
for taking care  
means all our  
school were  
taught me  
is a son's  
but they also  
that the  
of Japanese  
loyalty to the  
the Emperor  
that he would  
my parents,  
should be no

Unfortunately, I never heard such a story. I knew that many families whose sons died were suffering, despite the government's assistance. I was taught that the Emperor's mercy is just like sunshine, and it pours over everybody. But my parents cannot eat sunshine alone. It was the first time I doubted the teachings I received.





## Some of my heroes wore shoulder pads



By Virgil Thorp

The Kansas City Chiefs won Superbowl LIV after a five-decade detour through mediocrity. I have been a fan since Kansas City mayor, H. Roe Bartle convinced the franchise's owner and American Football League founder, Lamar Hunt, to leave his hometown of Dallas, Texas in 1963 and relocate 500 miles north northeast to my hometown, K.C. Missouri. and changed the logo on their helmets from the silhouette of Texas to the Arrowhead of the Chiefs.



The new team arrived in Kansas City as champions of the upstart AFL and quickly blended into the various neighborhoods of a community many other,



more sophisticated metropolitan areas referred to as, a "cowtown", a shoulder chip that endures even to this day. With the arrival of the Chiefs, I personally thought the city had achieved a status equal to a San Francisco vis a' vis Los Angeles and certainly a Minneapolis to a Chicago comparison. The players were welcomed as heroes immediately. A linebacker was a member of my church and after the football season, would bring





a bashing presence to the inter-church league basketball team. The quarterback did sports reports on television and radio and was dubbed "the spit-curl kid" by one of the disc jockeys at KMBC radio. Several players had homes near my father's grocery store, and I would watch them select meat and potatoes with adolescent awe. These were professional athletes and some of them literally did block out the sun.

In those days, as I grew, the team grew. AFL football was high scoring and exciting as quarterbacks named Dawson, Lamonica and "Broadway Joe" Namath launched bombs to receivers nicknamed Cookie, Frank the Flank and Bambi. The establishment National Football League traditional type of ball was three yards



and a cloud of dust, as boring as it was grimy. Draft choices weren't shared and college athletes were lured away from the staid NFL in competing drafts. The AFL also found an untapped lode of quality players from the black colleges who the NFL had ignored for years, only reluctantly adding an African-

American star or two who went to a major school, a practice some people have argued, was a dubious attempt to keep the league as white as possible.

Race did not matter on the field of old Municipal Stadium for the fans of the Kansas City Chiefs and we'd cheer for Lenny the Cool to "give the ball to Otis" from the bursting bleachers of the infamous wolfpack section. They were a team and a league that broke racial barriers and the players refused to participate in their 1964 league all-star game in a city that discriminated against the negro athletes. I had the opportunity to ask the then all-star Chiefs' tight end, Fred Arbanas, a few years later how they felt about New Orleans that day. I can only paraphrase what he said, "You discriminate against my brother; you discriminate against

me! Fuck 'em," Fred said of the Big Easy and the league moved the game to Houston, Texas. It was unprecedented to have such racially progressive ethics, but it united the players in a close alliance and subsequently bonded them with their fans and neighbors in Kansas City. More importantly, unlike the Athletics baseball team whose owner kept threatening to move the team every year, the Chiefs were embraced like family.

Finally, after bumping heads again and again in the bidding wars, the leagues decided merger was better than murder and a season-ending, final winner-take-all game, the Superbowl, was conceived.

It was AFL vs. NFL for the first four years of this contest with Kansas City getting humbled by Green Bay in the first game but maturing into a powerhouse by the fourth contest and decisively dominated the purple people eater Vikings from Minnesota 23 to 7, leveling the record of AFL vs. NFL at two games apiece.



But victory was short-lived, my chiefs got older and slower and at one point started importing San Francisco 49er quarterback cast-offs year after year. DeBerg, Bono, Grbac, Montana and Smith promised West Coast success and after an initial flourish, faded in the cold winds of December and by the end of each season resembled little more than bleached out bones. Not even the once great Montana could cast a shadow from the frozen Buffalo turf



that Bruce Smith had buried him in. Coaches came and went, each one promising a return to glory. Oh, we got close. We had years of dominant offense but no defense; and then the defense was feared but the offense was hooted at the year when little-known Tyler Palko was woefully dubbed

starting quarterback. Palko's (1-3) won-lost record ranks just ahead of Tyler Thigpen's (1-10) in 2008 and which was only eclipsed by the brittle, Brodie Croyle (0-10) who lost every game he started. It was beyond dismal and our hopes were cruelly dashed and our hearts were miserably trampled year after year. It always seemed that we lacked that one key player to take us over the hump and until then we would never go to the big dance again. And this was true until ... 2017 when we cashed in some chips, moved up in the draft and took a chance on a raw talent, Texas Tech gunslinger quarterback, Patrick "Showtime" Mahomes II.



