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**Note: see separate folder for PDF*

Welcome to issue #101 of PBW.

We come out twice a year, June-July and December-January, except during Plague Years, and all rights revert back to our generous (albeit unpaid and, by now, quite tired of waiting) authors. How we ever made it to issue 101 with me still being alive, I'll never know.

Our next issue will appear, magically, on your computer, in Dec.-Jan. as who wants to stand in line at the post office when anyone around you could be spreading the bird flu or listening to hip-hop - it was so much easier back when it was only the syph that did in a generation of French poets and novelists.

Poets are permitted to send their work on paper, but my patented two-fingered typing will no longer permit me to attempt anything much longer than a few short poems or three.

All writing and art work can be sent to us via e-mail, at
BNI@AOL.COM - traditionalists can still reach us at:

Richard Freeman

513 North Central Ave.

Fairborn, Ohio 45324

Feel free to make copies of PBW for family and friends, or even put it out on the net, though that might incur the wrath of the cancelling class.

Anyway, see you again in January.

I Cannot Remember If I Turned Eighty

by Daniel Gallik

Actually, I am becoming 78. Outside my window is parking, and then you drive on Bainbridge Road if you wish to go somewhere to buy a bowl of soup. Nothing is wrong with any of this. I could leave here and go see my nephew in California. It would be a four day trip. But from now on I will stay here in Solon and work hard to stay regular.

But enough of that. I am watching a baseball game, the Angels and the Indians (or whatever their current name is) are in the third inning and there is no score. Four lights are outside my window. Well, I think there are four. It's exactly nine p.m. Last night I counted four street lights. Tonight, the same number came into my eye sight. Wow, Cleveland scored four runs and I did not see that happen. This writing habit has taken away some of my understanding of what is really going on in our world. Ohtani is up. He struck out in the first inning, or wait a minute, didn't he walk because the ump thought he was thrown four balls? Those

are other moments I missed. This time he struck out on five pitches.

A man just parked his Toyota, walked from his car into a large apt. And the lights from his vehicle turned off after he got into his building. He works in a care center for aged folks. He works the night shift. Still those four lights are still in the lot. However, I am now seeing a single small light way out on Bainbridge Road. Cars are driving by quickly to get home from work on a Thursday night. There is no noise because it is early in our spring, and the heater in our apt. Is on and will not turn off till my wife and I go to bed.

I do not hear a thing except that damn furnace. I have the sound turned off on the TV. I do not need sound to watch baseball in America. Nancy is doing our bills in her office. She does not like baseball. She only watches football. We haven't any cats or dogs. We are both old and do not need noise. We sleep together in one bed. We arise in the morning to watch and complain about the news. No, we do not fuck anymore. And our four kids rarely call us from their houses. Our days of ravaging have come to an end. Horror persists even though Jesus' heart lives and lives, and

all His believers stand and sit and lie on the ground relieving their pain. I ask, can you only smile when there is light?

At this time so many warriors owned chestnut mares and died atop them without a whimper. They knew their fate and did not cry. So many stones had blood that disappeared. Not much land had buildings to considered. A flood of rubble creased dead citizens' homes. Words were left alone across the deadening hillside. Whether here in Ohio or out in filthy Iran wars kept coming. The number of books did not clean up wars or the elderly. I do not worry over costs anymore.

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Jack Benny

Audio Tape and a Long Quest Regarding a Showbusiness Legend

JAMES M. STEEBER	

It started with TV specials, I guess. Jack Benny (born Benjamin Kubelsky on February 14, 1894) – a comedian whom I had seen periodically on network television started fixing himself into my consciousness during his last years on Earth. Benny did a series of “Farewell Specials” on NBC ending in early 1974, when I was nearly 12, by which point I had learned to adore his name, prompted, without a doubt, by my parents’ reaction to him which consisted of similar adoration. It was in that last year of his life that I learned I had once been in the room with him and that my parents knew him and had even entertained him. I was too young (or too asleep) to have remembered most of the encounters.

At some point I had decided that I was destined and determined to meet Mr. Benny, and that was reinforced by my

delving into his radio career (which, again, I must have been told about) through an LP record set entitled *The Jack Benny Story* which I practically memorized. Parenthetically, people did memorize material on records because they'd play them endlessly. The discs would even flop down on automatic changers that shut down when finished while you slept, committing some of the sounds to dreams. Benny's radio episodes played like grownup cartoon shows – filled with mirthful exaggeration and comic frustration centering around their marvelous vulnerable star.

Benny later described his on air character as having all of the frailties of man -- stinginess, vanity, self-delusion, insecurity – qualities listeners could identify in themselves, but all in a comic mode of not taking the world too seriously. Coworkers described Benny as practically a saint – generous, helpful, supportive, and almost without ego -- “a precious man” in the recollection of cast member Sheldon Leonard. On the road, Benny would avoid hotels where his black cast member Eddie ‘Rochester’ Anderson was denied at a time where this kind of consideration was rare. Amazingly, around that time, my mother revealed herself to be a sort of Benny groupie. When the comedian visited our Island of Aruba (where my father had become the manager of the one large hotel there in 1960) my mother made sure to capture him on

audio tape. Our far-flung family owned D-battery-powered Grundig tape recorders for sending audio letters back to family in the states. They'd send back similar audio letters using their own Grundigs. Some of the tapes survived.



My mother remembered that one of them in our possession was labeled “Benny!” in pencil. Could it be? I had one of the

coerced into recording a greeting to my grandmother back in the States (in Dayton). “Her name is Mrs. Samuels,” I hear my mother say a bit shyly. Benny responds “Mrs. Samuels? Can I talk now?”

“Yes”.

Benny proceeds. “Hello Mrs. Samuels, this is Jack Benny. Your daughter’s been with me all evening driving me nuts ‘till I was sure I would say hello to you, and I told her you don’t have to drive me nuts, I’ll say hello to you; it isn’t such a big thing you know. So she asked me about three or four times, so hello Mrs. Samuels and how are you?”

He hands the microphone back to my mother. I can only imagine what my grandmother must have thought. Knowingly, she had kept the tape for us.

That certainly made the connection to our lives. A number of years later, my mother’s sister revealed that she had more of the little Grundig tapes, and one of them had even more Benny on it. My mother had captured part of the nightclub act, tailored to the hotel’s audience. This included a violin solo of François Schubert’s *The Bee* (something Benny had sometimes played to semi-comic aplomb on his original radio show on NBC) and his theme song *Love in Bloom* played with the hotel orchestra. Oh, to be a bee on that wall.

It was all there including our band leader's heavily accented introduction. My mother would often relay the story to anyone asking about life in Aruba that Benny somehow had begged his friend Morrie, one of the hotel's owners, to perform during a supposed vacation trip (stating "You know what a ham I am, Morrie, but if you'd like me to do fifteen minutes...").

Fifteen wasn't possible. He did forty-five. He'd even brought his violin on this jaunt (being an inveterate practicer). The recording reveals that within seconds of his appearance in front of the mic, the audience was roaring with full-throated laughter, even though some had apparently not heard of the man. What's more, the laughs that followed were just as strong. "My goodness, he looks so much *younger* on television," was his opening line (close to seventy at the time). It was funny. The anecdotes were perfectly laid out with the snapper punchlines that benefitted from long setups. And there was another aspect. Civility.



Jack Benny entertaining at The Klompen Club of the Aruba Caribbean Hotel during the early 60's. Benny's left hand often resided in his pocket as one of his trademarks.

A woman very close to the stage apparently started taking flash photos of Benny. Benny, instead of chiding her with a sarcastic remark, simply said "Gee, ma'am, I'm gonna get blind. Can you do that later? ...thank you." I thought it was a wonderful way to handle general stupidity.

That was Benny. That was it. The civility, the innate kindness, the understanding. This is what made people stop on a dime when they saw him. His Aruba hotel stories and island anecdotes were marvelous (including one bit about having visited the men's room when the posh hotel first opened and that a

symphony orchestra was playing in it. Benny's response to that was "Now really, that's ridiculous. ...I mean a violin and a piano would have been plenty."

Late in 1974 one December morning I opened our front door and saw the devastating headline glaring back that Jack Benny had died, all of a sudden. I cried. It seemed unfair and untimely, but there it was. I would never meet him now. I later found out that Johnny Carson had sobbed when he'd gotten the news.

Curiously, all these years later, I still feel the loss. There was an element of decency in Benny that no one could approximate or replace. There was virtually no one who didn't find him funny and no one who knew him who didn't think he was wonderful. On his shows he was known for promoting everyone around him, as that made the material better, and that was all that was important.

At least my parents got to enjoy him in person. My mother was a singer and a sometime actress in Dayton, when she wasn't being an administrator for an advertising agency. She had singing aspirations that were somewhat held back by ironically the same sort of problem Jack Benny had with the violin. Neither could play or sing perfectly in key.

Benny was facile enough with the violin to play concerts later in life, including a famous Carnegie Hall benefit with Isaac Stern where he played (at least the first movement of) the Bach Violin

concerto for two Violins in D minor. Just the same, my mother had a wonderful voice (sounding a bit like Jo Stafford). Benny played with a lovely singing tone. In either case, it was enough.

I associate Jack Benny with my mother, and I'm not sure she didn't associate herself with him. She'd grown up Jewish like Benny in the Midwest in the era of network radio, and Benny's big Sunday evening show was in full swing by the time she was nine or ten. Undoubtedly, he was in her head. By the time of her honeymoon, in the late 1950's, she was in Las Vegas (obviously with my father), and saw Jack Benny eating alone in the coffee shop of the hotel. She was champing at the bit to go over and get an autograph – only discouraged by my father who wanted to leave Benny in peace. Before she calmed down entirely, George Burns entered the room and joined his friend. Still, she restrained herself. Happily, she was at least able to tell Jack about it at the Aruba hotel, and he told her it would have been all right. The autograph, then, was the recording that I have.

A few years ago I had a subscription to a newspaper archive and thought to look up the February date in the *Dayton Daily News* in 1924 when my mother was born. While there was no announcement about her, there was a listing of Vaudeville downtown, including the appearance of one Ben K. Benny (his early stage name) performing at the large B.F. Keith theater at

Fourth and Ludlow. He was only blocks away from the hospital when she was born.

As with many kids, I would note what made my parents laugh, and they certainly laughed at Benny. He was disarmingly good at what he did – long pauses, plaintiff stares, and perfectly phrased anecdotes with great punchlines, just as in Aruba. There had been a note of sadness or wistfulness in the NBC farewells, and they turned out to be prophetic, as pancreatic cancer took the comedian away just as he was preparing for the film role of Al Lewis in the Neil Simon adaption of *The Sunshine Boys*. George Burns took over the part of his late friend and got an Oscar for it. Nevertheless, Benny had been a showbiz legend who enjoyed a sixty-year career on the stage.

Over the years, I tried to reach out to elements of the Benny universe to relay my story, without success. I was once in queue (on hold) to speak to Phil Harris (Jack Benny's fabled radio and television bandleader and cast member) on an NPR interview sometime around 1990. The interview ended with me still listening on hold.

About fourteen years ago I boarded a train headed up the coast and found the only available seat on the car next to a woman who turned out to be Jane Lahr – sister of the *New Yorker Magazine* theater critic John Lahr and daughter of the late

performer and eternal cowardly lion Burt Lahr. Her destination? Joan Benny's house. Ms. Lahr and I got along well, and she even charted a horoscope for me which seemed fairly on the nose. Sadly, I wasn't able to ascertain if she ever passed along anything from me. I'm guessing she hadn't or hadn't attached any importance to it, as no lasting connection ensued with either Jane or Joan. Eventually, Joan died, and there was no more chance to talk about Benny with anyone closely connected.

There is a fascinating postscript to this story, even with all the missed opportunities. Roughly twelve years ago I received a strange communication from a Las Vegas interior design firm working with an architect who had been commissioned by Hilton Hotels to help to remodel the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Hotel for its 55th anniversary. This was the same hotel my father had managed and in which Jack Benny had performed and clinked scotch on the rocks with my parents.

I had been posting some of my father's distinctive Aruba photographs to a tourism site where there was a lot of reminiscing, and some of the photographs had gotten the attention of the project designers who had very few photographs from the hotel's early years. The hotel itself was a Morris Lapidus creation, and there was a strong nostalgia about it – just very little wall art with the original hotel. I had been posting images from

that very period. Would I be willing to sell them? It turned out that I was to sell royalties for use of images at the very hotel where I had first lived. And the crowning glory of the collection was of a distinctive photograph of Jack Benny standing, windswept, at the entrance of the hotel, violin at his side, taken by my father with his Rolleiflex camera.



One of my father's best images of Jack Benny, standing at the entrance of the Aruba Caribbean Hotel, likely around 1961. A cropped version of this image now adorns elevators at the hotel.

I was lucky to have had the negatives to the Aruba images and a professional scanner purchased after my father died in

2009, so that I could start exploring my, his, and my mother's negatives. We all took pictures, and my father had been trained professionally, so the images were very good. As a result of all this, the Aruba Hilton now features a full-length image of Jack Benny in its elevators, taken at the time we were all there.

Occasionally someone even contacts me about them. I'm not even sure how they know these images came from me. I thought to write about this, realizing one day recently that Jack Benny was actually a component of my life – one I was proud to carry with me. Find his radio shows on-line, and do see *To Be or Not to Be* (1942), directed by Ernst Lubitsch and starring Jack and Carole Lombard. That's really all you need as an introduction. Now as Benny would state "We're a little late, so good night folks."

Joshua Martin

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A SNEAKY/SHITTY OMISSION

by Kit Knight

Precise printed directions came from the doctor's office one month before the test & upon scanning, they rapidly became more limiting as the week of the procedure progressed. Nearing 74, I was scheduled for my first colonoscopy next week & till now, had cheerfully avoided arranging one myself. Perfectly content w/ negative results from the three stool samples I'd sent to a lab over the past ten years & so was the new PCP (primary care provider) of the assisted living facility I board in -- till mentioning my mother died of colon cancer in '84. Forcefully, Christine said, "High risk, Kit; I'm scheduling you."

I was sorry & stewed about it, becoming more fretful as the gloomy week approached. Normally, medical stuff never bothers me & am a champ at hospital stays having been thru ten or 12 operations starting at 17. (A car hit me in the middle of my senior year w/the next ten months divided between stays in two hospitals. As years passed, additional operations piled up & now

have over a yard of scar on my right leg plus assorted sized others on various body parts).

However, aside from temporary problems, I've always been able to eat a regular diet. Whatever & whenever I want.

But my colonoscopy insisted on a low fiber diet for the first four days of that gloomy week--no fruit w/skin or seeds, absolutely nothing red (liquid, food or candy) & multiple additional no-nos including alcohol. After whining to Christine--& a dozen others--it bordered on un-American to deny someone onions for six days, I got serious about complaints explaining wine & pretzels were my "new widow" diet for the first year after Arthur left me & still love them. Also, I adore red licorice. Christine shrugged about the onions & candy but ok'd potato chips as a substitute & as long as the wine was white--fine. That was the only good diet news yet since for decades I've asked friends & friendly bartenders if they're familiar w/a '56 movie that's been remade twice, Invasion of the Body Snatchers? (Aliens come to Earth in giant pea pods, root themselves to a sleeping human & voila – the person wakes looking exactly as before but is now controlled by an otherwise 'thinking' pod.) My punchline is always – "If I ever order anything but Chardonnay, you'll know the pod people have landed."

The awful diet tightened. Both for the day before the procedure & the day of the actual test I was only allowed clear

liquids like broth, water, popsicles (not cherry or grape) & black tea or coffee (no dairy--&, of course I add milk). But I was committed--this time--so would follow directions. I usually do as told but it's surprising how often things are bendable.

Horribly, the directions worsened -- night before the procedure I had to take four laxative pills followed by a 32 ounce mix of energy drink & powdered laxative. Then on the morning of the actual test day was supposed to drink another 32 ounces of the same stuff. Diligently, I got as far as downing most of the first 32 ounces till throwing up & becoming violently sick/weak.

Unable to take any more so poured the remaining six ounces into a glass storing it in the refrigerator next to the waiting pre-measured morning dose. Sighed, then dragged myself to bed thinking tomorrow is another day--try again but don't kill yourself.

Woke up feeling almost ok but loathing that waiting 32 ounces so took several sips of the leftover six & promptly got sick. That's it; I'm done.

Also remembering my teen age self in the rehabilitation hospital hiding that ugly brown horse pill in my salad because I was positive that huge capsule was making me pee a dozen & more times a day. In my late 40s before telling that story to Arthur who laughed hard enough to make tears. We were in bed watching some old movie w/a hospitalized patient complaining

about some old pill while eating lunch. Wiping his eyes, my late husband gasped, "Those pills might have been very important."

