

Home, Sweet Home: Dispatches from the Manchurian Candidate Factory: #5

Distribution: Book group, Adams Blvd./Cochran Ave. and Environs, Selected Tenants of My Apartment Complex.

Purpose: To Ridicule Few. To Amuse More. To Inform Many.

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The Quotable Other, i.e., *L'Enfer, c'est les Autres* — Sartre (Hell is Other People):

I see no reason to question “the Other’s” judgment and certainly not his/her objectivity. So, let’s clear the air a bit wiv’ some radical honesty.

1. When I was at Teledyne Controls, I once overheard an employee, as he walked by say to someone: “How would you like to work with *that*?” Many decades later, at my local supermarket, I heard the following exclamation: “What we could do with *that*.” *That*. Not him, *that*.
2. During a date with Gretchen Davidson, she was so tense throughout that I wonder what a mutual friend, Beth Wolfson, may have told her of me.
3. While I’m working on his computer a customer, Larry Weinstock is on the phone. He tells the other person my name. I then hear, “you mean *he’s* there?” before Larry abruptly hangs up.
4. Renée Chaba’s aside in Yiddish(?) to Beth Wolfson’s mother during a visit. One word, meaning unknown. Followed (preceded?) by a question to me: “Are you antisemitic?”
5. Janusz Hetman’s friend’s comment about me (with me present): “Maybe not the worst.”
6. Mr. Ventura (first name unknown), a realtor, cuts me after I say hello over the phone during a visit to Renée. OK, but why?
7. Camille Solari’s comments that I belong in prison when she sees me in a striped sailor’s top.
8. Beth Wolfson’s unsolicited remark about my being yet another black man who’s unaware he’s gay.
9. My sister Irene who, in 1995, seemed to suggest it’s of no importance if I’m gay. OK, but why the suggestion in the first place?
10. Talking to Colette Walczak, I remark: “Don’t take them seriously.” Her reply was immediate and non-verbal: she copied the gesture of the ultramasculine menial, a black customer who, when I lived on Garth Ave., persisted in touching me repeatedly during a meandering conversation.
11. Comment probably put in the mouth of customer Mark Selko’s senile wife. “The sick machine.”
12. The neighbor directly across the street from my bungalow who, within days of my moving in, shouts from his porch: “Berg, are you gay?”
13. The woman, late middle age, black, living at 2638 S. Cochran Ave. (this is serious enough an accusation that it warrants explicit details) who, years ago, as I walked by, said: “See that man, that man is child-happy.”
14. My neighbor Tyson’s allusion to child molestation some years ago, as I worked on some solar stuff on the lawn with him standing nearby.
15. The desperate shout: “No!” on Adams Blvd., coming from nearby after I, walking to the market, turned back and followed a Hispanic man who had glared at me.
16. The man, black, older, on the 210 bus to Staples, who says: “Did you get off already?” A statement making no sense unless one widens one’s field of view. I had been reading the autobiography of Nikolai Lilin, *Siberian Education*. The implications may not be “good news for modern man.”
17. A-and while we’re on the subject (of Siberia, that is); when I worked at Santa Monica Studios, I was, during what I think was a “probationary” period, exiled to a remote part of the complex. Not so remote, however, that I was no longer in the US. For, you see, a set of rooms communicating with mine were soon rented to a Germans film crew which included a woman. I well remember once asking her for a cigarette only to hear: “*Hat jemand eine Zigarette für der Neger?*” (*Übersetzung überflüssig, OK?*). Do you suppose my reputation, like a bad aftershave, had preceded me?

The Quotable Mikoyan (This May Bear Repeating in Years to Come):

“it would be clear the country was not being run by a legal government but by a group of gangsters.” Applebaum, Anne. *Gulag*, 2003, p. 514.

Sassenach and His ~~Yankee~~ Damyankee Tricks:

In this new section I periodically describe instances of the “Tricknology” (as I’ve heard it referred to by black people) on occasional display in my life. As you read this, keep in mind the ever-present mystification factor and its potential for magnification of the emotional impact.

1. Anomalies on my computer synchronized with outside sounds, the loud scream(s) of a child for example. This is new.
2. Possible “fat finger” effect in which unexpected, odd, destructive things sometimes happen on the computer when I hit the wrong(?) key.
3. Four missing Writer documents, the whole *Home, Sweet Home* series, in English and Spanish. Though, curiously, the PDF versions are still there.
4. Names removed from my cell phone.
5. I no longer log instances of “sync, “feedback” and “coincidental” walk-bys, at home and elsewhere, so frequent have they become.
6. Though these types of incidents may, when looked at separately, seem trivial (this is Disneyland, after all), “The dosage determines the poison.”