This kid was different, he was special, he was and is a phenom! Patrick Mahomes has a cannon arm and a shoot from the hip football mentality that only those with superior talents can

succeed with. He throws passes without looking at his receiver. He flips the ball sidearm, like a baseball shortstop, but with accuracy and velocity. He



throws passes off his back foot – something the establishment frowns on – but somehow finds a streaking player for a gain or even a touchdown that baffles the verbose ex-jocks in the



announcers' booth. "He threw it left-handed!" Monday Night Football's Joe Tessitore shouted in disbelief. "How the heck did he do that?" became routine. Chris Collinsworth gushed with the alliterative slogan, "Mahomes Magic", a phrase that became commonplace game after game. I've seen him complete a pass that he threw from behind his back – in practice, never in a game – but if he needed it, I do not doubt he'd pull it off to the head-shaking consternation of the baffled defenses.

For Chiefs fans, we wagged our tails like a litter of happy puppies. Showtime set records, Showtime won games but he couldn't do it all himself and when the defense let us down once more in the AFC championship game against New England; when we could score at will but couldn't stop anyone, head coach Andy Reid had seen enough. Steve Spagnola was hired to revamp and coach the defense, some old fan favorites were traded or reluctantly, let go. New bodies were brought in and an important change of attitude was added for the defense. The fans' big question was, "Would they jell in time?" No one wanted to jinx the team by uttering the word, Superbowl, but we all thought about it.

2019 began well, four wins no losses, but we started getting players nicked up. Offensive line, defensive line, separated sternum for the fastest man in the league. When Showtime went



down in Denver with a gruesome dislocated patella, many of us, me included, feared we were watching another promising season circle the drain. But this kid wasn't through. Even as he limped off the field, he exhorted the team to "win this game."

Mahomes was not surrendering and he did not want any of his teammates to give up either. Showtime was on

the sideline with the team for every game he did not suit up for, rehabbing and practicing with the same intensity he had before

the injury. His “we can win this thing” attitude affected everyone. His teammates responded to his confident leadership. The defense became less porous and they weathered the teams’ injuries together so by the time the playoffs began, they were a formidable, dominating and complete football team.



Some announcers and sports pundits were not convinced that things had changed and gave the Chiefs little chance to advance as the playoffs began. The opening quarter against the Houston Texans found them behind 24 to zero after some disastrous blunders and cruel luck and the pundits tut-tutted knowingly. ‘One and done, Kansas City is going to dash hopes and break hearts again’ they prematurely concluded.

But, on the Chiefs’ sideline, Showtime insisted to his teammates, “we can beat these guys”, and “they’re going to talk about this forever.” Curiously, like when you witness a tide reversing momentum, an about-face occurred and determination and desire rallied. A heroic kick-off return by rookie Mecole Hardman gave them decent field position. The team had decided that they *could* “beat these guys” and in just a short ten minutes not only erased the insurmountable lead, not only going ahead by half-time, they went on to score 41 unanswered points as the suspect defense became immovably scary and throttled any Texan comeback attempt.

The AFC championship game found the underdog Chiefs in another early hole against the Tennessee Titans. The pundits gave the defense little hope at stopping the Titan’s uber-man running back, Derrick Henry who the week before, unmercifully stomped the favored Patriots into the dust of Gillette stadium in Foxboro. A trick play gave Tennessee a ten-point lead in the



second quarter and the poo-pooers clucked in the announcer's booths again. "Can't win, can't win, can't win." Oh god, we have heard this before, why can't they stop? This was a different team. This was a different philosophy. It was "attack, attack, attack!"

The doubting pundits were nearly unanimous in not giving the Chiefs a chance, "they've blown it before" echoed in the chilled stadium like a lost, wandering ghost. Bullsheeeet! The past is not the future and Showtime pulled his team together, the defense stiffened and the offense was machine-like, advancing the ball and just before the half, Mahomes pulled off some more magic, not with his arm, but with his feet as he weaved and dodged down the sideline then spinning into the end-zone for a 27 yard touchdown run and the lead.



For a change, doubt appeared on the faces of the Titans and also on a few announcers. Maybe this was the Chiefs' year. The defense led by Clark, Mathieu and Jones tired of being dissed, limited Henry to only seven rushing yards in the second half and allowed a lone score from then on. A sixty-yard touchdown pass to Sammy Watkins clinched Mahomes Magic for the championship Lamar Hunt trophy. What can't this kid do? Next stop was Miami

for the chance to end the drought of disappointment and remove the "inferior" chip from our shoulder for all time.



The Superbowl also came down to Mahomes Magic as the Chiefs spotted the 49ers, of all teams, a ten-point lead into the final quarter.

Showtime had not been



sharp as he had been constantly harassed by the vaunted 49er defensive rushers and inexplicably threw two drive-stopping and hope-killing interceptions. The 49ers gleefully dashed to the end-zone to pose for a gloating celebratory selfie picture with just under twelve minutes left in the game. Were we doomed again? Being behind was a pattern of the playoffs and just when it looked the bleakest for the Chiefs and their fans, Showtime was again urging his teammates to “bring it” and that “we can beat these guys”, and “they’re going to talk about this forever, baby.” I think the Chiefs got more than a little pissed off at the premature endzone celebration and came roaring back. The 49ers weren’t going to give up though and just when it seemed that all hope was lost, third down and fifteen yards to go, time running out, Showtime called a “wasp route”, launching a forty yard bomb to the dependable speedster, Tyreek Hill that wiped the grins off the faces on the 49ers sideline.