"They were!" I said. "I stopped peeing so much; it's really hard to transfer from wheelchair to toilet then back & then dress again," adding the word "tiring" for emphasis. Adding, "In a rehab hospital patients are well enough to be grouped, along w/ wheelchairs or canes, in a dining hall so there was a bunch of people & nurses always handed out pills at lunch; besides, I never ate green stuff then, either."

Laughing again, my writer/college teacher husband said, "No wonder you hate anything green."

"Not true," I protested, "I eat iceberg lettuce & like The Hulk." Adding, "Not everyone has a framed autographed photo -- vivid green & hulking!" Lou Ferrigno signed it on a press tour promoting some wrestling show & one of the small newspapers I wrote for in Sacramento asked me to cover it. My editor figured being the movie critic was close enough. It was a lovely & cheerful day.

Arthur & I along w/our retired racing greyhound were a month shy of leaving Sacramento for a move to Nevada. That state's major growth industry is old Californians; like us, leaving because the golden state has gotten so-o expensive. In Nevada, I added three to the six weekly northern California papers that had

carried me but left them all a year before Arthur got sick. Nine months later he was gone--kinder than dead--of liver cancer after a not-long-enough 36 years but lucked into a wonderful neighbor. Terry lived across the street & was helpful even before Arthur got sick but once ill the still working LPN/school nurse listened, drove me on errands, showered him & once crossed the street at 3 a.m in robe & slippers to help pull him out of the bathtub after falling while gripping a towel rack above the toilet. He was struggling to walk & soon to breathe, I was frantic desperately trying to help while we both grieved the sudden loss of our beloved dog a week ago. Nikkie sensed things were bad, getting worse & not knowing any other way to help, our 13 year old hound collapsed, then died.

And she was right -- it did help, very unexpectedly, by giving me one less thing to do. Painfully, no one had to feed the dog.

In two months Terry drove a still-&-again grieving me to Arthur's memorial service then a year later to Virginia City where, surrounded by friends, I scattered his ashes from the parking lot of our favorite bar overlooking that historic town of saloons. Both times she held me up. Sometimes literally since I'd recovered from three broken knees but was able to--98% of the time--walk on my own. Nine months later a seizure laid me on out on my tiled floor. Twenty minutes passed before Terry came over w/her dog & upon me not answering, peered thru the window seeing me

w/blood on & under the stove, cupboard & refrigerator. Using her key, she came in, checked me then called an ambulance. A week later I was out of the hospital--my rescuer cleaned up the blood first--& a month later gave her total control over my medical needs. Certainly logical then to name Terry as my immediate contact & seven years later, hers was the first face I saw after some rushed surgery upon breaking a hip the night before on the tiled floor. After two repair operations on that same hip--Terry w/ me each time--using a walker again (this time for the rest of my life, ironically, due to spinal arthritis) plus facing a much delayed knee operation it was--probably past--time to sell the fourth & final house Arthur had shared w/me.

In turn -- I'd healed from nine pelvic fractures & three broken knees--& others but these just concern walking--however, at 65 something else crept down the road making my back ache more severe upon breaking a hip & the four subsequent operations, altho the arthritis wasn't diagnosed for another three years. By now my valiant friend had retired & moved to Reno, an hour away. I'd visited several times & even stayed overnight.

My '23 move into a nearby assisted living facility let Terry relax feeling at last I was never completely alone but always drove me herself for surgery & most appointments. Before & since my arrival here, she often asked for my blood pressure

numbers; medically, the retired LPN is my babysitter. Later that year she helped me undress for the messy knee operation, which due to enormous prior damage & previous surgery--but only broken once!--took twice as long as a normal replacement. Two years later & facing outpatient surgery again, she'd be here in an hour. Terry grabbed my already packed carpetbag & we left. I'd never lied to my marvelous friend & won't now but will sort of glide over my final 32 ounce failure as she's--mostly, rightfully--strict about medical stuff. Let the photos show as much as they can & I'm good w/that. (Sorta upfront by emphatically telling both Terry & the clinic staff that I'd never go thru this again.) For the third or fourth time she helped me undress then watched someone wheel me away. The doctor was next to my gurney as I surfaced from the light anesthetic & groggily asked, "Everything ok?"

"Yes; we removed two small polyps but you're good to go." Then he left for the next--ha ha--asshole (why specialize in that?) before I was awake enough to ask more specifically about clarity but "good" was good enough. Apparently for Terry, too, since we both viewed the photos & again she was satisfied. Decided to confess my sneaky/shitty omission deed -- but not just yet.

We went to Reno for a welcome meal then watched a '25 feel-good movie at her house. Marveling at Sally Field bond w/an octopus was made happier munching the red licorice I'd tucked in

my bag; besides, the candy eased the sting of Gidget now being a grandmother. The next morning over coffee--w/milk!--& toast Terry shared details of her sister's funeral. After carefully stowing a picnic lunch between us in front her dog jumped in the backseat. We ate at a rest stop near Pawnee Indian ruins after she walked the 85 pound pup. Except for a curl tail the solid white dog looks ready to pull a loaded sled & scares the pants off strangers but is a well mannered pooch. Before breaking my hip I often puppy-sat Kia while Terry was working or on vacations. Charming me whenever she fished one of Nikkie's old toys out of the yellow storage bin. Kia gobbled whatever we tossed but Terry had taught her fur baby not to beg--just look hopeful. She said, "Hey, Kit, wanna go shopping?" Leaving the dog w/water & cracked windows, we prowled around for an hour & of course Terry tracked down the blood pressure machine first but I found long desired shocking pink shoelaces then saw a white lace blouse I hadn't known I needed. Rejoining Kia, we journeyed on to one of the two towns on Nevada's route 50, the well-named Loneliest Road In America.,

Middlegate wasn't actually a town, just a bar/restaurant that was first built as a Pony Express stop in the 1860s; the historical marker in front said Dedicated To The Women of Middlegate. A string of women--some married, most not--were named on the

bronze tablet who'd owned, rebuilt & remodeled the old station. In '77 another woman bought it, later adding computers & Wi-Fi. She & her family have run it--lovingly cluttered w/odd, old fashioned stuff--ever since. It must be an oasis to travelers who've mushed that road. Certainly to us.

Terry, who'd been there before, leaned against the old wooden bar w/brass railings & ordered one of the burgers the place is famous for but I wanted a Reuban w/plenty of onions. The pleasant bartender said those don't come w/onions & Terry interrupted, "This woman has been on a no-onion diet for a week – give her onions!" Obliging, he wrote it down adding we could sit anywhere. Terry both asked & said, "There are picnic tables out front & I have a dog." Eric nodded, adding he'd bring our orders out. Kia was thrilled to explore & after leashing her on the porch we shared with a reined plastic horse on metal rockers, Eric came out carrying baskets w/enormous sandwiches & gorgeous fries. The horse was the kind that used to be outside most supermarkets & a kid could put in a quarter making the pony rock in a pretend gallop. The shinny rails were rust-free inviting anyone to trot along & left me idly wondering (hoping) it still worked. But aww -- the food looked superb & Kia wolfed down bits of everything w/o preference, even tho mine looked best. Two ladies in huge sunhats, ugly green sneakers & looking very

worried sped past the big dog but most--Eric included--stopped to pet her & ask questions. Surprising me when two separate visitors knew she was an Akita.

Even tho all life's riddles are answered in the movies, the reach of film staggers me. Our tourists had recognized the not-widely-known Japanese breed from the Richard Gere movie, Hachi: A Dog's Tale, which is set in Philadelphia w/Gere owning a very loyal Akita. Once a movie critic--always, so I was quick to add the Gere film was an American make-over of an equally good Japanese movie, also titled Hachi. Just as the fabulous 1960 movie, The Magnificent Seven, was just a western version of an equally famous '54 Japanese film, The Seven Samurai.

Our country excels at stealing--permanently borrowing, if softer is better/easier--ideas, words & land. We broke every single one of the hundreds of treaties the US signed w/the Indians. Now Mein Trumpf wants Greenland.

After Terry put Kia back in the car. we returned our empty baskets to Eric & they enthusiastically agreed the restroom walls were worth seeing. Newspaper stories from the 18th & early 19th centuries. Upon leaving the ladies room a friendly male customer said, "Check out the walls in the men's room, too." More old newspapers but there was a mop in a corner & I observed it was sexist because we didn't have our own mop. Ever practical, Terry

whispered, “Look--no urinal, just a toilet & women don’t pee on the floor.” That was funnier than anything on the walls. Giggling, we waved to Eric & I took the arm of the beefy guy who’d invited us to the men’s room saying he’d been drafted to help Terry get me & my walker down the single step. The man was cheerfully obliging while Terry looked bemused as--several times--she’d said she could help unaided.

Her son had worked for a contractor so understands my needs & first suggested Terry bring me here, saying, “Kit will love it!” Terry certainly could have handled me alone if there were a railing but w/nothing sturdy on one side – a lifetime of experience said two were safer. I was touched Nick thought of me.

She headed back to my ‘home’ or at least where I resided since home is both a person & a place. (Sadly, Arthur has been gone--kinder than dead--nearly 12 years.) Now: “Terry -- I have a sneaky/shitty confession” She listened &--to my relief/gratitude--didn’t (pun intended) give a shit. At first, only casually saying my photos had been fine then adding she’d seen a bottle of prep in a bag on my floor & wondered if I took it all but decided that was my problem--not hers. “That was generic stuff; later buying the recommended brand because if I was only gonna do this once, do it right.” She smiled. Leaving Kia in the still running car, Terry carried bags to my two room apartment then helped put things

away including my remaining half a Reuban. After a hug, she drove her dog home.

Cheerfully, I confessed again to the 30-something med tech at the main desk who thought it was hilarious. Prefacing it with, “Ashley, listen up – this is for 30 years down the road w/your own colonoscopy & they want you to drink a second dose of that ghastly 32 ounce mix. You **don’t** & nobody even notices let alone yells at you.” Wiping her eyes, she promised to remember. After that, felt it was practically my duty to tell youngsters about my discovery & gleefully confessed several times, including to the new PCP, who also didn’t care but did examine the photos pointing out exactly where my polyps were removed while *I looked solemn* pretending to understand what Christine was showing me. Also confessing in a detailed letter to my older sister-in-law, a retired RN, who’s also been known to inquire about my blood pressure.

Linda was glad that “even w/half prep” the scope turned out ok. (It was more than half, but why quibble?) She also observed--typically, w/o judgment as to need--doctors wanted more preparation now than they used to & described how much less she’d done over a decade ago. I’ve known my sister-in-law since high school & have never heard Linda pass judgment on anything or anybody.

By now my confessions had become near brags & wrote an old friend who is barely five years younger, hoping I was in time to spare her unnecessary grief. Besides, like me, Laura appreciates a real letter. Tucking an email under your pillow just isn't the same.

Year One

for Jovi Lynn Cavell

on her first birthday

by Maura Gage Cavell

Jovi with cosmic blue eyes that
open brightly as she stands, arms
victoriously directing
indefatigable parents
like: conductor to orchestra.
You smile and giggle sweetly,
nudge your dogs, your two protectors.
Named uniquely, you shine—such a
cheerful, stunning, delightful girl.
Always you are dressed so chic—
violets, pinks, greens, yellows, blues—
each cute overall, headband, hat
lovingly arrayed by parents
looking at you with sincere pride.

Happy first birthday, darling!

Love, Pops and Gigi

I Would Like to Go Back to that Beach

Oh, how I'd like to go back to
that beach in that Florida park.
I forget the name, but I could
find out. It was pristine with white
silken sugar sand, pelicans, some
rocks, beautiful water, lovely
colors everywhere, gorgeous
full azure blue sky; pale yellow sun
warmly caressing all with its
bright rays. over everything
shimmering, magical pretty
shells bleached and pinkish.
My friends and I enjoyed gulls'
chatter as we'd walk the along shore.

Six O'clock on a Sunday Evening

There's a Ferris wheel lit up in
the distance; colorful arching
umbrellas nestle overhead as
we walk back towards the city,
its buildings quickly becoming
silhouettes in the now night sky.
Back home, we light candles, listen
to the owls in the trees softly
calling mate to mate. We sip wine,
sit on a balcony, hours
slipping away, dreams turning their
backs on us. We grow older by
decades from those we once were, so
now we have a deliberate
fashion of getting somewhere we
wish to be. Just as the moon and

the stars seem to make patterns
in the sky and through the dark night,
we adhere to comfortable
measures and habits as the dark
overtakes everything—buildings,
the Ferris wheel, and daylight's dream,
the hooting owls, their soft calls,
and the multi-colored umbrellas—
all disappear in the deep night.
When the sun rises and we along
with it are called to daylight, we do
not mourn the burned down pink candles.

Garden Dream

Somewhere in the garden
of his dreams, he saw snake
patterns move through the grass,
yet he only saw rows

of the snake's movements, but
no snake caught his vantage
point. His daughter played a
quiet game on the porch
with her dolls as students,
so he nervously watched
the garden as well as
the pretty girl at play.

He suddenly dropped a rake,
startling the girls, mother
who sighed loudly on her
swing as she lifted herself
into the pale sunlight—clouds
seemed to crack like an egg
over the landscape With-
out even a whimper.

She looked past the flowers
for her husband, lost in—
side if his garden dream.

Broken, Shattered, Sacrificed

Overlooking the wolf-edged night,
she peered into the other world-
ness, the interior, wilder
places of imagination.

Nightfall comes, but she tries to fight
off the bitterness, exhausted,
possessed by a presence, now clear—
too clear—an absence, breaking, gone.
Shattered by silence, she's splintered.
Breaking off into the blue, she
knows now she cannot fly, not home,
not alone, not able to make
a sound now. Left dangled, drowning
in the loss, broken glass, shattered.

The Whisper of a Dream

Carelessly climbing up, she fell
down on the whisper of a dream.
clasping onto clouds, thin air could
not hold her. Only seconds this
morning, and she's broken, searching
through the mystery of his eyes.
The frontier of love seemed to be
a possibility, but he
gave her only bags full of stones.
Riding the notion's fantasy,
holding the exposed photograph
of him, she had tried hard to make
It happen, but her labors ran
carelessly. Climbing up, she fell

Home

The details of home might be in
the furnishings, the pink fabric
fringed lampshades gilded frames around
paintings, or the people who are
there and how they make one feel or
the safe feeling one may get when
one comes inside for a refresh
or to breathe in the aromas
of a meal made with love and care.
Maybe home is the city or
town from which one comes, the people,
the taverns, the shops, the mood of
the place: Whatever home means to
to one—even state or country.

Dead Joey Jowolski

by Mick Mykola Dementiuk

When he came home from work and told his wife that Joey Jowolski died two nights ago, she said, Who the fuck is Joey Jowolski?

He told her Joey Jowolski was his friend back in grade school who taught him how to masturbate, You know, jerking-off...

She burst out laughing. Yeah, so show me?!

He shook his head, Have some respect...he mumbled, and went to take a shower.

Yet it was too bad about Joey Jowolski, especially that young. Hell, Joey was only a year older than him and if he went like that, a massive stroke, anyone could go.

He shook his head again and shampooed his hair, lathering his head and neck. It was funny what she said though, Show me!

In your mouth I'll show you! he laughed, moving out of the shower stream and lathering his chest, his stomach, his crotch, his legs and feet, and wondered if Joey Jowolski went out jerking off as well.

Hell, the guy had never married, never seemed to have a girlfriend, and though they had drifted apart over the years, just nodding when they'd pass on the street, Hey! Hey!, he always thought of Joey Jowolski in terms of jerking-off.

Much like spotting an old History teacher and remembering Columbus discovering America. Or an English teacher and worrying about your gerunds and syntax and if you are using them correctly. Well, Joey Jowolski was a teacher of masturbation, and teacher and subject always went together: Joey and jerking-off, Joey and ejaculation, Joey and total exhaustion and collapse. How else would Joey Jowolski have gone out if not by gripping his dick and shooting to high heaven?

He stepped back under the shower stream and rinsed, opening a bottle of hair conditioner. He always used his wife's, the secret pH formula flooding his memory with the scents of females, of girls, of their secrets, of impenetrable mysteries, and reminding him that no matter how many times he lay with his wife he would never truly grasp or pierce into the essence of what a man means to a woman.

Was it sex? Love? Caring and being needed? What man does not strive for that? A click of a heel, a waft of perfume, a tinkle of a bracelet, a lilt of a

voice, and what man does not lose himself in yearning and craving for connection with that fleeting figure, an always eternally fading distant image, of a female, a woman?

To try and connect, to lose it, to remember, to seek, to try connection once more...

