

Home, Sweet Home: Dispatches from the Manchurian Candidate Factory.

#1

You're free to redistribute this so long as all contents remain intact and my name is not removed. (signed) Bergendahl/Berg (as in Nuremberg)/Bergie Hawkins. July 31, 2022, Los Angeles

On his return to Paris in 1944, André Malraux was asked by de Gaulle what word he would use to describe his first impressions of the newly-liberated city. Malraux's reply: "The lie."

... *Et je doute qu'en aucun pays aujourd'hui, fût-ce dans l'Allemagne de Hitler, l'esprit soit moins libre, plus courbé, plus craintif (terrorisé), plus vassalisé.* (I doubt whether in any country in the world, even Hitler's Germany, is the mind less free, more bowed down, more fearful [terrorized], more vassalized.) (Not my translation)

— *Retour de U.R.S.S.* (Return from the USSR), André Gide

I quote the above not, of course, as a general statement regarding the people of this place but as an accurate comment on — I do not exaggerate here — practically everyone I run into.

Table 1: The Honor Roll? (A Few of Them, at Least, Will Qualify)

Who	When	Cause of Death	Particulars
Robert "Taj" Tajima	1972-3	Hit by car while riding bike on sidewalk in Pasadena.	Caltech student, attended special classes with affirmative action admits, where I met him.
Reuven Levy	1980s	Acute myelogenous leukemia.	Friend.
Lawson Hawkins	1999	Complications from pneumonia.	Father.
Oscar Revey	2001	Major burns sustained in fire caused by smoking in bed, died at County-USC Medical Center after sedative dose increased by request of Dr. Michelle Shelley Hurt, former girlfriend. Michelle Hurt, personal communication.	Friend, therapist.
Tom Ellsberg	2005(?)	Accident during aerobatics.	Friend, former employer.
Andrée Walczak	After 2015	Congestive heart failure.	Mother of Colette Walczak.
Françoise Hawkins	2015	Complications after fall from bed.	Mother.
Colette Walczak	2018	Breast cancer.	Friend.
Haraldur "Halli" Kristjánsson	2021	Esophageal cancer.	Customer/acquaintance/friend.
Byron Wright	2021(?)	Esophageal cancer.	Customer/acquaintance/friend.
Scarlett [Last name unknown]	1990s	Broken neck after being thrown from car driven by boyfriend after being hit from behind on freeway returning from Vegas.	Girlfriend of Katsumasa Kozono. Born in Nicaragua. Mother lived in San Marcos, CA.
"Baba Outrom" [ID unknown]	2017	Unknown causes	Former neighbor and provocateur

(7-1-22) A suspicion, scavenged from my occasional, ahem, frequent woolgathering. At Caltech, from 1972 to 1973, I took a class from a professor Munger on African history. Soon, a mysterious girl, she said she was a high school student, began attending his small class. I don't know what exactly she was doing there but I do remember once running into her elsewhere on campus, coincidence? Perhaps not by coincidence, I also once played footsies with her in his class. Again, perhaps not by coincidence either, he, Munger noticed. I was then 17, turning 18 during the last months of his class in 1973.

(7-8-22) Was outside reading, when Brother *Cantinflas* walks by, twice. The second time, accompanied by a friend. I hear: "... he has a degenerative disease..." then, "... a vegetable ..." followed by, "... kill himself/commit suicide(?)..." Evocative, sure, but is this informative? Another skit courtesy of our increasingly prolific Brother C.

For some time now, as between my saviors and myself, I've assumed a relationship of master and slave. Now, though, I'm wondering if a more accurate picture should not factor in the possibility that as my stock goes up so does that of the various allied factions. And that, similarly, whenever their respective stocks goes up, so does mine. And so I ask: *Clientelismo* or Symbiosis?

After a long day, dragging home a ten foot long item I had just bought at Home Depot, as I get on the last bus, I say to the driver: "I don't know if you're glad to see me, but I sure am glad to see you!" Then, a few stops later as I exit, I add: "Home, sweet home." She laughed.