“What happened?” the Niners’ all-pro tight end George Kittle asked a teammate after the completion that ripped a hole in the San Francisco victory balloon. A couple of plays later and Travis Kelce was spiking the ball in the endzone and the comeback was on.



I was on my feet, Lucy was on her feet, kissing and hugging, the cats were dodging us as we danced around the den. We believed, the chiefs believed, and ultimately, the 49ers believed as the time ticked off the clock and the chiefs scored 21

unanswered points to grab the Lombardi trophy for Superbowl LIV and pass it around in the postgame blizzard of red and gold



confetti that the 49ers had assumed would be for them.

The celebration is still going on, past the return to Kansas City, past the celebratory parade through downtown to the Union Station. It is on every television as YouTube replays the

games for the satisfaction from years of collective disappointment. We cannot get enough. I am proud to be a Chiefs fan, but I felt some nostalgia for those past teams, inept as some of them were, and then I recalled a moment that was even more profound for me. It occurred during the John Mackovic era, the team was still reeling from years of bad drafts, bad luck and bad management. But somehow, they made the wild card playoff game that year (1986). They had to play the Jets in New York and despite a gutsy effort, they lost. But they did not quit and that was the difference. They had just run out of time.



I don't think the team dreamed they would get the welcome they received when their plane landed back at the airport that



evening, but the terminal was crammed with cheering fans who also spilled out onto the parking lot. The welcome party lasted quite a while and was full of elation for the team and their efforts. It seemed every player, every coach was awed by the welcome and realized they were beloved by the town, almost as if they *had* won the Super Bowl. I was in the parking lot heading back to my car when I realized the guy in front of me was one of the reserve offensive

linemen (sorry, can't remember his name). I turned to see what he was looking at and as we gazed back at the joyful party at the terminal, I remember the damp lines of gratitude on his cheeks as he leaned on the hood of his pickup truck, whispering to himself, "wow, oh wow."

There are a lot of other moments I recall with Lenny Dawson, Fred Arbanas, Willie Lanier and others, but that was an instant that still brings a warm feeling of joy to my heart and makes me a Chiefs fan forever. I have a smile that won't leave my face now and what a *fantastic* time it is to be a Kansas City Chiefs *fan*.

Always remember. Never forget. "We can beat these guys!"

## FICTION

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# Murder on the Covid Express

By Jim Longo



The old lady laid on the gurney propped up at a fifteen-degree angle. The curtained area of the tent was white and the curtain was closed. Every breath the woman took was labored. She was dressed neat as if she took the time to get ready. She wore the mask they had given her along with the tube under her nose. Every breath was labored, and she felt she was suffocating.

The nurse's aide came in to get her out of her clothes and into a hospital gown. Cathy dressed in an aquamarine gown, an N-95 facemask and a look in her eye that she was way beyond of her end of her shift.

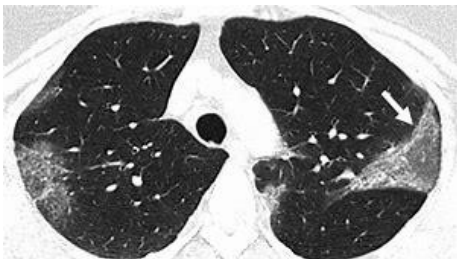
"Okay Mrs. Addams we're going to help you get out of your clothes and into this hospital gown." She tossed the cellophane

wrapped blue square at the feet of the bed. "Mrs. Addams can you stand?"

Mrs. Addams took as deep a breath as she could and tried to swivel her body around. Cathy the C.N.A. went to grab Mrs. Addams calves and help her turn. Mrs. Addams held up her hand, as if to say give me a moment, as she managed to sit up on the side of the gurney and said, "Can we talk for a moment?"

Cathy was as busy as a one armed paper hanger in the devil's workshop, but stepped back for a moment, and took a deep breath, after all it was so hot in the N-95 mask, and every breath was an inferno.

"I tried to kill as many as I could." Mrs. Addams said and sucked as much air as she could.



*"Can we talk  
for a moment?"*

Cathy's eyes went wide,  
"What?"

"Well I've known I had the virus for at least a week," Mrs. Addams took a long pull of air." Last Sunday I went to church, that one that is still meeting at the church. Well after church, there was a potluck. I brought a big salad, and I licked all the vegetables and spit in the ranch dressing."

"Enough I don't want to hear anymore." Cathy said, man-handling the frail old woman up and helping her undress. Mrs. Addam's warm breath hit Cathy in the face. She got her into the



hospital gown, tied the back and laid her back on the gurney re-positioned her oxygen.

"You know what else I did?" Mrs. Addams said sucking in the oxygen like it was life itself.

"What?"

"I went to that rally at the State House, the one demanding they re-open the government now. Those fools didn't even wear masks." Mrs. Addams laughed but it turned into a ragged cough immediately.

Cathy took her vitals, blood pressure 140 over a 100. She wrote it down. She turned to look at Mrs. Addams, "Why?"

"Why'd I do it, or why am I telling you?"



*"I tried to kill*

*as many as I could."*

"Both," Cathy said, pulling out the pulse-ox machine and placing it on her finger.

"I told you, because I had to tell someone before I died."

"But why did you do it?"

"It's the only way to save this country from fools." Mrs. Addams said, as she tried to stifle her cough which only made it worse.