No matter how Joey Jowolski went, if he had not experienced daily life with a woman, the loving, the bickering, the sharing, the pouting and sulking, the laughter and caring, then his life was like a stiff dick in his own hand, perhaps pleasurable for a solitary moment, but a life in the long run as wasted and pointless as shooting that stiff dick into your own fist and fingers and fading fantasies.

He rinsed his hair and the secret pH formula conditioner streamed down his chest and belly, bubbling in the hairs of his hairy crotch.

Good ol' Joey Jowolski, dead as a limp dick!

But back then Joey was the friend he needed most. Maybe in time he would have discovered masturbation on his own, without Joey's instruction. Maybe he would have eventually come to realize that besides thinking about girls and teachers in school, about Sonia's little titties, Kathy's juicy fulsome ass, or Miss Heather's cute little short-shorts when he saw her on a Saturday afternoon on Second Avenue, it would also be pleasurable to

clutch his dick and squeeze while thinking about them. And perhaps in time his fist and wrist would have innately begun that natural boy-movement of stroking himself in rhythm to the curving jiggling images he was imagining. Maybe also in time, on its own, he would have dared to imagine himself touching, squeezing, and even disrobing those images of tits and asses and short-shorts and discovering the beautiful eruption of ejaculation, and the well-worth exhaustion of cuming...

As it was, Joey Jowolski explained everything to him. But make sure you're alone in the house, Joey warned, because you'll probably start screaming and yelling when you cum!

Come where? he asked.

Joey laughed and winked. Cum there! You'll find out when you get there!

And he did find out, because he tried it as soon as he got home, his mother in the kitchen, his father watching TV, and his baby sister taking a nap.

It took awhile to position himself comfortably on the toilet seat, first sitting as if he were taking a shit and aiming his stiff dick into the bowl. Then he got up and tried it standing up, leaning against the wall and clutching his shirt flaps up to his belly, but that too was uncomfortable. So he sat back down, stretched out his legs, and roosted his ass on the edge of the toilet seat: his hard and stiff dick was positioned perfectly against his belly.

He gripped and stroked, just as Joey had instructed. And it felt good, but Joey hadn't explained how long it would take or how fast he should stroke, evenly up and down, or in a frantic staccato beat...

And it didn't take long for his images of Sonia, Kathy, and Miss Heather to embolden, and he knew exactly what to do when Sonia lifted up her blouse and plopped out her tiny titty, or when Kathy leaned her big ass down on his crotch, or when Miss Heather let him touch and feel in between her short-shorts...

My God, it was even better than Joey had said!

It shook his entire body: his face clenched and grimaced, his head bobbing up and down, his shoulders knocking the toilet tank lid behind him. And he spasmed in a release of his thirteen years as if his soul was spilling out in discovery, awakening, in a blossoming of his young male potential.

Perhaps that is the true loss of male sexual virginity, when a boy masturbates for the first time. When he steps out of his youthful narcissism and summons the images of others. Of females to soothe and comfort, and entice, lure, satisfy and share the secret images as he is now giving up his own secret image of himself to them in imagination, in experimentation, in hope, in the desire of desiring their images so much that he will come to dare and imagine himself in reality touching the real flesh of a real girl. Of

her real bosom, of her real body, of her real soul. And of her responding in her own pursuit of male images and daring to touch his own real flesh and spirit...

-Lemme in! his little sister suddenly jarred and screamed, pounding on the bathroom door. I gotta make pee-pee! Lemme in!

He masturbated two more times that first day, once in the bathtub that evening, his semen swirling, swimming and sticking to his legs and thighs. And once in bed, the mattress rocking and the headboard clattering, that he was sure his Dad banged on wall for him to Shut up, go to sleep!

And though it took longer each time to entice the ejaculate, each eruption was as intense and pleasurable as his first masturbation just a few hours ago.

He opened his eyes, gripping his dick. It was hard, bubbled in secret pH formula conditioner.

Good ol' Joey Jowolski! Good ol' dead Joey Jowolski!

He stroked his penis back and forth; it felt good. How many years since had last thought of Joey? How many years since he had learned how to masturbate? Probably thirty. And how many years since he had last done do? Probably before the wedding when he still was single, and that was already six years. Do handjobs giving by his wife count?

Good ol' Joey, as dead as a dick after cuming. Good ol' Miss Heather, probably even deader than good ol' Joey Jowolski.

He stroked faster, his eyes shut. Man, Miss Heather, her short-shorts were really something! He didn't know who it was in front of him on Second Avenue, all he saw was that round curved ass, the soft tanned thighs, the highlight of the slim panty line, and the dark draw of that unattainable mystery disappearing even darker, more mysterious, drawing more deeper but softer, into the curve beneath her ass and in between her legs.

He almost walked his hardon right into her ass when she stopped for the light, turned, smiled and squealed, Mickey, my favorite student, hiya!

He barely stuttered a response, his face red, his eyes disbelieving in the sight of her equally round high mysterious breasts, and if he had touched himself right then he may not have discovered the slow arousal of masturbation but he certainly would have hit upon the immediacy of ejaculation.

-I already did my homework, he merely mumbled, and limped past her, the wonder, the awe, and fascination of her short-shorts tearing into his soul and etching a permanent scar of longing, shame, loss, hunger and stupidity in his skull forever.

He ejaculated, his shoulder pounding the wet tile wall, the steaming water hitting his belly and fist and dick and washing away the bubbled conditioner, the scum, the hardness, the quickening softness.

God, that was a big one! Oh Miss Heather, whew! How many times as a kid did he jerk-off to her image? How many times did her bubbly ass and shorts appear in his fantasies and longings and perversions? Miss Heather, yeah! Sonia and Kathy, oh God!

He'd better let go, and pulsed his dick to drain out the remaining semen, then washed himself all over again. Once more he used the secret pH formula around his crotch –didn't want the missus to get a whiff of his own pH formula, did he, especially if she didn't help in preparing it?

He stepped out of the shower and wiped himself dry. Should he go to the funeral? It was tomorrow. Maybe just send flowers. Neah, he smirked. He had paid his respects. To Joey. To Miss Heather. To Sonia and Kathy and whoever else he once fantasized about. All of them: good ol' dead erotic ghosts, but good sexy teachers one and all.

He wrapped a dry towel around him and came out of the bathroom. His wife was in the kitchen making dinner and he paused to admire her round ass in her too tight skirt. Would Joey have known what to really do with it?

-You always smell so nice, his wife giggled as he pressed himself behind her and groped her breasts. He took a deep breath of her neck.

-You smell even nicer, he said, pulling her out of the kitchen as she reached to turn off the stove.

He had no problem getting it hard or staying in, though he fell into softness pretty quickly...

-What about your friend, what's-his-name? his wife asked afterwards.
Going to the funeral?

He shrugged, bit into his steak, leered at her peeked nipples in a tight pink t-shirt, and simply said, I really didn't know him all that well...

His wife stared at him.

-I thought you said he taught you... and she smirked.

-Oh, shut up! he laughed, chewing at his steak.

She did. Smirked. Then said, I'd still like to see what your dead friend taught you...

How To Pee

by

Mick Mykola Dementiuk

She opened the men's room door and saw me standing before the urinals, my dick fully exposed and poised in my hand, then entered the bathroom and shut the door behind her.

I had been trying to pee, tugging the flaccid skin of my dick back and forth, but the urine hovered somewhere between the pit of my crotch and the tip of my penis, as if stuck in the limp wrinkled shaft and refusing to leave either the dick or relax in its bladder; --a few times I even flushed the urinal tank hoping that the splashing sound of water could entice the urine to flow, but to no avail.

She moved away from the door and shuffled to the vacant cubicles, her heel-less slipper-like shoes sliding softly on the muck-edged grey-tiled floor.

I let go of dick and turned to look at her. She wore a tight blue skirt that disappointedly fell below her knees –out of style years ago-- and a frumpy gray sweater –more dirty than gray-- that concealed whatever flat breasts she may have once tried to plump up and show off. Her blonde hair draped limply along sides of her face, and her eyes and lips were still tinged in faint traces of week-old makeup.

I frowned; she looked wasted and desolate, --probably a burnt-out whore giving blow-jobs for a few bucks in the bathrooms and balconies of Times Square movie theaters, or some confused housewife having recently discovered her insatiable need for sex and tossed out in the streets for it.

She moved across the bathroom floor and peered into a vacant cubicle; her shoulders suddenly shivered and I heard her gag and spit out in disgust as she jerked away from the cubicle, her fingers clasping her lips and nose.

-Pigs! She blurted, quickly moving to the cubicle farthest away from the repulsive one, skipping two vacant stalls in between. She wiped her eyes and nose, and coughed and looked at me.

My limp dick dangled out of zipper but I made no move to cover myself and instead, tensed the bottom of my ass and felt my cock give a quick indistinct jerk up and down; I doubt she noticed anything.

She turned to look into the farthest cubicle, warily pushing open the stall door, then glanced back at me.

-Does this one work? she asked, and moved her eyes from my cock to my face and back down again.

I stepped away from the urinals and moved towards her, my cock flapping limply from side to side as I approached her cubicle and peered in.

-Looks OK, I shrugged, and saw her look away from my dick and stare at the toilet bowl.

-Yeah? she meekly said, and studied my face.

I smiled and nodded, and stepped into the cubicle. I lowered the black toilet seat then unrolled a wad of toilet paper and wiped the seat clean. I tossed the wad into the bowl and gestured for her to enter and sit down.

She looked at the toilet seat, glanced at me cock, then once more studied my face and finally entered the cubicle, pushing the door shut behind us and clamping the metal latch securely down.

For the first time since she had entered the bathroom I felt that familiar involuntary avid kick at the base of my groin, a tensing of possible release,

but it seemed more like a fleeting confused and uncertain reminder than an actual sexual arousal, and my dick stayed limp.

Still, I moved to the narrow space between the bowl and stall partition so my cock would be level with her face when she sat down on the bowl; I foresaw at least a hand-job, if not a possible blow-job, because where else could this thing be going?

I again held out my arm for her to be seated and she shyly glanced at my cock and up at my face then stooped down and clasped the bottom of her skirt and raised it over her knees. She slightly wiggled and tugged the tight skirt up her thighs but her outspread legs prevented the skirt from rising as freely as it should and she looked at me and pouted.

-I have to pee! She groaned, and crossed her legs and doubled over, rocking back and forth.

I moved away from the partition and reached down to her thighs and firmly grasped the bottom of her skirt, my fingers inching up the bare leg flesh under the skirt, and I again felt that sudden snap of possible arousal as my limp dick brushed the crumpled folds of her raised skirt.

I looked at her small breasts and grimaced. She smelled; it was an odor of stale sweat, unwashed feet, foul mouth, stagnant perfume, and I noticed how dirty and grimy her sweater and white blouse actually were.

Mushroom Offer South Nathan Anderson

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Modern Cowboy

by Randy Russell

“It was not like me to disobey
my instincts, so I kept my communication to a succinct
utterance when it came to drama with the cats.
That level of emotional gymnastics was not within my range
of responses—if you know what I’m saying—I preferred the lowly
stumbling, paper-route down the planked path,” said the tin

man—a man of tin
whose limbs disobey
his will, and whose lowly
attempts at meaning via a succinct
wail across the range,
a cry heard only by cats

and birds preyed on by cats
and TV cops, bumbling tin
star sheriffs, open range
outlaws who disobey
all laws and the succinct
code of the lowly

creatures, the lowly
prey of cats
whose succinct
existence, for a tin
of catfood shall disobey
rules of the range,

however dumb, back to the range,
the lowly
desire to disobey
the cats
of tin.
Succinct.

Enough with the succinct!
(It's overrated.) What we need is the entire range
of responses, from angry to soft, diamond-hard to made of tin
foil and egg cartons, from McMansions to lowly
urban SROs, bathroom down the hall, no dogs or cats
or visitors past 10 p.m., and eviction for those who disobey

the rules. Tin machine. Succulent neighbor, succinct
succumbs, perhaps. You who disobey God, in your Range
Rover, the lowly, doomed wanderer. Our only hope is the cats.

Notebooks 14

by Richard Freeman

We can think enough to be dangerous - to ourselves and to others -
but never well enough to be wise -

Socrates said that only he was wise, because only he, among
Greeks, knew that he knew nothing -

Yet as he also held that virtue was knowledge, and was not wise
enough to realize that knowing nothing, virtue becomes impossible. If to
know the good is to do the good, and no one knows anything, including
Socrates, how are we to do good?

Is it that obvious that I'm not fit to do philosophy? Or even understand
it...

At least I don't think I think I'm wise...

To me being wise is being conscious.

To be conscious is to know at one time all that you know.

I can't even remember half of what I know. I'm almost constantly in a fog, though at times, the fog thins into patches, so that I can almost see - at least straight ahead, if not to the sides.

Were I conscious, I'd surely know what good is, and I would only do good. Or so it seems. Not being conscious, I can't be sure that this is true. Just as not being conscious of God, I can't be sure whether there even is a God, much less about anything that concerns God. I don't even know what a God might be.

But I do know that I am not conscious.

I am not conscious, therefore I am... as I am.

To write about others is to be forced to judge others, and though I judge others all the time in everyday life, when I write, I hope to write from some small amount of consciousness. At least when I'm writing in these notebooks.

To write a novel is to have to be omnipotent, and I do not want to play God, even to imaginary people.

To be fully conscious in a world like this would be to fully suffer... to be sane, and alone, among the mad. Would one have to pretend to be also mad - or wouldn't that be necessary. Consciousness in someone else would seem like madness to me.

If consciousness doesn't lead to madness, then perhaps God isn't insane.

Sartre found that the universe was random, meaningless (at least as far as he was concerned) - and that we were condemned to be free (whatever that might mean to Sartre). He used his freedom to embrace communism - which provided him with... meaning? Answers? Jeunes filles?

No system invented by humans can provide answers for long... reality mutates... so that the answers become monstrous, cancerous... dead systems eating away at the body of reality.

I don't know whether the universe is meaningless or not - or what its meaning might be, if there is a meaning - but I have no reason to conclude that there isn't meaning in the universe... unless as below, so above is true.

It is possible that we're inventing new economic systems that don't work all that well (or perhaps the systems are developing themselves). The new systems seem to be trying to invent us - or how we should be in order to best interact with them. But it is likely that all too many people simply won't be able to adopt. Will be, in fact, like me.

What economic systems do to those they can't change is make them meaningless... or at least valueless, which, in a system like ours, is as close as a person can come to having no meaning.

Whether there is an economic system that can invent itself that doesn't drive us mentally bankrupt, I do not know. Certainly all attempts to invent such economic systems have proved thus far to be abortive. Abortions.

But then I was driven mad by our system long ago, by my inability to properly adjust, and am only clever enough to remain out of the hands of our institutionalizers. I am not to be trusted when it comes to creating economic sanity. Anything I might say has more than a tinge of madness attached to it, perhaps as a hidden tax, perhaps right out in the open where everyone but me can see it.

California starts its new policy of destroying affirmative action (though Jesse Jackson has threatened to march across the Golden Gate Bridge)...

In Texas, where the U of TX Law School no longer practices affirmative action, there are now 4 black students and 26 Hispanics... out of a student mind of 460. This is one standard deviation in action.

The right says that affirmative action is racist - and it well may be - but what is to be done if all races are not created equal, intellectually. If A.A. is racist, so is the effect of getting rid of A.A.

The problem here is that no one dares say that blacks might not be as legally minded as whites... well, I suppose a white racist might say it...

Life resembling irony.

All men are created equal... some are more equal than others.

Ann is reading Nature By Nurture, a book on psychological typing. She tells me I am type 1 (of 16). Usually psychological typing sounds as convincing to me as astrological typing, but, indeed, there I was... or seemed to be. The authors say that these types are hard wired into our brains at birth, though they can be somewhat changed as we grow (if we grow). If we are hit in the head enough, the wires might be shaken loose.

I think I've grown somewhat, and not merely older, over the years, though I hardly act my age. What I do know is that there are parts of me that don't let me be a hell of a lot different than I am.

My personality type accounts for about 1% of the population - which is probably why I haven't run into that many poor schmucks like myself.

But if this book is true, it would confirm some things I have always felt to be true - that I did not choose to be who and how I am - and that I had little to do with being who and how I am. I have been who and how I am for as long as I can remember, and haven't been able to do all that much about it. I am aware, sometimes, of who I am, and what this makes me do - and refuse to do.

And I can watch Caitlin, whose personality is as odd as my own, with some differences, trying to deal with herself. She is reading the book, and it seems to be helping her - at least to understand others (it is too late for me to understand others - all I can do is accept them). I was not as conscious of this when I was 17 - I mean I knew all too well that I was different, but I didn't have a clue as to why that was.