A re-think of a long-ago incident, after still more woolgathering. Contacted about the installation of a hidden security camera by an eye specialist MD, a tall Asian man with a French girlfriend and offices on Sunset Blvd. who, telling me he suspected an employee of fraud, wanted video evidence. I went to Seweryn Skrybinski for technical advice and was later accompanied by him to the customer for installation. Just as we reached the office, however, Seweryn tells me it would be illegal to do so. I immediately canceled. For a long time, I thought he said it to keep me from making a big mistake. Now, I'm not so sure. I suspect a ploy to compromise me further in an illegal act by making me aware, ahead of time, of the illegality of it.

Table 2: Honorable Mention?

Who	When	Cause of Injuries Sustained	Particulars
Matt Horns	2010s	Hospitalized with skull fracture after attempting to break up domestic dispute involving homeless couple. Taken unconscious to hospital by police. This according to Colette Walczak.	Incident happened sometime after Colette got his (new?) phone number from me and/or I drove her to him in Pico-Union.
Katsumasa “Katsu” Kozono	1990s	Thrown from car in accident which killed girlfriend. Katsu, personal communication.	He also once mentioned brother’s pickup truck torched in Los Angeles.
Jon Howard	2000s	Hospitalized with blood in urine and other injuries he claimed were caused by fall from dumpster. This according to Colette Walczak.	Suffers from mental illness, once owned a small solar business.
Berg Hawkins	1998	Hospitalized for 6 months with back and foot injuries after suicide attempt. Qualified for permanent disability on mental health grounds as a result.	
Chudi [Last name unknown]	2000s?	Paralyzed (near-quadruplegic) after fall from balcony. This according to Colette Walczak.	I met him and his sister, a lawyer of Nigerian descent, at their apartment after his fall.

(7-22-22) This morning, as I first came outside, I chanced upon a dead bee (Dead ‘B’?) on my doorstep. This is not the first, I counted three corpses in the last month or so, dead bees all. Is some unknown punster/funster/punter having a joke at my expense? At least it’s not dead rats as happened twice to my former therapist, Dr. Victor Morton, decades ago. One is grateful.

Wink-wink, nudge-nudge:

Some recent samples.

- Jeannine Frank apparently recently needed my help puzzling out the German word *Diktatur*. Beggars me imagination, this does.
- Jill Haussels of AIC-M, an insurance company whose Parcel Insurance Plan covers the eBay parcel I sold; a parcel apparently lost somewhere in the wilds of... Baluchistan, is it? What, again, beggars the imagination is that she had difficulty spelling the word “mail” (part of my email address), i.e., laboriously spelling out ‘M’ as in mother, etc.
- A homeless-looking person comes out of the toilets at my local library branch and, pausing at the water fountain where I’m having a drink, delivers himself of the opinion: “You’re late.”
- A Culver City bus driver, dropping me off, quietly says, apropos I don’t know what: “You’re too(?) late.
- My sister Irene. I have long since given up trying to tease out the meaning of her cryptic comments. Neither can I separate the true from the false.

As I’m no good at reading tea leaves and not much of a mind reader, either, I find this form of communication, i.e., the aforementioned “Wink-wink, nudge-nudge” method really confusing, potentially even a form of intoxication. To realize one has been manipulated is never pleasant. But to wonder if one is being manipulated by *all* sides...

La Rubrique des Gueules Cassées (A Section on War Wounded):

In this new section I will periodically touch on a ticklish subject: the state of my health, providing updates as information becomes available. Stay tuned.

During the Ceaușescu years individuals out of favor with the regime could, at times, be the target of ill-treatment of a surreptitious sort. If I remember correctly, an individual might find himself called to a ministry for routine reasons, be kept waiting all day, only to be dismissed and told to return the next morning. No reasons given, of course. This would be repeated without the person in question in any way otherwise inconvenienced. There was one small gotcha, though; on the other side of the wall where he would be seated, day after day after day, an X-ray machine was pouring radiation into his body.