"Do you know how much work you probably caused us?" Cathy screamed, she looked down to read the pulse-ox machine. It said



55. It is supposed to say 90. How is this woman even conscious? Cathy eyes went wide. "Just lean back and relax, I'll be right back with the doctor."

Mrs. Addams looked scared.

Cathy left the curtained cubicle and just stood there for a couple of minutes. Was it too much to take in? Was it karma? Was she making an active decision? She decided she needed a break. She headed for the Porto-potty. She sauntered back to the makeshift work desk. Started inputting the vitals into the computer, Cathy nonchalantly said to the RN, "The lady in cubicle three's oxygen levels is in the mid-fifties."

**"Oh God,**

**what have I  
done!"**

"The RN said, I'll tell the doctor, we'll probably have to intubate her."

By the time the intubation team made it to cubicle three, Mrs. Addams was cold.

At two in the morning, Cathy woke in a cold sweat screaming, "Oh God, what have I done!"

### The Nightingale Pledge

- I solemnly pledge myself before God and in the presence of this assembly, to pass my life in purity and to practice my profession faithfully.
- I will abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous, and will not take or knowingly administer any harmful drug.
- I will do all in my power to maintain and elevate the standard of my profession, and will hold in confidence all personal matters committed to my keeping and all family affairs coming to my knowledge in the practice of my calling. With loyalty will I endeavor to aid the physician, in his work, and devote myself to the welfare of those committed to my care.

## POETRY

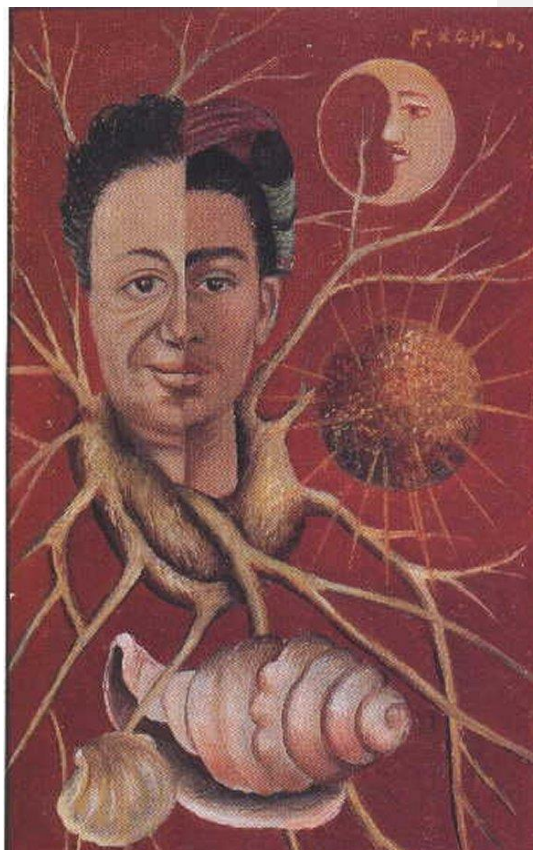


### I WANT YOUR EYES ...PLEASE

By Virgil Thorp

I need your help  
my darling,  
my sweet love,  
my be all and end all,  
I want your eyes.  
Please give them to me.  
Today,  
this afternoon,  
tonight  
while I prepare a feast.  
I will ply you with fine wine,  
and an opulent repast  
of humor,  
of insight,  
of tragedy  
and mirth,  
give me your eyes,  
please.  
One thousand, thousand  
kisses,  
on account.  
With love,  
respect,  
and devotion.  
Your eyes are my jewels,  
please

“leaving is not enough; you must  
 stay gone. train your heart  
 like a dog. change the locks  
 even on the house he’s never  
 visited. you lucky, lucky girl.  
 you have an apartment  
 just your size. a bathtub  
 full of tea. a heart the size  
 of Arizona, but not nearly  
 so arid. don’t wish away  
 your cracked past, your  
 crooked toes, your problems  
 are papier mache puppets  
 you made or bought because the vendor  
 at the market was so compelling you just  
 had to have them. you had to have him.  
 and you did. and now you pull down  
 the bridge between your houses.  
 you make him call before  
 he visits. you take a lover  
 for granted, you take  
 a lover who looks at you  
 like maybe you are magic. make  
 the first bottle you consume  
 in this place a relic. place it  
 on whatever altar you fashion  
 with a knife and five cranberries.  
 don’t lose too much weight.  
 stupid girls are always trying  
 to disappear as revenge. and you  
 are not stupid. you loved a man  
 with more hands than a parade  
 of beggars, and here you stand. heart  
 like a four-poster bed. heart like a canvas.  
 heart leaking something so strong  
 they can smell it in the street.”



# **DIEGO & FRIDA** BY FRIDA KAHLO AS TOLD TO MARTY McCONNELL

## COMEDY CORNER

### 56th Day ++++ of Isolation & Physical Distancing

I hope they give us two weeks notice before sending us back out into the real world. I think we'll all need the time to become ourselves again. And by

"ourselves" I mean lose 10 pounds, cut our hair, and get used to not drinking at 9:00 a.m.

New monthly budget: Gas \$0, Entertainment \$0, Clothes \$0, Groceries \$2,799.