I only knew that I hadn't willed any choices that made me who I was, and that there wasn't anything I could do to be like other kids.

It does explain why it is difficult for me to write novels - my personality type is so rare, I can't feel what it would be like to be a more common type, creating "real" characters that readers could understand and accept. Readers wouldn't understand my characters any more than the people who know me (or at least think they do) understand me.

It is sadly evident, if this book's thesis is correct, why I couldn't hold a steady job, make friends easily, be popular, etc. when I was growing up.

Combine an odd personality type, with the wrong sort of intelligence - and the results are not really my fault. Though I don't blame anyone else for this. Just the cards I've been dealt, which, to be honest, I wouldn't trade in for any other hand.

I think the problem with capitalism can be stated succinctly, as follows: Wealth corrupts; Absolute Wealth corrupts absolutely.

Belief in wealth is stronger than belief in God, when wealth is an absolute value.

Those who believe in their own wealth believe in their own godhead.

What passes for religion in America is merely the belief that those who have wealth are good, and that it is good to be wealthy. That rich men can buy needles large enough to fit through, with guards to keep the poor away.

To both the scientist and the mystic, God appears as something supernatural - something higher than rationality - a spiritual being.

But what if God isn't spiritual at all, but, rather, a breeder of earthworms. A farmer. And a matter-of-fact rationalist. Though perhaps a rationalist who sometimes has dreams of the supernatural - and wonders where He came from, and how, and why.

I doubt that this speculation would satisfy the religious, the scientists, or even religious scientists.

My friends think I'm joking when I tell them that capitalism is a radical/revolutionary economic system - while communism and socialism, like feudalism, are conservative...

But it should be obvious that once the “revolution” is over, and capitalism is overthrown, that communism then tries its best to preserve/ conserve - through bureaucracy - through thinking it’s the end product of evolution - and that even if the state somehow doesn’t wither away, no change is ever again necessary.

Capitalism, root hog or die, upsets everything - creates/destroys. It can never stand still. Stagnation is evil. Lack of economic growth is sufficient reason to overthrow anything - to fire, take over, or go out of business. Brahma and Shiva are more than welcome, but there is no place in our economy for Vishnu.

If there is an irony in this, it isn’t me that’s being ironic.

I hope to one day, perhaps, have another look at the O.T. - this time not to discover transcendental/esoteric gold, but rather to find out why God (if there is a God) hates the Jews.

For hate them, he must, otherwise everything in Jewish history is incomprehensible.

Jews have tried, in the past, to discover what actions of theirs might have upset God... angered him... even while His prophets have railed against one damn thing after another, as even the Koran states, only be put to death. Duh.

But to me, all of this is blaming the victims. What did the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto do to offend God? What, indeed. Did they forget to eat kreplach for Purim?

Jews can live with the knowledge of other people hating them - for killing Christ - or drinking Christian babies blood... whatever... but have had to hide from ourselves the sad but obvious truth that God, for some reason, hates us too.

I want to discover that reason(s).

When I was asked to run for a seat on council by the head of the Antioch College election committee, back in the '60s, so that this obvious affront to political dignity would cause others to run for office, I did my job well, making absurdist statements that infuriated the serious minded.

They promptly took out petitions, and soon, there were enough candidates running to fill all available seats, so that I wouldn't have to.

It is only today, 30 years too late, that it came to me what I should have campaigned on - that if elected, I would do my best to convince the other members to abolish student council entirely.

We have become so used to the idea of representative democracy that we needlessly use it to disenfranchise ourselves.

Though as I have never voted for anything or anyone (not even for myself), I can't say that I have ever been enfranchised.

But a school with 700 students, or even a town with 4,000 residents, doesn't need elections. Such small numbers allow for direct democracy.

Instead, we alienate ourselves from politics - and from the political processes - feeling virtuous if we vote for someone else to do our job.

Naturally, people look at someone like me, who never votes, as an idiot (in more than the Greek sense of the word). But I don't want to delegate my responsibility.

We don't have democracy because, as a society, there is no wish to truly enfranchise people like me - let alone those who exhibit my personal traits - the cranks, the kooks, and the poor.

Government must be protected from such as we the people - at Antioch, in Yellow Springs, and, most definitely, in the rest of America.

I wonder whether if after WW2 there had been no possibility of a Jewish state, Judaism as a religion would have imploded. Whether our "relationship" with God would have broken once and for all. Without real estate, there was no tangible evidence that God loved us, like we think He said He did.

Only the creation of Israel allowed this abusive marriage between God and the Jews to stay clear of the divorce courts, and out of the battered believer shelters.

What if you slept. And what if, in your sleep, you dreamed. And what if, in your dream, you went to heaven and plucked a strange, beautiful flower. And what if, when you awoke, you found you'd wet the bed. Ah, what then?

Franz Kafka once dreamt he was a giant bug, and when he awoke, he wondered if he was a giant bug who was dreaming it was Franz Kafka... not that it mattered much either way.

Karl Jung had many interesting dreams, which somehow were only explicable in terms of his psychological system. Freud, on the other hand, had a psychological system that was only explicable in terms of his dreams.

I don't remember my dreams at all.

Gabriele asked me if I believed in reincarnation, and I answered that I hoped not. That I didn't want to ask for more porridge. I don't know how she felt about that, though it's the proper Buddhist response, I should think... to get off the wheel.

But in a sense, thanks to our genes, and to our personalities, which are probably genetic in nature (though combined), there is a chance of my being born again, and not knowing it. God pity the poor bastard who wakes up being me again.

From the 11/8/97 N.Y. Times, Page 1:

"Universities around the country are facing an agonizing dilemma: if they retain their affirmative-action admissions policies they face growing legal and political challenges, but if they move to greater reliance on standardized tests, the results will virtually be a return to racial segregation.

“Test scores by Black and Hispanic students remain stubbornly below those of whites. The phenomenon, which cuts across all income groups, is only now being widely studied, with several scholarly reports offering new explanations for it.”

There should be little wonder why Fundamentalists are willing to fight to their intellectual death over the matter of evolution - for using simple logic, it is plain to see that:

Man is made in God's image (major premise)

Mankind originated in Africa (Minor premise)

Therefore, God is Black (Conclusion)

Them's fighting words to a Southren Baptist.

Not being a part of West Civ., and not having any part to play in it, I can see it, from outside - and so am aware that it is dead. But what do I belong to, then? What is my native tribe, feeling no closer to Jews than I do to members of Hitler Youth. What is my collective unconscious? Neither Plato nor Aristotle, neither Freud nor Jung, Neither Marx nor Smith, neither/ nor.

To be a man without a country is one thing, to be a man without a consciousness to belong to is quite another. It bothers me to have the same tastes as others - even in porn and wrestling.

My search through history has been a search for ancestors - but I can't seem to find any family tree to meditate under. I am without history - personal, family, group.

Little wonder I can't remember my dreams... they symbolize nothing.

Little wonder Hitler wanted people like me removed from his body politic... such thinking can play havoc with the volk.

I do not feel unique - but nobody else appears to think like me. What I say is never met with a shock of recognition.

Freud's psychology seems to be about adjusting the individual to society - Jung's about finding the god within, creating a new religion under the pretext of doing therapy...

Freud, as part of the atheist tradition, found even the thought of a god residing inside of himself as anathema... he wanted to make psychology in his own image - Jung a religion in his.

I'm not sure, however, that if God was only the Jewish God, Jung would have cared to find Him... and even discovering Jesus within would have been problematical - unless, of course, Jesus wasn't really Jewish... or the Jesus of the Koran.

To build a religious community composed of people crazy enough to be seeing shrinks is just asking for trouble... and to receive what you asked for.

On the way home from dinner with Ellen (the family being in OK for Xmas), I objected to the Hanukkah music on the radio - it was as shlocky as Xtian music - Russian Jewish choirs singing in minor modes (do Jews ever use major ones?) was surely a lugubrious way to celebrate such a bloodthirsty holiday.

I don't know how I'd feel to be of Greek culture, had we lost to the Syrian Greek empire... do I prefer Plato to the O.T.?... do I dislike reading the O.T. more than I do Aristotle?

But surely this can't be Xmas, whatever that is.

Ellen said I was a self-hating Jew, and I objected to that characterization. Firstly because I don't hate myself. And secondly, because I don't dislike all forms of Judaism (and don't like any religion that people are currently trying to practice)... I don't dislike the esoteric teachings of Jesus, for example.

Apparently, to be Jewish, one must like the religion. One doesn't necessarily have to believe in God - as long as one observes and celebrates the holidays and follows the laws. I have never met a holiday I liked, let alone cared to observe.

It really might be necessary to write my book, *God Is Just A Four Letter Word: Why God Hates The Jews*.

I don't mind being a part of a nation in exile - it's being part of one large dysfunctional family with a national home that bothers me... all of that child abuse and incest...

I prefer exile even from other Jews, though I don't deny that I'm a member of the tribe... any more than if I were a member of some other hideous tribal culture - the Irish, the Slavs, etc. Having a country is a dangerous thing. It does hideous things in our name - writes bad checks, and signs our name to them in blood.

To a severely warped imagination like my own, it is amusing to note the similarities between John Kennedy and Adolf Hitler -

It's true, of course, that JFK's anti-semitism was milder than Adolf's, just as Hitler's sex drive was milder than our former president's...

But in terms of charisma to followers... and the secret wars both engaged in....

It's just lucky that JFK didn't get us into World War 3 with those attempts of his to have Fidel assassinated... had one of those cigars exploded, who knows what the Ruskies might have done.

Our natural revulsion towards Hitler makes it very difficult to see any similarities - but had the Fuhrer been assassinated in '36, or Kennedy lived past '63... perhaps then we would have seen both in a very different light.

To be in a concentration camp and want to live... to be rich and want to die... what, if anything, can we make of this?

If to be a Taoist is to be enlightened, yet live in the world, then I wouldn't mind being one, I suppose... as long as I didn't have to understand Taoism, that is. But can a pornographer be said to be truly enlightened?

I do know that when I thought I was enlightened for a few days there, way back when, I didn't have a great desire to review porn. It was a state of adulthood that was so pure, and so puritan, that ordinary pleasures seemed somewhat preposterous.

It was almost like being a Buddhist - but I wasn't prepared to give up the family to stay in that state, as a good Buddhist would have cheerfully done.

But then from what little I understand of Taoism, the sage, having reached enlightenment, gives it up and goes back to the world. That what enlightenment does allow is a way to live in the world without either hardening, or breaking down, existentially.

If the world does break in, existentially, it only leads us back towards enlightenment again...

But what on earth, or in heaven, do I have to show that this is anything but my imagination? The enlightenment... the theories of what Taoism is...

Peter Ackroyd, in his biography of T. S. Eliot, writes: "His work at this juncture gives the impression of a highly refined and skeptical intelligence investigating its own patterns and its sudden leaps without finally being convinced that its conclusions are valid. Perhaps his characterization of Henry Adams should be recalled here - of a man who is interested in many things but who could believe in nothing, but has inherited a Bostonian or Unitarian skepticism which 'is not destructive, but... dissolvent.'" Adams (and perhaps Eliot) believed in nothing but their prejudices - which were so ingrained, they could not be dissolved... these prejudices were the acid that did the dissolving.

Eliot needed order and ritual to replace his "visions of madness and a disintegrating world - such natures are not meant for restless drifting because they are destroyed by it..."

I have had to make do without ritual, and have had to settle for habit, since I watched my time begin to unravel in 1967.

Eliot wanted some sort of system that he could cohere around - that his skepticism couldn't eat through, for there is nothing as dangerous as skepticism if it can't be bottled in some way. It leads, inexorably, to some form of existential breakdown.

Eliot chose the Church as his rock - and rebuilt his world around it. I have had to rebuild my own world as well, around my poorly understood conception of the work, hoping that like some sort of old Taoist, I can work on myself in hermit fashion, without a monastery or a religion to help.

Inner madness and outer disintegration can be lived with - but it can not create a teaching from itself that can feed the young.

I don't know how les jeunes are living with their own madness - with no adult society to enfold them that they'd care to be enfolded by. I don't know how much trying to be primitives will work as a defense against a technological world - and how long they can cling to their tattoos.

It will be interesting to see what sorts of answers they demand to their questioning - and if they'll demand order, or else they'll end this charade.

To take away someone else's meaning is more of a crime than taking their money - the young are right now screaming, "Give me meaning, or give me death," but the old have no meaning left to give.

The young want freedom, but the desire for freedom is what betrays them - that to be free means to be alone in a narsty universe, free from man and God, without being able to be God - or even human.

Whittaker Chambers came to believe that the great divide lay between those who believed in God and those who believed in Man...

There might well be a God - and perhaps even more than one, and there certainly seems to be Man - but I can't find my way to believing in either God or Man... and certainly not what other people tell me God is, or worse, what God tells them.

I might be able to believe in an Unknowable God, but certainly not in an all too knowable Man...

I know from experience that there is a higher - or at least more abstract minded-I within me, and I pray that it keeps an eye out for me, now and then, but like St. Auggie, I'm in no hurry to spend the rest of my life looking out through that I's eyes.

Chambers tended to see things in black and white - and I certainly have the pre-color film sight within me, when I'm feeling particularly Jewish... but more usually, I'm somewhat color blind, and see everything as shades of puce, as if I were outside any possible political spectrum.

How can Capitalism be stopped, when it mutates faster than lawmakers can enact new legislation, and when its changes are not fully understood, so that laws often end up doing the opposite of what they were intended to do (the Sherman Anti-Trust law was used to try to break labor unions)... when there are enough unpurchased legislators to pass anti-capitalist legislation, that is.

And what economic system is there to replace it? What other system is so fully based on the worst parts of human nature, encompassing at least six of the deadly sins? The only sin left out is sloth, and, by definition, sloth isn't going to act against capitalism.

And now that even God appears to be on the side of the major multinationals, it is seemingly impossible to reimpose the Middle Ages.

Socialism seems like the economic equivalent of the Holy Roman Empire - neither holy, Roman, nor an empire. Socialism is neither social nor an ism.

Supporters of capitalism believe in the Market - a mystical entity or entelechy, which supposedly operates like the Tao... thus the Dow Jones.

There are further beliefs in some sort of hidden hand that resemble those about the uncarved block.

Of course this belief is only operational in good times, which is to say, times that are in one's favor. During bad times, even belief in God languishes.

Whether the Market is the Tao can be answered only by Taoist priests, or that other enigmatic bunch of esotericists, the market analysts.

At first, after enough people were killed in the civil wars, Communism ran on idealism. But idealism is a positive emotion, and the world only runs on negative emotions -

It was necessary, therefore, to replace idealism with fear and trembling, with Stalin and Mao and purges and camps.

It takes a major league psychopath to run a state like that, and the successors to those charismatic leaders are likely to be only ordinary bureaucrats and functionaries (if only because the leader kills off all possible opposition), who, while perfectly willing to sacrifice others to ensure their own personal safety, do not have what it takes to do this 24/7.

So it was with leadership after Uncle Joe and Chairperson Mao wound up in the wastebasket of history.

These successors also had the bad luck to believe their own propaganda, which told them that communism could outproduce and outperform capitalism. With their still terrorized and zombified workforce, they decided to go into mortal economic combat.

The result is a large number of melted statues, and cheap labor for the West (just as the end result of the Vietnam War is 25¢ an hour tennis shoe workers).

What kind of positive emotion can stand a chance against greed and avarice? The same chance love stands going up against lust.

Under communism, the only sin that proved useful for the workers was sloth, aided and abetted by chronic alcoholism (harvests were too small for gluttony to set in).

But without the fear of Commies organizing the masses, and teaching them how to strike, Capitalists are now like that Hindu God who used to wheel through the streets like an LA driver in a state of road rage. Where can we find another god to protect us from this destroyer and creator? Where can we find a protector and preserver from Juggernaut?

The meaning of life as a quantity:

If by what we are asking, when we ask, “Is there a meaning to life” - is, “Is there a God who has put meaning into the universe?” then there is no way of knowing this intellectually. One can only feel an answer, with no way of discovering whether our feelings are correct or not.

There may or may not be a God - whatever a God might be - and even if there is a God, we may not know about it or be able to know about it. God might well be unknowable. Whatever that might mean.

If these questions can be answered through reason, they certainly can't be answered by my own reasoning powers, small as they are.

But if what we mean by the question is: “What and where is the meaning in my own life?” - then there may be a way of not only answering, but of quantifying the answer.

That is if, by “meaning of life,” we mean - what the quality of meaning is for us.

Saying that something is meaningful to us is the same as saying that we are identified with what has meaning for us.