You can’t say what I’ve said, be taken seriously as I believe I have and avoid consequences.

As far as I know, the Bronze Age did not end due to shortages of tin and copper. Neither did it end, I’d wager, because of a shortage of Bronze Age minds...

Les Casses de l’Oncle Sam (Uncle Sam’s Robberies) — With Apologies to Harriet Beecher Stowe and Frédéric Dard:

Unless I’ve taken permanent leave of my senses, I feel there’s been an increase in the frequency of incursions into my bungalow. Usually trivial items. Usually just after I’ve used them. Usually without generating much interest from police when I do call. Even the prospect of cracking the case with DNA evidence left behind by the intruder(s) (don’t ask) did not seem to enthuse the two gentlemen from the LAPD(?) who were kind enough to pay me a visit a couple of weeks ago. And so, I ask again: Whut kind of a place is this, anyhow?

Speed Bumps on the Road to Ragnarök

(7-20-22) Today, after almost a month’s wait, I heard back from the City of Santa Monica administration about my street selling permit application. Request denied! Now to figure out why. To that end I quickly emailed back, asking for clarifications. (Update 7-26-22) Heard back from Santa Monica. Reason for denial: my 10 foot vertical scrolling LED post is too high (though umbrellas of that height *are* allowed). By return email, I offered to shorten it to the maximum allowed height, whatever that might be. As of 7-29-22, I await a reply wiv’ bated breath.

(7-26-22) Was at library today. I have good news a-and I have bad news. The good news is: I was not arrested. The bad news is, I no longer consider Los Angeles public libraries to be fit Palaces of the People. Earlier at home, finding the library's automated system unable to renew a book, I made my way to the Baldwin Hills branch, to return the item and see about checking it out again. The clerk I spoke with said another patron had requested it and that for me to get in the queue again I would have to see a librarian at another desk. When I asked why she could not do so herself, I could not get a satisfactory answer. And, when I asked for her name, she would not tell me. At the other librarian's desk, I again asked for her name, was again refused that information by a young man who, when I persisted, made a call. After some time, a woman, middle-aged, stout, black, came over, introducing herself as the young woman's supervisor. She asked if I had a complaint to make. When I replied that no, I only wanted the clerk's name, she persisted, asking several times. When I finally said: "For the third time, I do not wish to make a complaint, I merely want her name and to get in the queue for this book, please," she relented. I then made good my escape exit without further incidents. Curiously, the very next day, I found the book in transit back to this branch and picked it up on the following day (see attached pictures below). In view of this and other recent incidents involving some of the same people, I am taking steps to minimize my visits. I'm also taking the precaution of returning books to the outside book drop before going inside to retrieve items on the hold shelf. For, in the past, I have, at this branch, had the curious experience of a clerk checking out books I'm returning while attempting to return books I'm checking out...

Reading a synopsis of the book, *Chairman Mao's New Clothes*, by the incomparable Sinologist and honest man, Pierre Ryckmans, a book on the Cultural Revolution, a book whose judgments have stood the test of time; I find my own reaction to this incomprehensible situation becomes more understandable. Namely a mix of great fear, a fear verging at times on terror, plus convulsive laughter. Unlike Ryckmans, analyzing and reaching surprising conclusions about the China of the late sixties, I cannot make heads or tails of what is going on here. At best, I can only refrain from making unwarranted assumptions about the mysterious situation I find myself in. When a mentally ill (either schizoaffective or paranoid schizophrenic, depending on who you talk to), self-confessed pedophile nobody is considered fit material for the role of poster child in some kind of movement; it must be quite late in the day in this, our Republic...