Breaking News: Wearing a mask inside your home is now highly recommended. Not so much to stop COVID-19, but to stop eating.

We low maintenance chicks are having our moment right now. We don't have nails to file and paint, roots to dye, eyelashes to re-mink, and are thrilled not to have to get dressed every day. I have been training for this moment my entire life! 🤖



Commented [VT1]:

When this quarantine is over, let's not tell some people.

I stepped on my scale this morning. It said: "Please practice social distancing. Only one person at a time on the scale."

Not to brag, but I haven't been late to anything in over 8 weeks. 👍

It may take a village to raise a child, but I swear it's going to take a vineyard to home school one. 🍷

**Day 2 without sports. Found a lady sitting on my couch. Apparently she's my wife. She seems nice. 😎**

You know those car commercials where there's only one vehicle on the road? Doesn't seem so unrealistic these days.

### Covid-19 Dinner Menu

Day 1: Roast Beef, Mashed Potatoes and Gravy, Steamed Broccoli, Rolls, Green Salad, Chocolate Cake with Cream Cheese Frosting

Day 2: Grilled Chicken, Brussel Sprouts, Rosemary Baby Potatoes, Cucumbers and Tomatoes

Day 3: Homemade Pizza

Day 4: Leftovers

Day 9: Spaghettios

Day 17: Cereal

Day 25: Ice Cream and Potato Chips

Day 32: Do we have to eat *EVERY* day???

What Feels Like Day 15,472: Is this real life??!

Day Eighteen Billion: If I have to think about dinner one. more. time. I'm going to go into a coma.

They may open things up next month -- I'm staying in until July to see what happens to you all first.

Day 56: The garbage man placed an AA flyer on my recycling bin. 😊

Appropriate analogy: "The curve is flattening, so we can start lifting restrictions now. Or could it be... "The parachute has slowed our rate of descent, so we can take it off now."



**UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE  
THE DAYS OF THE WEEK  
ARE NOW CALLED,  
THISDAY, THATDAY,  
OTHERDAY, SOMEDAY,  
YESTERDAY, TODAY &  
NEXTDAY!**

People keep asking: "Is coronavirus REALLY all that serious?" Listen y'all, the churches and casinos are closed. When heaven and hell agree on the same thing, it's probably pretty serious.

Never in a million years could I have imagined I would go up to a bank teller wearing a mask and ask for money.

I'm home schooling. First day, I tried to get this kid transferred out of my class.

Putting a drink in each room of my house today and calling it a pub crawl.

Okay, so the schools are closed. Do we drop the kids off at the teacher's house?

For the second part of this quarantine do we have to stay with the same family, or will they relocate us? Asking for myself..

Coronavirus has turned us all into dogs. We wander around the house looking for food. We get told "No!" if we get too close to strangers. We get really excited about going for walks and car rides.







I was in a long line at 7:45 am today at the grocery store that opened at 8:00 for *seniors only*. A young man came from the parking lot and tried to cut in at the front of the line, but an old lady beat him back into the parking lot with her cane. He returned and tried to cut in again, but an old man punched him

in the gut, then kicked him to the ground and rolled him away. As he approached the line for the 3rd time he said, "If you people don't let me unlock the door, none of you will ever get in to shop."

*Provided by Gale Baker*

**How many believe that  
this is ending in 2 weeks  
and your life is back to  
normal? Raise your hand.  
Now slap yourself with it.**

# Jo-bob's Bull sac

(scrotum)

*A modern parable,  
irreverently based on  
the biblical book of Job*

Blasphemed by

Virgil Thorp

(heathen)

Happy was Jo-bob, his  
life, his love, his family  
and his wealth were  
abundant.



Some said Jo-bob was beloved by God, some said he was just in the right place at the right time. Don't quote me, but it is said some wanted lucky Jo-bob to have a comeuppance. But Jo-bob paid those no mind, he knew they were merely sinfully covetous.

Jo-bob knew his god loved him as much as he loved his god. It was muy, muy much and Jo-bob was certain he was reaping his rewards of the contractual totality promised to him through his holy covenant with the one true god who Jo-bob and his family worshipped every waking moment.

Every afternoon, Jo-bob would sacrifice a burnt offering because he was told God loved bar-b-que and even though Jo-bob may have had some hungry servants who tended the smoky blaze, they were only allowed to take long sniffs of the succulent fatty haze. No touch, no taste, not even if they were starving. It was only meant to be a tribute for the revered, all-powerful god.

The aromas from Jo-bob's roasting sacrifice pleased his lord god and God boasted to the dark angel, Satan, of Jo-bob's filial piety.



"How wonderful for you, Lord." Satan exhibited filial piety himself when he was in the proximity of God, but God had apprehensions that Satan had more than a little sarcasm concealed in the tone of his compliments. It was an unsettling feeling, especially for an entity who considered himself the supreme of all divine beings.

"Of course, Lord," Satan began his cunning trap, "everything is going well for your adored Jo-bob. I regret to say though,

that he would change his admiration for you if things – little things perhaps – would go wrong for him."

"What are you alluding to," God replied in a grumbling thunder.