We are always identified with something or other -

Some of the things we identify with may be positive, others might be negative (as either we or society consider such things to be).

For instance, we might identify with money - and if we have a lot of money, then life would have a lot of meaning for us.

Or we might identify with not having money, as Indian holy men are said to do, and many of them do seem to lose their own sense of meaning when they fly West and are given large trinkets by chelas.

People who are born into money might well take money for granted, and therefore not identify with it - wanting instead power or prestige...

Someone who identifies with money, and hooks to get it, might find meaning in what they do, even though society disapproves of hooking.

If one identifies with both money and drugs, it is possible, should drugs eat up all of their money, to find life suddenly losing meaning - becoming meaningless, or at least boring.

I identified, once, with being a writer, and this was fairly harmless, as long as I was able to write. But when I upped the ante and identified with being a published writer, and was not published, and the writing then stopped - I lost all sense of meaning, and ended up in an existential breakdown, which is where we get to rethink all questions of meaning anew...

There are probably higher and lower qualities of meaning - which is to say, higher or lower qualities of things to be identified with.

To not identify with anything at all is a state of consciousness that is seemingly beyond us. But if we can stop identifying with things that are bound to lead us to negative meaning... or find things that will give us positive meaning... we might be able to escape, somewhat, from the general overall meaningless of life.

There are 5 billion± of us, each with internal quantities of meaning, and we can not appropriate the meaning of life that is in someone else's head (though we can identify with others... musicians, political leaders, stars and celebrities... and seemingly get meaning from this). We can not come together and join our individual meanings so that we can have a group mind with a group meaning, to become a mob or an audience or just passengers on the subway of life...

To identify with something that is “greater” than we are - with Jesus (whether or whether not there ever was a Jesus is immaterial) - can give us a great amount of inner meaning. But what if Hitler becomes our Jesus, and the rest of the world intervenes...

It might well be a dangerous thing to identify with and find meaning in some other person, but in a desperate search for meaning, such dangers are easily ignored. When one is drowning, one does not distinguish between rescuers.

If our minds did not search for meaning, then it wouldn't bother us if there was no god, if the universe was meaningless, and we had no meaning in our life. We could all become poodles...

The fact that lack of meaning is so upsetting seems to imply that minds need to identify - to find meaning - and that a lone human, without anything to identify with, becomes either a psychotic or a saint. And usually saints identify with God, or at least say they do.

Psychotics often identify with their psychoses, which eats away at any possible real meaning in life - which is why psychosis is so painful, and the belief systems of paranoids are clung to so desperately (all of life must connect in strange conspiratorial ways in order for there to be meaning - yet often enough no one else will agree with the psychotic's psychosis).

However when a group does accept the belief systems of a psychotic, interesting things happen... and life starts to fill with meaning for the psychotics. It is best only to make fun of lone psychotics, and even then only from far away... and quietly, only to oneself. Do not write Why Allah Hates the Muslims.

To help others is to find positive things they can identify with... and not to take away what has meaning from them... to be a philosopher is one thing... to teach philosophy in the streets, like Socrates, is to be a deadly danger to others. The Greek government was only supporting mental health by getting him to off himself..

If people sound to me - and if I sound to myself (for who knows how I sound to others) simple minded, perhaps it's because humans have basically simple minds... or at least minds that work best with simple solutions.

Yet we have created a complicated world, whose problems cannot be simply solved... and this is disturbing to us, as our politicians all too well know. It gets people who can't do anything jobs.

Possibly in tribal times, we were able to live simply in a simple world, and simple solutions to problems were possible. We lived in this world for hundreds of thousands of years without quite being able to create the sorts of population/resources/growth problems we face today...

Let alone problems of class, race, income distribution, crime, sex, drugs & rock n roll, etc...

When this tribal world started to collapse, about 10,000 years ago, we were faced with a world of partial solutions leading to even more complex problems. Such a world was far greater than the simple mind of man could easily endure without the creation of new gods and governments to kill for us, or help us kill.

We are, or should be, grateful to govt. for its bread & circuses, advanced gossip and scandals, and the rise and fall of eminent men. These are things we can follow and and appreciate.

Some philosophers have sought for more complex solutions, led by political philosophers, who are always on the lookout for a possible final solution (or at least one that can last two full terms) or an ideal state - one that could, somehow, make people finally be good.

This century has seen the rise and fall of several such philosophies - and the next century shall undoubtedly see others, resulting in suffering and collapse.

But there seems to be no way, under the logic that determines our various cultures, to create a state or system that is simple minded enough to really work. At least no one has been able to create one yet, out of their own heads, even though there is less on earth (at least) than can be dreamed of in our philosophies.

If we were still a part of a tribe, we could identify with being such a member, as the tribe would be, for us, our identity - and as long as the tribe existed, it would be our meaning, and life itself would be its own meaning.

But we cannot really identify with our state and federal governments. We can say we hate government (and yet run for office), but we are not a part of it, and see it merely as an evil necessity, not a meaning of life.

So we are unable to identify with our life, unless we lead a glamorous, publicized, and happy (or even unhappy) life. Yet all too many people who seem to lead such lives find it almost impossible to identify with it, and see themselves as other than their life (and who knows how their children see them).

Instead, we carry identity cards... and, at best, identify with local sports franchises.

If we had more complex, sophisticated minds, perhaps we could better deal with the cultures we have created; and if we were conscious, we could discover what was beyond culture. But as it is, we are stuck following a logic that began 10,000 years ago.

Our oldest records are laws and stories of dissatisfactions - of God being angry with man, and, when man dared, at man being angry with god.

It would appear that meaning of life questions were only asked when tribal identity was broken, and we became tillers and toilers - and we started to build what we still consider to be civilizations.

The collapse of West Civ has made meaning of life not merely something that one might broach in a philosophy class, but something that strikes deeply into even the simplest of minds, such as my own.

After thousands of years of “high” civilization, it would appear that there is something in our minds that again seemingly demands tribal relationships - which possibly accounts for the popularity of armies, the Loyal Order of Moose, fraternities, unions, bikers’ gangs and gang bangs.

But none of these can quite take on the meanings given by a tribe... to be a member of a group for life... a group that will care about you, and take care of you.

This was clearly how the hippies felt in the ‘60s... and even the Eighteen Hundreds saw a number of communes formed, where people could live together under outlandish systems of laws, mores and morays.

It is possible that the young today are looking for some more primitive form of life with their piercings, tats, and general mindless behavior... and that colleges are turning into communal holding tanks.

As West. Civ. continues to collapse around them, who knows what seemingly new patterns kids will come up with - or at least have drawn onto their bodies.

Simple living for the simple minded.

Is it possible that the Pope doesn't believe there really was a Jesus - or a heaven? He (the Pope, that is to say) has asked the Great State of Texas to please not execute some woman who has discovered Jesus, after years on death row.

Admitting that Jesus can be found (even from the purlieus of death row - it's Lao Tzu that no one can seem to find), and that our axe murderer has gone and found him, one wonder why the Pope wants to keep this woman out of His (Jesus') arms, and in the clasp of the Texas Penal Authorities. Or is another 50 years in jail better than going to Heaven (surely the Pope would know, if anyone did, if the lady were going to Hell).

Meanwhile, the Texas prisoncrats have no desire to have a class action suit for sexual discrimination brought by the fellows on death row, and it's unlikely that the son of the man who brought us Willie Horton is going to save this gal's life...

Politicians who want to run for higher office need to know what to run from, as well. In 1992, the Limits To Growth people put out a new book, saying that we had gone over a few of those limits. Al and Bill probably read the book, but did little to bring about the redistribution of income throughout the world that the book calls for. Al is already suspected of environmental wackiness and tree hugging, and Bill Clinton would sacrifice all of the world to get and stay in office. They know that the truth would set them loose, not free.

Not even Jesus could run on a platform of income redistribution. Anyway, if there has to be a deluge, it might as well occur during a Republican administration.

Once I thought that if I was a genius, I wouldn't need to actually be intelligent - but what do I have any genius for? Except, perhaps, an inability to do everyday normal things that everyone else seems able to do - hold a job, understand directions, drive a car....

I first became aware of my lack of genius when I started to write... though I kept the pretensions of it for some time afterwards.

My sense of the absurd is so acute, I am almost unable to know what is real, or at least that which others tell me is real.

It would seem to be a bit late, at 54, to find a sellable use for a mind like mine.

Yet for someone as stupid as I know myself to be, I still can't help feeling a contempt for the supposed intelligence of others (but then that's just a further definition of stupidity).

While it's true these days that the only news I follow with avidity is sex news, watching Roger and Greta religiously to see what the doctors are spinning, still, I should have heard something about our U. N. weapons inspectors finding weapons of mass and utter destruction in the palaces of Saddam... I'm sure they checked out the bathrooms thoroughly, and looked in the clothes hampers in the hall cupboards - but did they search his socks drawers? Or look in the front pants pockets of Saddam's old military uniform?

In town, the suppressed news was the kicking out of four freshmen from my old alma mater, for hanging a dummy from a tree limb. We once used to toss them from the auditorium balcony on to those down below.

But Antioch has been partaking in racism workshops recently, which is the equivalent for liberals of going to tent revivals. These end up convincing liberals that Satan is everywhere (or almost everywhere - He's never where the conservatives think He is).

Little wonder then that the college exploded in fits of fear and loathing when they saw that mannequin, knowing that the Klan is right down (or up) the road.

When the Not-So-Merry Pranksters confessed to their little joke, they were promptly reeducated, in Chinese fashion, by the rest of the student body - and then flung out of heaven by the administration, with as much due process as Satan got from God.

Antioch is strictly utilitarian - whatever saves the largest number of tuitions is ipso facto right.

I would suspect, somehow, that the existence of slavery today, with blacks selling black Christians to Mohammedans, is not the sort of thing that is brought up in racism workshops - after all, blacks, by definition, cannot be racists. Whatever it might be, blacks selling blacks to Moslems is not racism. Nor is it capitalism.

As for the rest of the world, it sees such incidents as nigger on nigger crime down in Niggertown, and so pays it little attention. No one even bothers to file a police report.

So now we have 11 year old boys in Arkansas opening fire - and the law feels somehow powerless to properly punish them - why, they might even have to be freed at 18, as the frivolous legislature didn't pass any laws that would have allowed the state, like Michigan, to treat 11 year old, or 8, or even 5 year olds as adults, when the need arose.

What no one seems to recognize is that law is a rational body of thought, dealing with responsible adults who misbehave (at least that's the theory, as I understand it), so that lawyers for 11 year olds charged with capital crimes will always try and argue that their clients are neither competent nor responsible to stand trial. Judges then deal with these motions in a crap shoot sort of manner.

A rational system can not cope with the irrational without becoming infected by it - and as the law cannot deal with the notion of insanity, it turns madness into a question of whether the accused knew he was doing wrong, and was able to distinguish between right and wrong.

Under our system, a man who kills young boys and eats them can be found sane to stand trial, as the citizens of Wisconsin know all too well, as in our culture, apparently, cannibalism isn't an insane thing to want to do.

But if a 7 year old is considered to be an adult in the eyes of the law, then what meaning does being an adult have? Is the law saying that adults have the minds of 7 year olds? Or that 7 year olds should be allowed to drink whiskey and vote for republicans in Presidential elections... and should be encouraged to have sex with other adults...

Suddenly, the law enters the irrational, and justice becomes Wonderland justice, though not necessarily insane justice, unless law itself is unable to tell the difference between right and wrong.

Antioch is considering instituting a new mandatory anti-discrimination policy, where everyone there would be forced to take racism, sexism, classism seminars. I'm not sure whether my alma mater is doing its proper job, if it doesn't teach students how to discriminate (this can be seen in its inability to distinguish between a freshman prank and a visit from the Grand Kleagle). I fear the people there have been so brainwashed that they don't have any gray matter left.

If kids are behaving badly in school these days (and surely shooting one's teachers and fellow students could be construed as kids behaving badly), then one reason for it (though not the only reason) might be the socialization process the schools are so proud of providing. As part and disunited parcel of our economic system, schools are set up to separate the future economic sheep from the lambs (though all are ultimately fed to the wolves).

A few of the students will become lions, social and otherwise, making it onto the covers of magazines - everyone else will be left to buy whatever magazines they can afford.

At any rate, if the grading system is there to show some students that they are smart and worth A's, while others are worth D's and F's - how can we expect the alphabetically challenged to act as though they had true value... as if someone esteemed them?

At one point in America, even before we were a country of freedom and justice with liberty for all, we had two cultural systems. The one in the North said that some were saved and the rest were damned for all eternity. The one in the South said some were free and others were slaves.

These systems looked down on each other, in an M. C. Escher fashion.

Get rid of Calvinism and slavery, and there's no one left to look down upon.

Fortunately, both North and South have schools, where places in the future system can be handed out as report cards.

But this might be too much of an oversimplification.

However, if our rulers want to continue our social and economic system, it will be necessary, no matter what changes might be made in our schools, to keep them basically the same. So that instead of changing the nature of our education system, we hire more police, bring in dress codes, and use metal detectors. And the rights of students are abridged yet further.

We like what we have, and will do anything that is necessary to keep what we have - even doing it to our own children.

We will preach democracy and equality - and teach dictatorship and inequality, even should students notice the discrepancy between words and deeds. Those lucky kids will grow out of their discontent soon enough, and become corporate types (if it happened to my generation, it will happen to yours). Those who are going to be at the bottom can get themselves a piercing and tats, if that's what makes them happy.

What cannot be accepted is teachers questioning the system in classrooms, and kids thinking for themselves. Such thought could possibly undermine a system built on inequality. In order for America to be America, no serious education must ever take place in our schools.

If there has to be a debate on education, let it be about teaching Creation Science.

Any foolish kids who actually do want an education will have to find it somewhere else, outside of our public or private school systems.

An anarchist would seemingly say that men are naturally good - but that they become bad as soon as they form governments (why good men think they need governments is impossible for me to say)...

Conservatives, on the other hand, would say that men are naturally bad, and government is needed to punish the bad and see to it that the rest have religion. Other than that, everyone should be free to make a billion (as long as they don't get caught).

On the third hand, liberals might say that good governments do good things for good (though poor) people, and that if there are bad people, they're only bad temporarily, and that more money for schools will soon take care of any possible badness through caring and special ed programs.

Radicals believe that only those people who own the means of production are bad, but that once the state runs the businesses, those executives who escape liquidation will become good.

Our government wants to keep 15 year olds from smoking or drinking, because they are not adults, at least not until they take their guns to school and open fire.

The only right a child has is the right to be punished as an adult.

Confounded Ann and Caitlin by going with them to the movies to see Fear & Loathing In Las Vegas (but then even Nero Wolfe rode in cars, if it was absolutely necessary for plot development)...

Not a bad film, actually, though I don't know what possible meaning it'll have for kids today, whose wave hasn't even started, let alone washed up somewhere out in the desert where Charles Manson once lived.

Of course, I laughed along with it, as I did with the book - one needs that sort of laughter to help overcome the overwhelming sadness of lost dreams.

I think that our analysis of America c. 1960 was dead on right - and that the Control Group, knowing we were right, did everything in their power to destroy us, so that even today, kids look at hippies as if they were idjits. Only the Beats are safe to emulate, as if they weren't once pre-modern hippies.

Hippies were post-modern beats who didn't completely succumb to alcohol, and the other depressants the Control Group offers - religion, and heroin, the opiate of the classes.

If a critique can't be answered, it either has to be taken into account, or those who promulgate it must somehow be destroyed.

Had we had a political/economic system to replace our current Control Group, we might have been able to withstand its power to negate us, but all we had to offer was socialism of one variety or other; and aside from the fact that socialism doesn't seem to work, or at least couldn't have made the poor middle class without making the middle class poor, it was anathema to the only group who could have financially supported such a revolution - the rich.

The anarchists stood alone - as if one can stand alone against the Control Group...

But if our analysis was correct, as I suggest, then we now have the America that we predicted back then, and the rock n roll will only get worse in the future...

And if our analysis was wrong, and what we have now is wonderful, why does no one seem to recognize our excellence? Why is no one seemingly happy with America today?

This is the end result of 30 years of taking advantage of the short term, without wondering where that might lead. It is true that in the long term, we are all dead... but that doesn't mean that through an infinity of short terms, we can live forever.

It is the Conservatives position that governments are here to make laws that will either protect the rich, or punish some of those who break the laws (and all jails will not be created equal).

Liberals believe that governments are here to create opportunities for the poor - that government can create a better society - not so the poor to marry their daughters, but so that their daughters can get a job managing the poor.

Government can only create opportunity at someone else's expense. Those who've had to pay for reforms generally believe that nothing good can come from them, and that their money would be better spent buying a RV, or a congressman, who will promise to protect their money.