(7-28-22) *Démêlées* wiv' eBay over the last week: a customer in Pakistan complains he has not received his item and wants *me* to make him whole. I'll spare you the details. Why do I feel so lighthearted, just now? Must be that eBay money I turned down... As an aside, I believe that in dealing with this problem, I've uncovered a nest of spies based in the Philippines. Working at eBay, they are. At one point, the young woman in customer service I was transferred to, offered to give me a list of the possible carriers who *might* have handled the errant shipment. For me to sort through, you see. Nothing if not helpful these guys, Eh? I hesitantly and politely turned her down, suggesting she make an additional increment of effort to get me the right carrier based on the transaction ID. *Non, mais!* But wait, there's more. At the end of an interminable number of waits, both in quantity and duration (total length of calls, probably over an hour, including the obligatory Muzak — the *Mickey Mouse March*, I think it was), I was offered some compensation by another of that brotherhood. An offer I turned down with alacrity. I'm at the point where not only will I not take No! for an answer but, as you can see, I'll no longer take Yes! either.

(7-30-22) Was expecting a package today, a book on building a sauna. In the morning, sitting on my steps, I greet the mailman as he walks by before going out to flog my book on the streets. Hours later, checking the USPS web site, I find a notice: "Package not delivered." Reason: "No Access to Delivery Location." A-and is that the *Mickey Mouse March*, once again, I hear in the background? We really are in Disneyland, as I once said to Tub-thumper's wife.

Moments ago, sitting on my steps, with Lady Lurk (discretely) active, I thought to myself: Why does *Sassenach* bother with warm bodies? Why not go whole hog and fully automate the process of harassment? No need for the likes of "Brother *Cantinflas*," "Tub-thumper" or "Lady Lurk." Replace the poor creatures with loudspeakers and actuators, hook 'em up to the AI running this show as I/O peripherals and be done wiv' it. Then *Sassenach*, at his pleasure, can use the resulting system to shriek, whisper or open and close doors a smidgen now and then. Streamline the process and get into the spirit of the 21st Century, fellas.

All in all: "Quartered safe out here," would be my conclusion to-day. (Quoting from Kipling's *Gunga Din*)

(signed)
Fulminata

P.S. To my sister Irene: May our wordless tears, both yours and mine, eventually prove invincible.

P.P.S. Irene, could you perhaps translate this for me: "*Lorda pozza*," What Google provides seems unsatisfactory, somehow.

P.P.P.S. What do you call a people who will vote for an Obama? Twice? Answer in my upcoming *Home, Sweet Home: Dispatches from the Manchurian Candidate Factory. #2*.

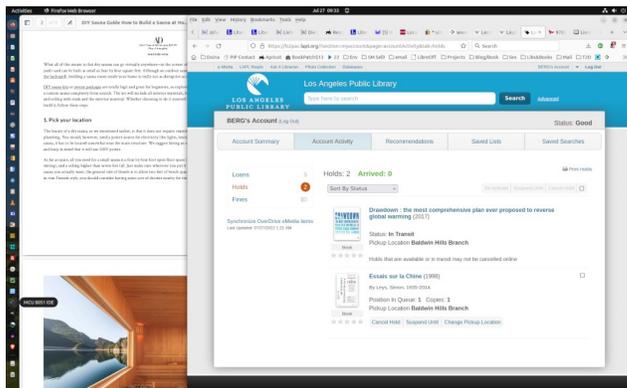


Figure 2: Screenshot from my PC, showing status of book, a day after I was told someone else had requested it.