"Let's say Jo-bob becomes a trifle less lucky. Perhaps a bad investment, diminished wealth, maybe add a death of a loved one or two. He wakes up one morning and all his oxen have been rustled. Give Jo-bob a chronic physical ailment or ailments. That sort of unplanned thing." If Satan had not been an angel, he'd have made a fortune in marketing or as an insurance rep. "If there is too much calamity it would add up and there may be an outside chance that he could curse you. Or worse, he could start worshipping another deity, Baal, perhaps, or even Moloch." There was an uncomfortable silence as Satan paused to briefly gauge God's reaction to the mention of those nemesis gods. "I've heard that it has happened before, that time you lost your temper with

mankind and flooded earth but saved the drunken oaf, Noah, and his family."

"How dare you! God exclaimed, the thunder now crackling with lightning in his voice. He just knew Satan was baiting him.

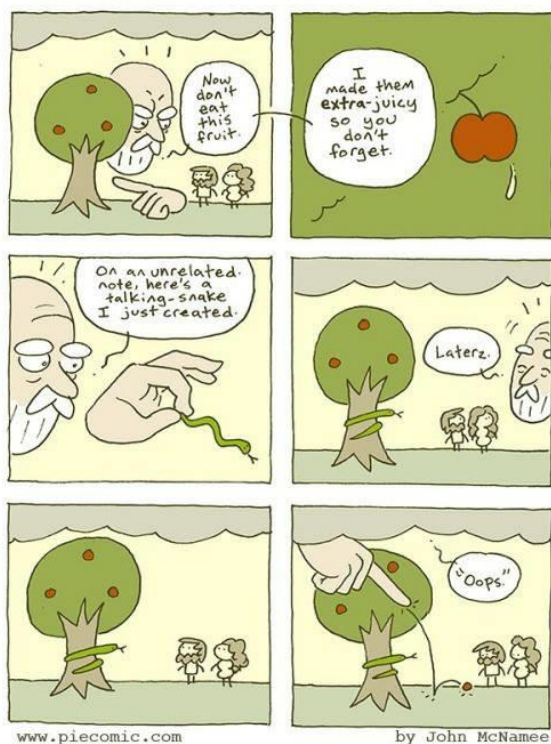
"No-no-no, Lord. I meant no offence," Satan said with sudden apology. "It's just, just that, well, I know I heard some of the drowning unfortunates calling you a – there's no way I can put this diplomatically – 'a pompous shithead' and burble 'fuck you, fuck you, fuck you' as the waters enveloped them. It was pitiful but I couldn't help but think they were convinced you were extreme and very unfair in your judgement."

"They had it coming," God snarled with disgust. "Sinners and fornicators all! I thought about doing an S&G on them (Sodom

and Gomorrah although that had not happened yet). Fire and brimstone have always been my first choice but that would have incinerated Noah's family and the animals on the ark. A flood was the only obvious alternative."

"Indisputably but, and I say this with all humor included, it is whispered that Noah and his sons *did* expose their backsides to the drowning wretches as they clawed the hull of that leaky dung-barge. Prove me wrong lord, please."

It was probably the 'please' that was the catalyst



although it was written that God always enjoyed tempting his creations in subtle ways as he had with temptress Eve and the pussy-whipped, cuckold Adam. "Here is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, don't eat the fruit. Especially when my back is turned." Of course, the fruit not only attracted the eye, the sweet aromas floated hormones that made humans salivate with hunger and mouthwatering desire. Such was the temptation to take a simple nibble and how could one resist? God knew this but did it anyway. "I'm God after all. This is my creation, I made it and I can always change the narrative and say that it was Satan appearing as a snake who enticed the vanity of Eve. Oh, am I bad!" and inwardly he sniggered a little at the image of Satan wiggling on his belly before turning back to the shady malevolence.

"You'll see," God said as he accepted Satan's challenge. "Jo-bob will always be faithful to me no matter how much he suffers." God now had to come up with something despicable to torment Jo-bob and, as the devil could always attest, as God tediously went through His infinite variety of tortures, Satan grew impatient and interjected the celestial reverie with a conspiratorial wink.

"Would you allow me try something first, Exalted Lord."

"Like what?"

You could always get God's attention when you called out his name or referred to a title. Saying something obsequious like "Oh Mighty One" invited a response, "Exalted Lord", guaranteed it.

"Oh, just something simple," Satan replied with a shrug. "A little physical irritation, perhaps. Just to see how he responds."

"Will he suffer?"

"I'll make certain there is discomfort."

"Nothing permanent, now," God chided.

"Not from my side. I can't guarantee that he or someone else might try a remedy that may or may not leave a mark or a temporary bruise," Satan equivocated.

"Very well," and God nodded his permission. He had little doubt that Jo-bob would disappoint him. With a grand moving gesture of his magnificent arm, the lord God allowed Satan to practice his doctorate in human torture on the loyal Jo-bob. It was almost like he decreed to the dark angel, "sic 'em."

The unaware Jo-bob awoke the next morning with a slight itch in his groin. It was his pesky scrotum that was tingling, and his fingernails scraped at the soft and warm, fine lambskin like leathery sac where his testicles sheltered in happy warmth and security.



"I knew I should have washed before I slumbered," Jo-bob muttered to himself and noticed a small spot of blood as he breathed the musky aroma of the crotch sweat on his fingernail. "Just like my favorite bull ox." He sniffed again, referring to the tang – not like perfume but intoxicating just the same – as he prepared for his day.