At any rate, it is a small price for the rich to pay to have a few stock traders thrown into minimum security prisons, on occasion, as long as their dividends are not cut.

There isn't a hell of a lot that the rich can buy that is of any interest to me. Let them fly wherever they wish and live wherever they choose and eat all of the cake they can afford. It isn't as if they have hoarded all of the tickets to a Charlie Parker concert.

It is good to see that our old philosophical friends, the Sophists, who Socrates tried to rout, have once again found a niche, making bad cases seem good, posing as spin doctors for politicians and other celebrities who need a fast image makeover.

True, like Socrates, I find them to be an annoyance, especially when they clutter around the Flag. I don't at all mind watching our President lie, or his wife lie, but I find myself becoming agitated when seemingly dozens of Sophists appear like flies around shit, on TV, lying for their fuhrer.

They have been trained to speak by someone who graduated from high school with me back in 1962, as I recognize their debating techniques, from having to go up against pimply Catholic school youths with 3x5 card boxes filled with ammunition. They speak quickly, making as many points as they can, before they're rudely interrupted by a question of fact.

If they can tell their beads as many times as possible in under one minute, all will be well with their universe.

We are given a series of well rehearsed one liners, prepared by the fuhrer's comedy writing team... as if Bob Hope was the only hope our leader had left (America no longer has the attention span for the three lines necessary for a syllogism).

I suppose that once upon a time, Politics was real in America, as was professional wrestling, which Politics emulates. Speeches and debates, like wrestling matches, could last for hours, without boring the fans. But as audiences grew tired of five hour headlocks leading to draws, the wrestling equivalent to trench warfare, they stopped listening to Cross of Gold oratory.

Rather than Lincoln v. Douglas, we have q&a from the audience, or TV hacks posing as reporters.

As political marks, we can't see how our system is booked - and those who try to see this end up as conspiracy theorists, with a group of 9 Jews ruling the world... a group of dangerous bookers, with enough clout to get the wrestlers to do what they want... unlike what happens in WCW with the Hulkster.

With the arrival of mass man in the political arena, America split off from such satrapies as Europe and the Former Soviet Union, where Kings or Tzars did their own booking. So America became the home of professional wrestling, and professional politics.

All of this is painfully obvious for me, and I can only hope that it's already painfully obvious to everyone else, or who will feel my pain?

If I'm a 14 year old, and shoot a few of my teachers, along with a fellow student or two, I will be tried as an adult. But if I fuck one of my teachers, they'll be tried for having sex with a child...

I might not be allowed to smoke or drink, if I'm a 15 year old girl (though I'll do it anyway), but if I want an abortion, I can get one without even having to tell my parents, because it's my body and I can do what I want to!

As for people my age, the AARP wants me to join their org. I don't know what to do about this... I'd be willing to read Modern Immaturity, which at least I could feel at one with - but how am I going to be able to all of a sudden, at 55, consider myself mature?

Caitlin will be going off to Sarah Lawrence in a month. I wonder what she'll tell her fellow students about me - "Dad's a pornographer" might go over well at a warm weather college, where the kids like to show their tits at the beach, or in New Orleans during Mardi Gras... but these are East Coast girls are hip, even if I don't really dig the styles they wear.

I have been a member of society in poor standing forever, it seems... I'm not really a different element, though. At most, I'm an isotope.

When I was a “member” of the avant-gard in the '60s, I thought I was part of the vanguard of artistic history - thought my work would be published, and that I'd be famous, if not enormously wealthy.

This was my misunderstanding - of who buys art, and what they want (and, perhaps, if what I was doing was art).

In the past, the rich bought what they were already used to, sons buying what their fathers bought, with only small fashionable changes being permitted.

While it was possible for a style, like Bach's, to become unfashionable, and forgotten for a moment or two, he was not about to be replaced by John Cage in the hearts and pocket books of middle class Germans. Being a mycologist doesn't make him a meistersinger.

For thousands of years, there was no conscious avant-gard... the phrase didn't even exist (it had to be taken from French military terminology). As with everything else, art changed, but changed slowly. No punctuated equilibrium permitted.

With the arrival of the avant-gard, it was necessary to find a new paying crowd... an upper middle class crowd that was willing to have the values of the middle middle class attacked.

By the time I showed up on the world historical stage, there was no group capable or willing to pay for my right to exist... no publisher was interested in losing money on me.

And the lower classes, with their popular taste, were even less interested in being my patrons, unless I was willing to learn to drive a monster truck.

Being inept, I was unable to sell out to either the upper or the lower classes... no one but adult movie magazines was willing to buy my own peculiar culture.

Artists have been given the choice of joining the avant-gard (and being avoided by even their avant-gard friends); joining popular culture, and riding that very short wave; or becoming past oriented, and playing for the elderly.

Tried to reread *The Idiot*, but though couldn't get past the first few pages, I could at least perceive that it was no coincidence why the Rusksies have that history of theirs.

Of course everyone writes novels about people going crazy these days. What would be truly unusual would be to write a novel about people going sane in a world like this... to write about people becoming conscious.

Of course, in order to write about such higher states as sanity, it's probably necessary to be sane oneself. And would someone who was sane even want to write a novel?

I've been closely watching the face of that juggling clown as he did tricks for me... the first confused denial about Monica, followed by the full frontal denial, scripted by his Hollywood pals... the "that woman" denial...

Then the months of shit-faced grinning, as he told us he couldn't speak on this matter, innocent though he was, because of those lawyers of his...

Then the I will Testify speech, followed by the embarrassing discovery of the devilish blue dress...

Then the defiant speech to the nation, and off to a vacation with wife, child and dog.

A working vacation, as it was necessary to bomb gooks in retaliation for their terrorism.

None of these faces looks particularly real, as our President is a bad actor in world affairs... take off the grease paint, and who knows what Just Plain Bill looks like.

And we are all critics who judge his acting by how it plays politically. All the world is his stage, and we are lucky if the management comps us free seats.

Should we cancel his show, or let it run another 13 weeks?

It is possible that the real Billary died long ago, and what we have in front of us is a zombie... albeit one who can salt his Big Mac and fries without dissolving in front of our eyes.

When I saw my parents, I was saddened at what age had done to them, physically and psychologically - eyesight going, hearing going, physical pain - wondering how much of this was to be my inheritance in the next 15 years...

How are we going to manage? Who will put us in day care? And who will pay for our Depends if Social Security fails?

The Pabbies are saying that Bill Clinton doesn't have the moral authority to lead us... that he is a fucking liar, and a lying fucker... I always get scared when Pabbies get on a morality kick...

I even get scared of myself when the old Hebe Prophet starts to rise, and I want to throw the Sex Pistol to the mercies of the American people... though that would be like throwing a pig into slop, wouldn't it?

The stock market seems to be collapsing today, which is no surprise to me - but that doesn't mean that I understand why it's collapsing. The reasons given by the experts seem more like mumbo-jumbo guesses than true knowledge, though I suppose what all of this might mean is anyone's guess.

Since I have no more faith in capitalism or capitalists than I do in Christianity or Christians (not to mention Judaism and Jews), nothing that class says means any more to me than the equivalent ramblings of Baptist ministers, other than that there appears to be a close similarity in each group's belief in the workings of Providence in their favor. But perhaps God is as interested in money as he is in his "children."

It is possible, however, that what people take for reality is no more real than my Universal History... or these musings.

But then just how unreal is my History? Thousands of unconnected quotes that somehow seem to connect in my own mind much more than outward reality connects...

True, most of the time, I float in the outer world just as if it was real for me, forgetting for long periods those clear perceptions of the world's unreality - that even I am unreal... that I am pretending to be real so that others won't have to deal with the uncomfortable truth (for all of us) that I am unreal.

The real me that they seem to know is the one I seemingly create for them, so they can seemingly know me.

It is impossible for me to talk seriously to anyone about my History, so I speak about it as a joke... and the more serious I wish to be about it, the more I have to joke... but this book really does seem to contain all of our history, and if only I could somehow connect it all up, instead of only 4-5 pages at a time, I would be conscious of our history...

In my History, there is no cause or effect... there are no connections that can be made, yet, oddly, everything seemingly connects. At least my mind wants to make everything connect.

Writing the book is horribly depressing on some level - I can only work on typing it into the computer a few days a week, 5 cards/day... and I immediately forget what preceded these cards, as I will forget the cards to type in that follows them. In order to write, it is first necessary to forget.

I am not sure what I'd make of it if others found the same connections... but the book is how I see reality, and is why I can barely cope with the reality everyone else seemingly travels in....

We are able to see, yet again, just how nasty a bug the Presidential Virus is - and what men (and, presumably, women) will give up, in the way of dignity and self-respect, in order to be President, once they've been bitten...

Men will lie, cheat, steal... and tell a grand jury anything to be President - and to stay President, they'll have bombs dropped on anything that moves. It seems to take what little human there is left in a politician, and replaces it with an alien life form. Our Presidents are undead, body snatched, astrozombies.

Our current President will quite obviously sacrifice anyone, as well as anything he once might have believed, to stay President... will eat breakfast with the clergy and say he has sinned, over oatmeal and oj.

At least I now believe him when he says he inserted but didn't inhale... it's his M.O.

The personality of a President has to be false, in order to attract the votes of other sinners. It is impossible to be both conscious and electable.

Power is said to corrupt, but it isn't power that does this. False personality will accept any necessary corruption, if it helps it stay in power... absolute false personality will allow absolute corruption.

The Presidency is as close as a human can come to playing God, and shows why that sort of theater is so dangerous.

Of course we do have strange ideas of what God is like... don't we just...

Not knowing, myself, anything about God, I hesitate to play the role. I don't even know what it's like to be President, though I have enough false personality to let me pretend to myself that I know.

I do think, however, that even Presidents should have the Constitutional right to lie about their sex lives. There is no reason why Presidents shouldn't have the same rights as athletes, sex researchers, priests, and common sexually boring citizens, when asked, "Do you still sleep with your wife?"

It occurred to me, while washing the dishes, that life is a sort of mirror, in which we are reflected. Questions about the meaning of life aren't answered by the mirror, but are reflected back; so that if our lives seem meaningless, then life appears to have no meaning. Whatever meaning our lives do have for us then becomes the meaning of life.

This is undoubtedly simplistic, but is probably true for most non-philosophers (and probably true for the theologians, all things considered).

However, philosophers reflections are distorted through analytic mirrors, from the fun house they live in. Convex thoughts reflect as convoluted prose... and attempts to break the mirror lead only to shards of meaninglessness.

Reading Kenneth S. Davis' bio of FDR, and thinking about Justice Holmes' comment that FDR had a second rate intellect but a first class temperament, which is exactly what one would need to have in times like those...

A man with a first rate intelligence wouldn't know what to do - how to decide among bad choices - let alone believe that God had a plan, and that they were a major part of that plan, leading America towards the light. A man with a second rate temperament would not only be unhappy and insecure, but unwilling to let others with first rate intelligences work with him, doing the sort of work that Tommy the Cork and Ben Cohen did so well.

I asked myself what sort of intelligence and temperament Justice Holmes would have found in me. Not first rate, I fear... no legal or scientific ability... not even the mind of a good businessman or novelist.

And the temperament.... definitely sanguine... pessimistic, at best... with not a gleam of assurance that what I do is any part of any God's plan... even if it were.

What intelligence I do have, or at least my attempts at trying to think, are out of phase with any workable system of reality. It is little wonder why people in the '60s thought I spent my days stoned, and my nights raping women.

I see things out of phase... see obvious things that others don't bother to see; missing, in turn, much that is all too obvious to others. I see patterns that might not be there, or at least that others don't bother noticing. I connect things where there are no dots. I am not sure whether a mind like mine is fit for anything in a society like ours, or even what sort of society might find me useful.

From what I can determine, Republicans appear to believe that there is something called "the law," and that Bill Clinton has broken this "law" and should be punished for doing this.

Democrats appear to also believe there is a "law," but for technical reasons, Bill Clinton has only broken the unpunishable moral part of it. Therefore, he should only be punished in a symbolic way.

My mind sees it differently. I am aware that people have spent their lives writing and passing laws, laws that I find as much difficulty believing in as I do the existence of God. Or at least the existence of God's "laws".

I have no idea what either set of laws has to do with sex.

Our law is from intellectual center, and says right/wrong.

God's law is from emotional center and says good/bad.

Sex only operates off/on.

Neither intellect nor emotion can control sex center.

As an act of “conceptual law,” I can see that the Republicans might have right/wrong on their side. But what all of this has to do with sin, or what either the Republicans or Bill Clinton mean by sin, I do not know.

Sitting on the toilet late at night, I can see that Bill Clinton’s punishment is not understanding his sex center, and his trying to control it through intellect and emotion - and being unable to do either, feeling that he’s a sinner.

To believe that God is concerned with our sins is as odd, to me, as thinking that we are part of God’s plan... or even thinking we know what God’s plan might be.

I attempt to pass as human, but am, at best, only a poor mimic.

Still, just because I’m only passing for human doesn’t mean I’m wrong when I try to explain why Presidential Politics is a subset of Professional Wrestling, especially as my explanation of political reality fully explains the evident popularity of Bill Clinton, something neither party seemingly understands.

Wrestling audiences these days like heels much more than they do faces, and when the Republicans said that Bill Clinton was a member of the New World Order, they made him more popular than ever among those who watch WCW wrestling, where Bill could well be part of the NWO Black & White.

Bill is a super heel, like Ric Flair, yet not even his own party understands this. And the Christian Republicans are shocked when people in the stands shower them with beer. Val Venus is over, but Bill Clinton is the Real Deal... the Boy Toy.

But then the Demos never understood it when Newt Gingrich, a fine heel manager in the tradition of Bobby "The Brain" Heenan, was loved by his fans. Luckily for the Demos, Newt has decided to turn face, and the electorate now sees him as just one more fat boy from Georgia, who might be far right, but won't ever be Champion of the World.

Bryan Magee in *Confessions Of A Philosopher* says that early in life, he wondered how time began - whether there is or isn't a beginning of time...

I first started to wonder about the beginning of the universe on a bus ride home from Hebrew School, when Dick Grant posed the question of was the universe created or did it always exist... at least I think I remember that, but my memory, like God's, is fraying around the edge somewhat...

But I know I was asked the question by someone else, and didn't think it up by myself - and I still can't answer it, as I barely have enough math to balance my checkbook. (In truth, I have never even bothered trying to balance my checkbook, but I think I have the math to do it, should the need ever arise... if I can read my handwriting).

And while I can play, in a fumbling manner, with ideas - and say that God might be in the 10th dimension, or outside time and space, I have no idea what I, or anyone else, might mean by this, if anything.

I still am trying to figure out how the speed of light found its way into Einstein's equation... and how mass can be created out of energy divided by the speed of light squared.

So it wouldn't totally surprise me to find out that God is really a mathematician, and that the universe is one of God's equations, though I would be a fool if I heard this from myself and believed it.

If there are physical dimensions that we can comprehend only abstractly (7th dimension), mathematically - are there also psychological dimensions?

The first dimension of a child is that child. Only with time can a child come to recognize dimensions outside of its own ego - parents, siblings...

As we age, larger dimensions enter our lives - groups of children at school, the community we live in. It is possible that these dimensions can be as concrete for us as height and length. But there are personal dimensions that remain abstract for us... states and nations. We might die for our country, but for the world? For our universe?

To a certain extent, all of us are somewhat autistic. There is always some level of human relationships that we do not fully understand, that remain abstract to us.

Political dimensions demonstrate abstraction when paranoia and conspiracy theories seem real. Government is then, theoretical, full of control groups that run the system, so thoroughly hidden that even I can believe they're out there, somewhere between the lines.

Even the President's wife appears to believe in vast right wing conspiracies, but then Hillary looks to be a very theoretical person, except in the most personal of dimensions, with her poor zhlob of a husband, and their frowsy child.

Which isn't to say that Hillary might not be right - for all I know, there might be a vast right wing conspiracy, just as there might be a God, and those who believe strongest in God are part of that vast conspiracy.

I can best understand my history of the world as an autistic effort to try to make the abstract concrete - at least to me. I have no concrete knowledge of anything more than my family (and who knows how well I know it?)... I have no political experience. No business experience. Little experience of others' lives. And what seems to me to be as concrete as a highway in my history probably would look like a tree stump road to a real historian.

Our President has taken the time to instruct me on why socialism won't work in America, and has chosen as his lesson, the calling for 100,000 new teachers, to be paid for from our surplus (President Clinton also loved the number 100,000, which was exactly the number of new policewomen he called for only a few years ago)...