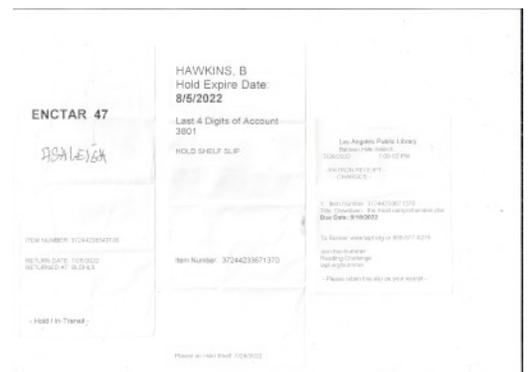
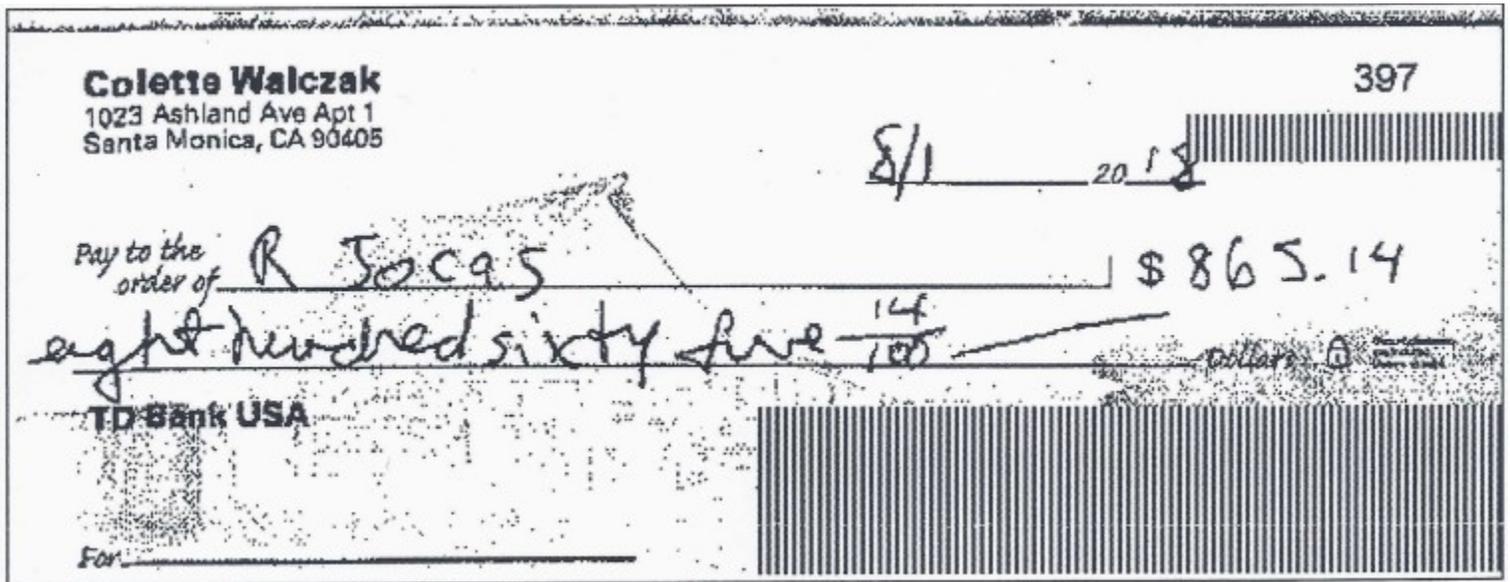
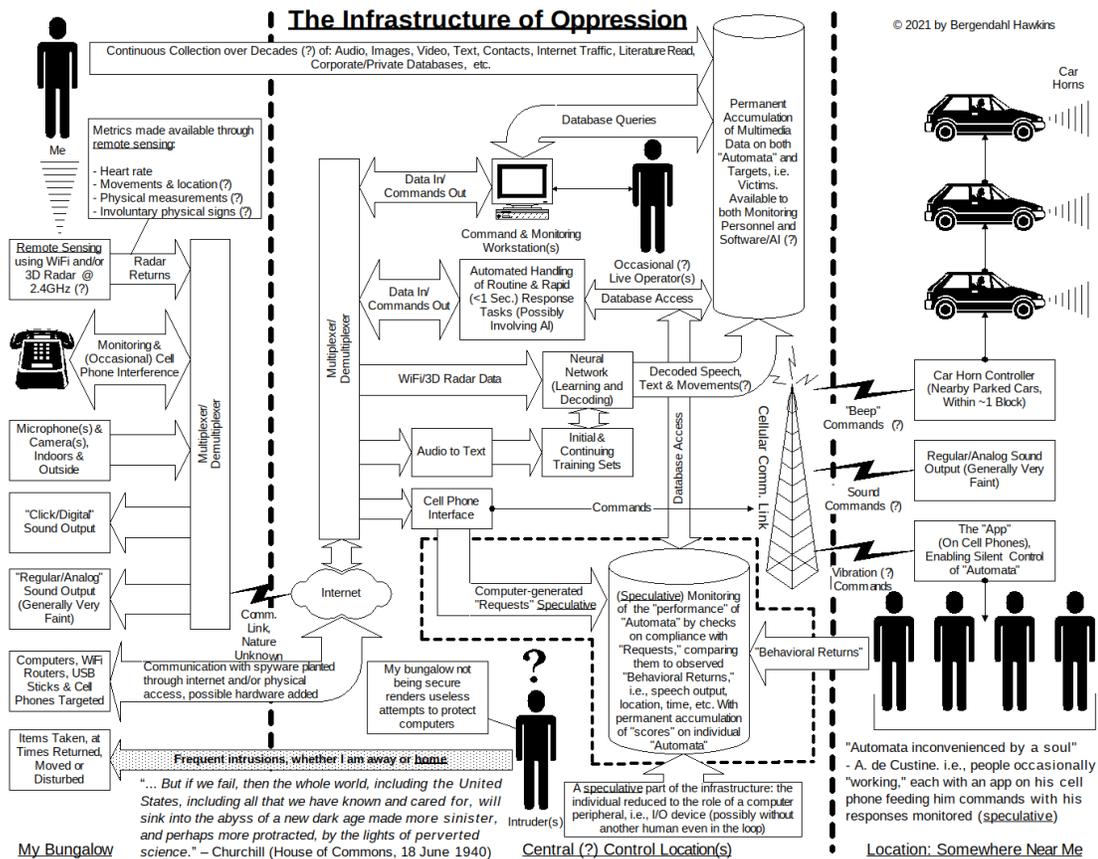