When Jo-bob stopped for lunch his crotch had continued to itch all through the morning and he would scratch – only momentarily quelling the feeling. He felt a hard nodule on his scrotum and pulled up his robe and pulled aside his loincloth to see what it was. In the blubbery folds it appeared he had an ingrown hair, maybe an infected zit. It was very tender and yet, with his forthright resolve, squeezed the pustule between his thumb and forefinger. There was an audible 'pop and splat! as the zit exploded and instantly, the discomfort was alleviated ... momentarily.





"Ahhh," Jo-bob breathed with relief. He examined more of his scrotal folds and located other zits cramped in the wrinkles and creases of his flesh. 'Squish them all,' he thought gleefully and followed with more 'pop, splat, pop, SPLAT', "That was a big one!" 'pop, splat, pop, splat'. It was addictive, like so much bubble wrap, and he found he had to use his cloth belt to wipe the excess mucus that dripped from his fingers. "So much for that," he said, satisfied that he had excised all the acne on his tender part. Tucking everything back in place, Jo-bob went forth about his business for the remainder of the day.



God watched with quizzical interest after he blew his lunch at the cavalier way Jo-bob disposed of his pus bucket. 'I did not know that Jo-bob was such a slob,' God observed and then hotly blushed that he did not know that aspect before. He glanced furtively around to see if any of the angels and especially the dark one had apprehended his inner monologue.

Some may ask how a supreme being would become nauseated from watching dribbling body fluids, after all, the evolutionary digestive tract was derived from an original cellular creation. But, to reveal a celestial secret. The dripping pus was a distressing reminder of the backroom at Sodom's infamous uncut bear bar, "Wooley's". White stuff always seemed to be dripping from the walls and furniture. No wonder the image made his gorge rise.

For Jo-bob, every hour or so, he was reminded of his earlier discomfort. He became more aware of his scrotum, almost with every step he took. It seemed larger than it ever had. Even though it chafed, he chuckled to himself reminiscing that the boys had nicknamed him "bull sac" when they had learned to swim as children, unashamedly naked in their skinny-dipping.

Comparatively, his scrotum had been noticeably larger than the other boys', stretched further, dangled lower, much like the bull ox's that mounted all the heifers in the field.

"Yes, it is like a prized bull's sack," Jo-bob smiled with gratified hubris. Unfortunately, despite the narcissism, there seemed to be an increasing pressure in the area, and it felt much warmer than normal to the touch when he stuck his hand down his loincloth to scratch again. 'Maybe if I sat down and rested, this ache will go away,' he hoped to himself. He was concerned another hard nodule was forming at the apex of the swelling where he had popped the first zit.

That evening Jo-bob was very discomforted as he limped home. He had to do something to ease the pain he felt, something cooling on the inflamed skin. He went to his medicine chest and located a bottle of hydrogen peroxide. "This will help with any infection," he said aloud, popped the cap up and started squirting the antiseptic liquid into his loincloth. His hand holding the bottle disappeared in a foam explosion, almost like rising yeasty bread – no unleavened baguette for him! The cool feeling the liquid provided didn't last long and he squirted again before he gave up and poured the entire bottle into the effervescing goop.

"Ow, it stings," Jo-bob bawled as frosty hunks of foaming liquid attacked the bacteria that had festered in the perfect, moistly warm environment all day. Gouts of foam fell on the floor looking all the while like the alarming infection it was. Jo-bob did not notice one of his servants – who bore an uncanny resemblance to Satan – giggling at his discomfort as he dance around and fanned his private parts until the stinging subsided.

God felt contentment that Jo-bob was enduring such humiliation and pain. 'That's my boy,' he reflected. "Satan, do your worst. Jo-bob can take it! Wanna double the bet?" Satan merely looked out of the corner of his eye, like a magician who was just warming up.

Meanwhile, Jo-bob did not know what afflicted him. Every movement became agony for his treasured bull sack now swollen to twice its normal size. The creases and folds were all but gone

and the skin at the point of the swellings – yes, swellings, as in multiple – was reddish, taut and more tender than an open wound. Worst of all, the skin at the center of the carbuncle, for that was what it was, seemed paper thin and there was a throbbing pain for each time his heart beat sent a surge of blood through the veins and capillaries of the affected tissue. It was agony just to stand and try to take a step. Every time his thigh brushed his scrotum, he felt like he was goring himself in the balls with an Italian stiletto.



"God damn," escaped from his lips. "This fucking hurts!" After the first curse escaped, it was one blue obscenity after another as he allowed the servant to help him to his bed. Like all those afflicted with tumors, growths and other malignancies, Jo-bob pleaded, "Why the hell is this happening to me?"

The cursing bothered God, but only slightly, 'hey,' God reflected with a nod, 'remember how loud Moses and his kid screamed when their prepuces got sliced off with a sharp stone? Now that was pain!' God got a look on his face of creeping nostalgia and the numerous, odious abominations done in his name. "Foreskins," he muttered aloud and started to chuckle.

By the time they got Jo-bob on the bed, he was wobbly with pain. Even the featherlike weight of the cool, wet cloth his servant had nimbly laid over his scrotum made him accept more agony for just a smidgeon of relief it brought – barely an equal trade-off. But anything was better than status quo.