Well, my fellow socialists, what does 100,000 new elementary school teachers mean to you? 100,000 new classrooms to house them. The elementary school across the street could build six new classrooms so that class size could go from 25 to 18.

Of course we'd have to find 100,000 college students and somehow convince them to become low paid elementary school teachers, who, if the surplus suddenly turned into a deficit, would be willing to leave academia for new jobs at the public trough.

But if we did have a surplus for the next 30± or so years, so that we didn't have to attempt to pass new school levies to pay our new teachers, all we would need would be 100,000 x \$30,000 a year. A mere \$3 billion, with a bit tacked on for classrooms, chalk, janitor supplies, and additional college teachers to teach our new ed students.

And add in a skosh for retirement, I suppose.

The sexual question, put inelegantly - why was it perfectly legitimate to sell human beings in 1860, to even have sex with one's chattels, and sell their offspring - yet looked down upon, if not totally illegal, to sell one's own body? Why weren't whores also seen as being the flower of the Confederacy?

And why was it perfectly acceptable for a good businessman in 1906 to shut 50 women and children in a room and sweat them for pennies an hour, when it was patently against the law to give a woman her own room in a brothel, and pay her well to boot?

Today, a pillar of society can, without losing social status, close down a plant, move it to Mexico, and turn a community into a ghost town, if, by doing so, his company turns a profit and pays dividends to the shareholders. But just try to open an Adult Video Store in Cincy...

If I don't exist, why do I have to take the trash out?

The relations between the two wings of the Property Party have deteriorated badly over the years, as they have had to each become somewhat ideological (in a country without a stated, but with an implied ideology) in order to paper over the fact that there is so little difference between them... Democrats are able to steal Republican planks and make a raft of them to float to victory, showing that in politics, at least, imitation is not the sincerest form of flattery...

The Republicans have the truth, and it shall set Bill Clinton free.

Had a moment of absolute clear insight while still half asleep in the bathroom this morning... I know it is some higher form of consciousness as I can barely reconstruct my thought chains now.

I was thinking, for some reason, about prisons - and I suddenly saw how impossible they were for helping people, because they are absolute factories for negative emotions. All they can accomplish is to make everything worse for everyone involved... from prisoners to prisoncrats to the judicial system to the lawmakers... to the rest of us.

No one can be helped by being so punished - that such punishment is a form of violence that can only lead to further violence...

I saw all of this in one or two out of time seconds... all logic bypassed for pure understanding, insight being so much faster than intellect.

If one had a dangerous animal about the house, they could shoot it, or attempt to retrain it, or at least put in a place where it would do no harm to others... but no one would consider punishing the animal by breaking its leg... or keeping it in a cell for a number of years - and then letting it go free.

If we have been instructed to judge not, lest we be judged (it's part of a religion that everyone over here believes in, so that no one has to follow), then even more should one be careful of punishing, lest we be punished.

Sadly, my insight did not tell me what to do about out 25,000 murders± each year.

To posit that the universe either was always here, or was created out of nothing - sounds like one of those curious problems that show up in popularizations of quantum physics, whose answers are absurd, but evidently mathematically true....

It is, of course, possible that God always existed... or that mind always existed... or the noumenon always existed, whatever that is... or that nothing always existed, from which came everything... but to prove these statements mathematically at a level beyond pure addition and multiplication (which is to say, at a level beyond my comprehension)...

But it is also possible that we have these seeming paradoxes, not because the universe, like G. K. Chesterton (not to mention the more perverse Oscar Wilde) is naturally paradoxical - but because we are working with very incomplete knowledge, and are thus theorizing from what is still fundamental ignorance.

Well, at least I am fundamentally ignorant... I can't even figure out what our government is up to, and what it's spending my money on (even with my knowledge of professional wrestling).

I don't even know why there is a universe in the first place, though I find my own existence a bit less puzzling... possibly because I rarely think of myself, at least not in this way.

He murdered Vince Foster (or had him murdered, same thing) before the Special Prosecutor could squeeze his pips and make him tell our Republican congress everything... and then he caused Ron Brown's plane to run into a mountain before he could be forced to talk... So how dare he pretend to be a face, and treat Republicans as heels!

He refuses to even fight a loser leaves town match (though what good that would do, I don't know, as he would just come back wearing a mask)...

Simply infuriating... though he gives great face interviews... if not head.

The Demos are trying to show that white men (and female Senators and Representatives from California) can have their own O.J. who they are prepared to defend to the death.

But then as I have problems with our criminal justice system, I believe that we have no duty to tell the truth when we are on trial... and if by our lies, we cause the system to somehow collapse, well all the better.

Bill has apologized to his family, his party, and to me as well, though I'm not sure what for. Misleading me (or trying to) about an inappropriate relationship? He should apologize for wanting to run for the Presidency... getting a bj is a peccadillo, wanting to be President is sociopathic.

And now one of his high school sweeties is suing him for denying that they had sex, thus losing her a lucrative publishing contract.

As for how our Commander In Chief's lying will effect our military, as Henry Hyde spends his nights worrying about, let's just say that we pay those high school grads to kill for peace, and run idiotic ads for them on tv during football games - surely that's enough pandering to those willing to serve LBJ and Nixon without any trepidation or doubt.

If only the military would collapse, something positive will have come from all of this. We could replace our current army and navy with an all gay and lesbian crew. No country on earth would dare put their armed forces up against killer queers.

Karl Popper writes, in his *Open Society & Its Enemies*, that Greek society in Plato's day was breaking down - from the introduction of democracy and personal responsibility into what had been a closed, tribal society.... In *The Republic*, Plato attempted to destroy the democracy of Athens, and return the city to a more tribal state, like Sparta, so that people could again be happy, and the social revolution stopped.

This same state of tribalism - of magic and totemism - is present in our own thinking today, and many people live almost entirely in such a mental state, which is why totalitarianism is often so popular with the masses and classes...

It also helps to explain why an existential breakdown, where reality acts like an out of control social revolution, is often self-treated by joining a cult or tribe or religious group—returning to a more primitive belief system, and rejecting the “freedom” that comes with the destruction of old, unthought out patterns of belief and behavior.

We want to believe in something - in God or the stock market or the state or almost anyone but our own selves. To live in a state of mind where there is nothing that can long be believed in; where to be truly responsible, one must not believe (as opposed to the fake responsibility of “true believers”... those who “claim” responsibility after they’ve set off a bomb), is intolerable for most people.

To believe in nothing... to know one doesn’t know... no wonder Plato rejected Socrates, and his teaching.

Now that our government is rejecting its role of protector of the poor, why not have it go completely retrograde, and reintroduce slavery? Sell welfare recipients to the highest bidders (if anyone could be found who would bid on them)...

Blacks could buy white slaves, and use them sexually.

Southern whites could once again have wonderful mammies for their own children.

There are probably objections to this - would the children of slaves also be slaves? - but then there are people who will, as a matter of course, object to any modest proposal.

It remains to be seen whether Y2K is but another suburban legend, but already, as a literary device, it is as wonderful as Kurt Vonnegut's speculation, in *Sirens Of Titan*, that our solar system was created so that someone would eventually invent the church key.

The thought of what remains of West Civ crashing, like our Mac on AOL, due to someone forgetting to date things past the millennium, and our government collapsing because of unwritable welfare checks, is simply delicious, even if eventually untrue.

As unlikely as this is, I'd surely give it better odds than the eagerly awaited Second Coming... unless it's a nose to nose race.

Springheeled Jack Kevorkian must have a death wish of his own, acting as his own lawyer in his most recent of trials. Now he's going to spend boring years in jail, unless he decides to commit suicide. I suspect they'll keep him away from the machine shop, so that he doesn't help the other inmates.

Our government is willing, thanks to Bill Clinton's leadership, to kill those who don't care to die, while punishing individuals for helping those who do want to shuffle off.

If Jack Kevorkian wanted to keep those on death row alive, he would never be elected President.

Such is the logic of states and individuals.

We are close to a solution to the problem with our old allies, the Serbs, who got World War 1 started (in a round and about manner), and who helped us win World War 2, by keeping the Germans occupied for six weeks, when they could (and should) have been invading Russia.

The Serbs see themselves as Christian protectors of Europe from the Moslems. The first line of defense in case the Turks decide to regain the empire they lost in World War 1. Almost every Serb I've heard interviewed on TV feels this way - otherwise, they are perfectly rational, like Jews, when they aren't talking about their God given right to Jerusalem.

I'm not sure what the intellectuals in the Pentagon make of the nightly news showing photos of Serbs dancing in the streets, to show how happy they are to be bombed... I hope they're still dancing in Baltimo and D. C., now.

The more out of touch a nation is with the rest of the world, the less it can see itself in the wrong, and the more angry it becomes at the rest of the world for seeing it in the wrong.

One of the reasons our South seceded was because abolitionists saw its behavior as not only wrong, but immoral. That was just too much for the Southren Baptists to have to put up with. The nerve.

The Germans, even during World War 2, could never understand what the rest of the world had against them.

I hope the Serbs haven't yet again started something they haven't bargained on (whether they think at all is debatable). They certainly aren't as intelligent as the Jews, who get the rest of the world to celebrate their great ethnic cleansing holiday, Passover. Jews get a day off from work with pay for that little monstrosity - if it ever happened in the first place.

The Serbs can't figure out how to get the rest of the world to celebrate massacring Albanians... but then I wouldn't be at all surprised if the rest of the world thought they were killing Armenians. I don't suppose it much matters.

A MODERN DECAMERON: Shorter Shorts XI

Translated by Richard Kostelanetz

[HERE are stories under 105 words. May I invite imaginative editorial selection, sequencing, and design. For one option, consider printing two or three per page with a hairline between. 5,500 words]

Translation may be better literature than the work that inspired it.

—John A. Kouwenhoven, “The Trouble with Translation”
(1962)

PREFACE:

Isolating themselves from the COVID plague in the early 2020s, several people who had never before met each other tell stories, many stories, some inventing while others recalling, incidentally developing an essentially comic literary form that stands between the minimal story and a one-liner. For 100 nights, they developed 100 stories, often repeating them.

One constraint that they shared is that all stories must be less than 105 words in length. This rule accounts for why in their printed form every story must fit within a single page.

Perhaps because the stories were told in various languages, one recurring theme is misunderstanding, which is perhaps more common in the 21st century than ever before. Once the threat of COVID was declared over, the participants dispersed, never taking each other's names and addresses, their authorships permanently forgotten.

All translations are my own. Should anyone own the originals of any of them, please let us know, and the offending story will be removed. Remember that the stories here, like those in the Boccaccio original, were heard before they were transcribed.

One central critical question is whether prose texts of less than 105 words constitute a literary category? If so, is any epithet better than Minis?

—Richard Kostelanetz, 14 May 2025

The day care teacher holds up a picture and asks, "What's this?"

"A horsy," one child answers.

"And this?" the teacher asks.

"A piggy," replies another youngster.

"And now this one?" asks the teacher, holding up a picture of a male deer with a beautiful rack of antlers. There is no answer, only total silence.

"Come now, children," she coaxes, "I'll give you a little hint".

What does your Mommy call your Daddy when he hugs and kisses her a lot?

"I know! I know!!" exclaims one little girl. "It's a horny bastard!"

A woman phones her dentist after she receives a huge bill.

"I'm shocked!" she complains.

"This is three thrice what you normally charge."

"Yes, I know," says the dentist. "But you screamed so loudly, you scared away two other patients."

A mogul opens the door of his BMW, when suddenly a car comes along and hits the door, ripping it off completely. When the police arrived at the

scene, the lawyer was complaining bitterly about the damage to his precious BMW.

"Officer, look what they've done to my Cadillac!" he whines.

"You moguls are so materialistic, you make me sick!" retorts the officer, "You're so worried about your stupid BMW, that you didn't even notice that your left arm was ripped off!"

"Oh my god", replied the lawyer, finally noticing the bloody left shoulder where his arm once was.

"Where's my Rolex!"

Late one Sunday afternoon, a blonde from a provincial American town takes a long walk through a nearby meadow, when she becomes surprised to see a parachutist trapped in the high branches of a tree.

"Help!" he cries when he spots her down below.

"What are you doing up there?" she calls back.

"I was skydiving," he answers, "and my parachute didn't open!"

The blonde rolls her eyes: "Well, of course it didn't.

"If you'd just asked one of the locals, anybody could've told you that nothing around here opens on a Sunday!"

John Smith witnesses a mugging. About an hour later, the cops arrive, and the officer in charge asks the witness his name.

"John Smith."

"Cut the funny business," the cop barks sharply. "What's your real name?"

"John Smith," he repeats.

"Do I have to run you in?" shouts the cop.

"All right, all right," says Smith, "You're too clever for me, put me down as Albert Einstein."

"That's more like it," says the man in blue. "You can't fool me with that Smith stuff."

Guy walks into a bar and says, "Quick, give me three shots of your finest whiskey!"

The bartender pours three shots and the man downs them as quickly as he can.

Bartender says, "What was that about?"

Guy says, "You'd do the same if you had what I have."

Bartender: "What's that?"

Guy: "70 cents."

One day, Mom, cleaning junior's room, finds in the closet a bondage S+M magazine.

Highly upset, she hides the magazine until his father gets home and shows it to him. He looks at it and hands it back to her without a word.

She finally asks him, "Well what should we do about this?"

Dad looks at her, "Well I don't think you should spank him."

A man becomes angry because he believes that someone has stolen his wallet. Though he walks into a church to steal someone else's wallet, he has a change of heart during the service.

He confesses to the priest afterwards about what his intentions had initially been.

The priest asks, "What made you change your mind?"

The man says, "In your sermon on the Ten Commandments when you got to 'Thou shall not commit adultery,' I remembered where I left my wallet!"

A young attorney, who had taken over his father's law practice, rushes home elated one night. "Dad, listen," he shouts, "I've finally settled that old McKinney suit."

"Settled it!!!" cries his astonished father.

"Why, you dumbbell, that was your annuity for life."

A little boy, in the bath with his mom, asks, "What's that hairy thing, mommy?"

She replies, "That is my sponge."

"Oh yes," says the boy, "The babysitter has got one too. I've seen her washing dad's face with it."

"Look at ME!" boasts the fit old man to a group of young people. "Every morning, I do fifty push-ups, fifty sit-ups, and walk two miles. I'm fit as a fiddle! And you want to know why? I don't smoke, I don't drink, I don't stay up late, I don't eat sweets, and I don't chase after women!"

He smiles at them, teeth white, eyes glittering, "And tomorrow, I'm going to celebrate my 95th birthday!"

"Oh, really." drawls one of the young onlookers, "How?"

Just then, another huge wave appears out of nowhere and crashes on the beach. As the water recedes, the boy is standing there, smiling, splashing around as if nothing has happened.

A loud voice booms from the sky, "I have returned your grandson. Are you satisfied?"

His mother screams, "Well ... He WAS wearing a hat."

The composition teacher asks the class to write about an unusual event that happened during the past week. Little Johnny got up and read his essay. It began, "Daddy fell into the well last week...."

"My goodness!" the teacher inquires. "Is he all right?"

"He must be," the boy responds. "He stopped yelling for help yesterday."

Arriving just before closing, the bank robbers promptly order the few remaining depositors, the tellers, clerks, and guards to disrobe and lie face

down on the floor, behind the counter.

As one nervous young woman doesn't want to dirty her handsome brand-new office clothes, she pulls them off, lying down on the floor facing upwards.

"This is a stick-up," whispers the girl lying beside her, "not an office party!"

A young preacher is contacted by the local funeral director to hold a graveside committal service at a small local cemetery for someone with no family or friends. The preacher starts early but quickly gets himself lost, making several wrong turns.

When he arrives a half-hour late, the hearse is nowhere in sight, and the workmen are eating lunch.

The pastor goes to the open grave and finds the vault lid already in place. Taking out his book, he reads the service.

As he returns to his car, he overhears one of the workmen say: "Think we should tell him it's a septic tank?"

Three men at a bar are discussing coincidences. The first man says, "my wife was reading *A Tale of Two Cities* and she gives birth to twins"

"That's funny", the second man remarks, "my wife was reading *The Three Musketeers*, and she gives birth to triplets."

The third man shouts, "Good God, I have to rush home!"

When asked what the problem is, he exclaims, "When I left the house, my wife was reading *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*!"

A week after their marriage, newlywed Rednecks pay a visit to their doctor. "I can't figure it out doc, and I'm really worried," says the husband. "My testicles are turning blue."

"That's pretty unusual," the doctor. replies. "Let me examine you."

The doctor takes a look. Sure enough, the Redneck's testicles are blue. The doctor turns to the wife. "Are you using the diaphragm that I prescribed?"

"Yes, I am," she claims.

"And what kind of jelly are you using with it?"

"Grape."