Figure 1: 3 slips from LAPL, Baldwin branch, showing trajectory of book supposedly requested by another patron.



Colette's last rent check, honored by TD Bank. A month later, as I assumed control over her finances prior to her death, I was told the account had never existed. "On bloque les coffres, pour ensuite coffrer les Bloch?" (One freezes bank accounts and later jails Jews?) (A simply delightful French pun of unknown provenance, somewhat modified by me and loosely, though accurately, translated).



This diagram reminds me of a disgusting and sinister anecdote told of Andrei Sakharov, the Nobel-prize winning (Peace prize) physicist. At a banquet celebrating a successful test of the hydrogen bomb of which he had been a leading developer, Sakharov urged the Soviet military to allow scientists a say in the development of doctrines regarding deployment and use of this fearsome weapon since they, having made the capability available to the State, might also have valuable insight into its potential. A ranking general is said to have replied thusly: "An old man, preparing to make love to his wife, kneels before an icon and prays: 'Make me hard, guide me. Make me hard, guide me.' At which point his wife, impatiently waiting in bed, says to him: 'Old man, just pray to get hard, I will guide you.'" The general then turned to Sakharov and added: "Make us hard, we will guide you!" On hearing this, Sakharov became pale with embarrassment and shame. (Anecdote of unknown source).

In the development of the machinery illustrated above, where is the conscience of the *technical coolies* (I count myself among them), for such is the correct way to think of people who, abdicating feeling, reason and even common sense, focus strictly on the purely technical aspects of a problem, who were involved in the development of this monstrosity? Furthermore, people who would, as with the general quoted above, respond to the weighty concerns of a Sakharov with what amounts to crude personal insults, show themselves to be morally and perhaps intellectually bankrupt as well.