The next morning found a feverish and sleepless Jo-bob trying not to move as even his breathing was causing him misery. He had to try to get relief somehow. His scrotum was now the size of



A tub was quickly filled with steamy hot water and a jar of Epson Salts stirred in. Jo-bob slowly dipped a toe, then his whole foot into it but jerked it away.

"This is scalding," he cried.

"It has to be hot or it won't do you any good." His servant instructed. "Now in. Left foot, hold it. Right foot. Come on, get back in there."



Jo-bob was hyperventilating to the point of dizziness. The 'put it in and take it out' seemed to be working though. One foot in, one foot out, one foot in and then shake it all about. Repeat. He attained the threshold where he could now stand the blistering sear of the water and the moment of truth came as he squatted. The back of his thighs stung with the heat but strangely, his scrotum did not seem to notice the water's scalding braise.

"Does the hot water feel good?"

Simultaneously, it was torturingly hot and yet pepperily comforting, that was how feverish his afflicted area was, and Jo-bob sank down until he was waist deep.



"Wow, it is – really – fucking – hot!!!"

"Don't get out, make your body get used to it," his servant said as he pressed on Jo-bob's shoulders to hold him in place. "The hot water will help draw the poison out."

Jo-bob answered like an Armenian goatherder, "yi-yi-yi-yi-yi!"

Jo-bob's lower body turned a bright scarlet, very much like a boiled lobster and the blood seemed to pocket at his scrotum, now so swollen he couldn't bear to search for his testicles.

God's response was intense interest. A stretched scrotum looked like a favored balloon. It would probably been prettier without the stringy hairs, though, he observed.

The other servant, the one with the handsome face and dreamy eyes spoke as a suggestion. "Go ahead, press on it. Squeeze it. Poke it. You know you want it to pop. Press it hard. Harder!"

By all that was holy, God surprised himself by enthusiastically agreeing. He'd seen worse in his old testament time and He wanted to see the boil pop as much as Satan did and joined in on the devilish chant, "yes, squeeze it, make it pop. Harder, harder!"

With tears squeezing out his clinch eyes in scorching severity, Jo-bob pressed around the taut angry boil. The pain was so excruciating he started chanting in a vulgar refrain. "fuck me, fuck me, fucking god, fuck meeee!"



A purplish plume of pressurized abscess gushed from the side of his bull sac. The suppuration was the color of pus mixed with blood and it blossomed quickly, covering his hips and thighs like the Deepwater Horizon oil spill spewing clouds of dark, evil contamination. There was more contagion in his groin than in the toilet of a clogged Shanghai restaurant. Jo-bob sighed like he had finally passed a concrete turd. The tightness was lessening but still had plenty built up volume and it became necessary to pull the plug on the tub and run fresh clean water to flush out the infection.

"Why," Jo-bob asked with beseeching eyes, "why Lord did you let this happen to me?"

'Come on, beg louder, oh dear, I so love hearing them pray and beg.' God puckered like a tickled anus.



In the corner of the room the handsome, dreamy-eyed servant could no longer repress his glee at God's embrace of evil and fell to the floor in paroxysms of laughter.

"Mother-fuck, why are you laughing!" Jo-bob demanded. Then, he saw the giggling creature was not his servant after all, it was the devil. "Satan! Why are you here? Did you bring this awful calamity to me?"



All Satan could say through guffaws was "God told me to do it, just to hurt you. It was his idea." Satan was now on his back and kicked the floor while he giggled. "How do you like your God now?" and set off another uncontrolled paroxysm of breathless laughter.

Jo-bob, more than a bit damply agitated, was now pissed-off angry. "He told you? That's cruel, that's inhuman! What a prick! What kind of god would be such an asshole?" Jo-bob exclaimed in his delirium! "That son of a bitch! Damn him, damn him, damn him!"

God was taken aback, shattered by this betrayal. Why Jo-bob called him a 'son of a bitch' was confusing. And, he called him 'an asshole', too! Then, in a rush of epiphany, God abruptly apprehended why he did what he did. He — *God* — was the grand anomaly. He was not ontological nor was he teleological. Hell's bells, he was barely cosmological! From where did he spring forth and why? He had no mother to love him, no father to guide him. No wonder some people called him, "a bastard" with such clear-cut ease!

"I think I'll smite Jo-bob," God exclaimed and boom, as soon as the holy thought was comprehended a demolished Jo-bob collapsed into a burbling heap of protoplasm and was dead. The only living entities were the rejoicing *Staphylococcus bacilli* on

and in the devastation that was once his body. A last curse had expired on his lips.

However, Jo-bob was dead-right, God was an inhuman, cruel prick and first-rate, sadistic asshole. But Jo-bob's bull sac no longer hurt.

And thusly, the contest between the mighty immortals came to an end with a jubilant Satan skipping merrily away and ignominiously for the dejected, un-colossal God, now trudging in the opposite direction and beginning a search for an unlikely virgin to torture, torment and maybe, rape next. Perhaps he'd choose a girl this time.



\*Identity of the mystery lady: The wonderful, the fabulous, RBG, Ruth Bader Ginsberg