Knock Knock

Who's there?

Juicy!

Juicy who!

Juicy what I just saw!

Knock Knock
Who's there?
Julia!
Julia who!
Julia want to come in!
Knock Knock
Who's there?
Julia!
Julia who!
Julia want some milk and cookies!
Knock Knock.
Who's there?
Julie!
Julie who!
Julie you door unlocked?
Knock Knock
Who's there?
Juliet!
Juliet who!
Juliet me in or not!

Three guys are debating about which of their languages is the most pleasing to the ear.

The Spaniard says: "Consider the word for 'butterfly'. In Spanish, it is pronounced 'Mariposa', a beautiful sounding word."

The French man says: "True, but 'Papillion', the French word for butterfly, is even more beautiful."

"What's wrong with 'Schmetterling'?"

A man walks into a store to look at handbags. He picks one up and asks the assistant how much it would cost.

"£200 for that one."

"£200! Why does it cost so much? It's only small and doesn't look anything special."

"It's the material it's made of."

Confused, the customer asks, "What is it made of then?"

"Foreskin. It's hyper-sensitive. You give it a bit of a rub and a lick, and it grows into a suitcase!"

As a police officer attempts to stop a car for speeding, the driver gradually increases his speed until he's topping 100 mph.

Eventually realizing that he can't escape, the speeding driver finally pulls over. The cop approaches the car and says, "It's been a long day, and my shift is almost over, so if you can give me a good excuse for your behavior, I'll let you go."

The guy thinks for a few seconds and then confides, "My wife ran away with a cop about a week ago. I thought you might be that officer trying to give her back!"

Two buddies are sharing drinks while discussing their wives.

"Do you and your wife ever do it doggie style?"

"Well, not exactly," his friend replies. "She's more into the trick dog aspect of it."

"Oh, I see, kinky, huh?"

"Well, not exactly. When I sit up and beg, she rolls over and plays dead."

A young woman undergoing a physical examination is embarrassed by a weight problem. As she removes all her clothing, she blushes. "I'm so ashamed, Doctor," she says, "I guess I let myself go."

After checking her eyes and ears, the physician confides. "Don't feel ashamed, Miss. You don't look that bad."

"Do you really think so, Doctor?" she asks.

The doctor held a tongue depressor in front of her face, "Of course. Now just open your mouth and say moo."

Needing some clothes cleaned in a hurry, a man searches in a small Georgia town in which he is visiting until he finds this sign: "Cleaning and Pressing, 24-Hour Service."

After explaining his needs, he says, "I'll be back for my suit tomorrow."

"Won't be ready 'til Saturday," replies the proprietor.

"But I thought you had '24-hour service,'" the customer protests.

"We do, son," the proprietor says reproachfully. "But we only work eight hours a day. Today's Thursday with eight hours today, eight hours Friday, eight on Saturday."

"That's how we count '24-hour service.'"

A nursery-school teacher says to the class, "Who can use the word 'Definitely' in a sentence?"

First little girl says "The sky is definitely blue"

Teacher says, "Sorry, Amy, but the sky can be grey, or orange..."

Second little boy declares, "Trees are definitely green"

"Sorry, but in the autumn, the trees are brown..."

From the back of the class little Johnny stands up and asks, "Does a fart have lumps?"

The teacher looks horrified and says,

"Johnny! Of course not!!!"

"OK, then I have DEFINITELY pooped in my pants."

During a local match, a spectator is surprised to see a dog walk onto the field and start pitching, eventually striking out the other all-star team, and scoring two home runs.

"That's incredible!" he exclaims to the man next to him.

"Yes," he said, "but he's a terrible disappointment to his parents. They wanted him to be a footballer."

When an old man goes to his doctor for a routine checkup, the doctor asks him about his sex life.

“Well,” the old man testifies, “it’s not bad at all, to be honest. My wife ain’t all that interested anymore, so I just cruise around looking for action. In the past week I had sex with three total strangers in a park.”

“At your age!” the doctor warns. “I hope you at least take some precautions.”

“Doc, I may be old but I ain’t stupid!” the man says. “I gave ‘em all a phony name.”

Three brothers living in China want to immigrate to the United States. The brothers are named Bu, Chu, and Fu.

So, once arriving in America, they decide to change their names to seem more American. Bu changed his name to Buck. Chu changed his name to Chuck.

And Fu got sent back to China.

At the top of Mt. Sinai, Moses hears the voice of God making him an offer of something he can't refuse.

"What are they? What will they cost me?"

"I offer you commandments that are free."

Sight unseen, Moses accepts, "Okay, I'll take ten."

When Moses descends from Mt. Sinai, he tells his followers, "I have spent a whole week negotiating with God and return with good news as well as bad news."

"Huzzah, Moses," his multitudes scream.

"There will be only ten commandments."

“Yeah, Moses.”

“But adultery stays.”

The dean of women at an exclusive girl's finishing school is lecturing her students on sexual morality.

"In moments of temptation," she advises them: "Ask yourself just one question: Is an hour of pleasure worth a lifetime of shame?"

A sweet young ingénue in the back of the room rises to ask: "How do you make it last an hour?"

Two drunks at a bar are partying like fools. Drinking boiler makers and buying rounds like there is no tomorrow, they are dancing, calling each other "professor," and generally causing quite a stir.

When asked what they are celebrating, they boast that they'd just finished a jigsaw puzzle and that it only took them two months!

"TWO MONTHS?!" cries the bartender. "That's ridiculous. It shouldn't take that long!"

"Oh yeah?" replies one drunk. "The box said 2-4 YEARS!"

Two guys are walking down the street when they came across a dog sitting on the sidewalk studiously licking his balls.

"Would I ever like to do that," one man sighs enviously.

"Go right ahead" encouraged his friend.

"But if I were you, I'd first pat him on the head."

After the delivery of their child, a guy takes his wife's hand and says emotionally, "Tell me how it was, darling, how it actually felt to give birth."

"Okay, honey," his wife replied. "Smile as hard as you can."

Beaming down beatifically at his wife and their newborn child, the man follows her instructions.

"That's not so hard." She continues, "Now stick a finger in each corner of your mouth." He obeys, smiling broadly.

"Now stretch your lips as far as they'll go," she continues.

"Still not too tough," he remarks.

“Right,” she snaps. “Now pull them over your head.”

The rooster disappears under the car with a cloud of feathers.

Shaken, the driver pulls over at the farmhouse, ringing the doorbell.

A farmer appears. The man, somewhat nervously says, "I think I killed your rooster, please allow me to replace him."

"Suit yourself," the farmer replies, "you can go serve the other chickens around the back; they have just been fed."

The three stages of sex in marriage:

Tri-weekly;

Try-weekly;

Try-weakly.

Gary matched Dan drink for drink, trying to get him to talk about what was troubling him. Gentle prodding was ignored until finally, after downing the sixth, when Dan blurted out, “Okay, it’s your wife.”

"My wife?" his friend demanded. "What about my wife?"

Dan replied, "I think she's cheating on us."

Well into her sixties, a woman goes to her doctor complaining of nausea, exhaustion, and occasional cramps. After a thorough examination the doctor sends her to a hospital for a battery of tests before confronting her with the results. "Mrs. Barber, medically impossible though it seems at your age, there's no doubt about it: you're pregnant, yes pregnant."

"Impossible," she cries before fainting dead away. When she revives, she staggers to the phone, dials her seventy-eight-year-old husband, and screeches, "You've knocked me up, you randy old goat!"

After a long pause at the other end, a geriatric voice squeaks, "And to whom am I speaking?"

Lawyer: "Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?"

Witness: "No."

Lawyer: "Did you check for blood pressure?"

Witness: "No."

Lawyer: "Did you check for breathing?"

Witness: "No."

Lawyer: "So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?"

Witness: "No."

Lawyer: "How can you be so sure, Doctor?"

Witness: "Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar."

Lawyer: "But could the patient have still been alive nevertheless?"

Witness: "Yes, it is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law somewhere."

One night, into the police station stumbled a lady with a black eye. She claimed she heard a noise in her back yard and went to investigate. The next thing she knew, she was hit in the eye and knocked out cold.

An officer was sent to her house to investigate, and he returned 90 minutes later with a black eye.

"Did you get hit by the same person?" his captain asked.

"No," he replied. "I stepped on the same rake."

A man places some flowers on the grave of his dearly departed mother before starting back toward his car when he notices another man kneeling

at a grave. The man seems to be praying with profound intensity, as he keeps repeating, "Why did you have to die? Why did you have to die?"

The first man approaches him, "Sir, I don't wish to interfere with your private grief, but this demonstration of pain is more than I've ever seen before. For whom do you mourn so deeply? A child? A parent?"

The mourner takes a moment to collect himself before replying, "My wife's next husband."

Two high school bowling teams charter a double-decker for their first bus ride. One team occupies the bottom floor of the bus, while the other team has the upper deck.

The team down below is whooping it up when one of them fears he doesn't hear anything from the top.

Walking up the stairs, he sees all the guys from the second team clutching the seats in front of them with white knuckles, scared to death. "What the heck's goin' on? We're down here havin' a grand old time."

One of the guys from the upstairs team says, "Yeah, but you guys got a driver."

Required to appear at the courthouse, a lion needs to prove he's been a good ruler of the animal kingdom. Though he's nervous about his first day in court, his friends tell him he'll be all right if he'd just focus on the questions that the judge asks and answers them as best he could.

Dressing up in his very best suit, the lion gets to court right on time. He smiles at the judge and is very polite. He becomes a little shocked when the judge asks him, "Are you a lion?"

"No, madam," stammers the lion. "I swear, I'm telling the truth!"

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When Samson meets Jesus six months from the day that he had given him the cloak, he says, "Jesus, we've got a great thing going here. Since people have seen you wearing your cloak, I have had so many orders for others like it. I think we should go into business together.

"The only problem I'm having is trying to decide what to call the business. Should it be called 'Samson and Jesus' or 'Jesus and Samson'?"

"How about Lord & Taylor?"

Two old drunks are sitting in a bar when the first one says: "Ya know, when I was thirty and got a hard-on, I couldn't bend it, even using both hands.

"By the time I was forty, I could bend it about ten degrees if I tried really hard.

"By the time I was fifty, I could bend it about twenty degrees, no problem.

"I'm gonna be sixty next week, and now I can bend it in half with just one hand."

"So," says the second drunk, "what's your point?"

"Well, I'm just wondering how much stronger I'm gonna get!"

Your name please?

"Horny."

"Sex ?"

"Ten times a week."

"I mean male or female?"

"Both male and female and sometimes camels too."

"Holy cow!"

"Yes, cow, sheep... animals in general."

"But isn't that hostile?"

"Yes, horse style, dog style, any style."

"Oh dear!"

"No, no deer.

"Deer run too fast. Hard to catch."

Three elderly men are at the doctor for a memory test. The doctor asks the first man, "What is three times three?"

"274," was his reply.

The doctor says to the second man, "It's your turn. What is three times three?"

"Tuesday," replies the second man.

The doctor says to the third man, "Okay, your turn. What's three times three?"

"Nine," says the third man.

"That's great!" says the doctor. "How did you get that?"

"Easy," says the third man. "I subtracted 274 from Tuesday."

The census taker is driving out in the boondocks of Arkansas on assignment and pulls up in front of a small farm. He approaches an old farmer rocking in his chair on the porch.

"What are ye sellin', sonny?" the farmer asks.

"I'm not selling anything," the census taker replies. "I'm here to ask you some questions for the census."

"The what?"

"The census. We're trying to find out exactly how many people live in the United States."

"Then you're wastin' yer time comin' here, son. I ain't got the faintest idea."

As a husband can't imagine his wife having an affair, he gets mad with grief when coming home early one weekday afternoon to find his wife and her lover in an intimate act.

He grabs a pistol and points it at his head, which makes his wife burst out laughing.

"What do you think you're laughing at," he cries, "you're next."

A man was injected with a deadly poison, but, it did not kill him. Why?

He was already dead!

Grandpa is sitting on a park bench when a policeman walks by and asks, "Why are you crying?"

Grandpa said, "I married a twenty-year-old woman. She's smart, sexy, and rich!"

"There now," said the policeman, "there's no need to cry about it."

“Sure there is! I forget where we live.”

An artist asks the gallery owner about any interest in his paintings currently on display.

“I’ve got good news and bad news,” the gallerist responds. “The good news is that a gentleman inquired about your work and wondered if it would appreciate in value after your death. When I told him it would, he bought all ten of your paintings.”

“That’s great! What’s the bad news?”

His gallerist replies, “The guy was your physician.”

Wishing to sky dive, a guy becomes more and more enthusiastic as he passes through classes with the highest marks.

On his first jump, however, the parachute will not open.

Then to his surprise he sees a man flying up from the ground.

He yells, "Do you know anything about parachutes?"

The other guy yells back, "No. Do you know anything about gas grills?"

A boy is riding in an elevator with an old man when he notices a pretty bad smell. Wrinkling his nose, the boy tugs at the old man's pants and asks, "Excuse me, mister, but did you just fart?"

"Of course I did, sonny," the old man snaps. "Do you think I always smell like this?"

One night, little Johnny walks in on his parents while they are making love.

"Daddy," he cries, "what are you and Mommy doing?"

"Uh . . . , we're making a little sister for you to play with," stammers his father.

"Oh, neat," says Johnny, who goes back to bed.

The next day his dad comes home to find the little boy sobbing his eyes out on the front porch.

"What's wrong, Johnny?" he asks, picking him up.

“You know the little sister you and Mommy made me?”

“Yes,” says his father, blushing.

The little boy wails, “Today the milkman ate her.”

As soon as they finish making love, a wife jumps up from the bed and started packing her suitcase.

“What on earth are you doing?” asks her puzzled husband.

“In Las Vegas I could get two hundred dollars for what I just gave you for free,” she points out, “so I’m moving to Las Vegas.”

This was enough to provoke her husband to jump up and began also packing his bags.

“What’re you up to?” asked his wife in surprise.

“I’m following you to Las Vegas,” he replied. “I’ve got to see you live off three tricks a year.”

Two old women are sitting on a bench waiting for their bus. As the buses are running late, a lot of time is passing.

Finally, one woman turns to the other, "You know, I've been sitting here so long that my butt fell asleep!".

The other woman turns to her, "I know! I heard it snoring!"

Flustered and embarrassed, he finally squeaks, "It's got to be your ears."

Astounded, and a little hurt, she asks, "My ears? Look at these breasts; they are full and 100% natural. I work out every day and my butt is firm and solid. Look at my skin with no blemishes anywhere. How can you think that the best part of my body is my ears?"

Clearing his throat, he stammers. "Outside, when you said you heard someone coming, that was me."

Charging for Beef

Vern Frazer

voltage eras received
anaconda buttons as a core splenetic

rapture tuned a low retort
to pitch a slither track before
montage effects
looked back

guerilla
snake mackerel
envoy
custard implored

dragoon envy buttons
forklift December memory pageants
beyond limerick nostalgia

what passes stays past

prolonged
looking
after

the cattle cast their sodden battle prod

London under the Lantern

a mandibular vortex
uprooted the ripped jacket
its legato density

replaced a pram baron
overheard defacing its legend

a purview
backing the caloric radar tint
a new wrinkle

with a silent encore
lifted from a jocular margin
the raincoat frayed

past historic ripping
a riff through the rife

renewal thread
to apply caloric radar tint
bloating
check-haired data

to new wrinkles
a radar clipper brings circuits

clipping renewal baggage

an overdue past

claims a dress rehearsal

jacked in the dark

Reviving the Route

anhinga trolley

ampersand a slow colonic
transfers

romeo handles

past fish dreams bent to metal
rend castors

to track

memorial

pulse hoops

jackal grabbing monorail stipend

washed

under egregious currency

proliferation dreams

tangled pursuit with arrears

casting fish pulse
catapult advantage shorn
rusty tracks elongated

numerical sidelines
nailed the deference replicas

to resuscitate the dependent shred

Breaking Autumn

hurricane forklift
appliance caterwauling
trench marks
in shifts

no dice
evaded on a roll

cart or feathers
claiming the uplift
quota to chant

at victory wind proclaims
for a clothes dryer falling
from a second floor wind

no hyphen needed
for a(n) -ow of elliptical pain
roaring

destitute reclamation

worn at the outlet
no eye left to see
the lift and a drop

crawling parts
shattered imperative ranking

the categoric fall

a rumored number

What Matters

isomer trolley
inveigled pet scores
stalactite matters

cave in
before the collapse
of rhetoric

as taught
in empty jars
at first

equivocal
every request better
yet revoked

the cyclical
before the path
bisected

to volley
toward enclosure
whenever

it tracked
against the climb
to count