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

1. (9-12-22) The pair of pink-handle scissors I have been looking for for several days turned up in my wicker basket, just where it normally is. I thought I had looked there several times. I hasten to add that I’d not left my bungalow for days.
2. Colette’s voluminous set of spiral-bound diaries, maybe over a dozen. On her death in 2018, I looked for them briefly but could not find anything.
3. (9-14-22) The glue I bought yesterday for my “Democracy Wall” project from Emil’s Hardware is missing. Forced to go back today (9-15-22), tail between my legs and buy another bottle.

無為 (*Wu Wei*, Action Through Inaction) or A Passive-aggressive’s Travails (and Those of His Unfortunate Victims, Natch!):

I won’t claim the idea sprang “fully formed from the head of Jove,” as the expression goes. It actually came from a remark of my sister’s boyfriend. First, a definition from Wikipedia:

Sinologist Herrlee Creel considers wu wei, as found in the Tao Te Ching and Zhuangzi, to denote two different things.

An "attitude of genuine non-action, motivated by a lack of desire to participate in human affairs" and

A "technique by means of which the one who practices it may gain enhanced control of human affairs".

(9-13-22) So outrageous has my conduct become that tonight, I’m feeling remorseful; just a bit, mind. It happened at Emil’s Hardware on Robertson. There today to gather supplies for my “Democracy Wall” idea. I would therefore like to extend an apology to the following individuals:

1. The cashier who, when I asked for directions to the fasteners, perhaps heard me imperfectly and, as a result, was unable to direct me to the right aisle, mumbling instead I don't know what. I replied with a thank you and, briskly walking away, began my own random search.
2. The cashier, again. As I browsed through a collection of nuts and bolts, he came up to me and, ever so helpful, asked if I were looking for bolts or screws. Cutting him to the quick, wiv'out so much as a glance or a reply, I turned away and pursued my perusal. For shame!
3. Some time later, my selections made, I walked back to the counter where, after charging my debit card, the very same cashier omitted to hand me my receipt before walking away. A fact I only discovered after rummaging through the several bags he had handed me.
4. While I waited fruitlessly at the counter for minutes on end, another clerk, eventually asked/mumbled something, I'm not sure what. With my, by now, trademark move, I again performed the cut *direct* and, instead of replying to this solicitous fellow standing not three feet from me, I turned squarely away even as he spoke, reached for a book and began perusing my trusty Romanian-English dictionary. So interesting was the subject that I failed to see or hear him, possibly exasperated beyond measure, calling and (literally) waiving at me to get my attention.
5. By now in full passive-aggressive mode, I remained impassive (as it were), choosing instead to deepen my mastery of Romanian diphthongs or triphthongs... or some such things.
6. After perhaps another ten minutes or so, the poor fellow, by now away from the checkout counter, asked again if there were something he could help me with. I then politely inquired as to the possibility of obtaining a receipt for my purchases.
7. With a look of lively surprise on his face, he quickly reached near the cash register, eventually putting the receipt on the counter after I failed to notice his attempt(s) to hand it to me. Picking it up a moment later, I made good my escape.

As I walked out, with my items and receipt (Natch!), *le roi n'était pas mon cousin*. Disgraceful of me, really... *Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*.

Speed Bumps on the Road to Ragnarök:

A timeline of my dealings with the City of Santa Monica on my application for a street selling permit allowing me to flog my book from a sidewalk stand.

(9-12-22) Nothing to report as I've not sufficiently bestirred myself to read Ms. Favre-Smith's email reply of 8-30-22.

Current Events:

(9-11-22) As I sat outside this evening, "Miss Mumbles," roommate of "the Banshee," drove up and parked her car on the grass just outside, elaborately maneuvering it back and forth. When she was satisfied, presumably with the car's clearance, she and a friend got out and proceeded into our complex, laughing loudly all the while. Walking past me on the walkway, she said: "Hey." When I did not answer, she repeated herself, only this time screaming: "HEY!" After a moment's pause, I turned to her, nodded and quietly replied: "Hi." The mumbling did not start until they had passed me, at which point I heard: "Animal(s?)." And where exactly might that have come from, I wonder. Well, at least she didn't burp noisily as she walked by. I hate it when they do that. Just hate it.

(9-12-22) Yesterday and possibly on previous days as well, I saw Tyson's little boy try to catch my eye before bowing as he walked by. This is gruesome.

(9-12-22) Lady Lurk sitting on her steps, momentarily looked a bit nervous tonight as I stepped out, scissors in hand, to cut some styrofoam I had found at the curb. Earlier, my preparing an eBay package for shipment seemed to rouse her from her torpor as she'd been indoors all day. Scared, she was. I've also noticed, I think, she's afraid I'll make a pass at her. This is a frightened woman. No wonder, given her expertise in gaslighting. About the only time she's ever made eye contact with me was just after I began, in my emails, to refer to her as "Lurk", (now "Lady Lurk"). Coincidence?

(9-21-22) This morning I got a call from a detective Hargrove, ID # 37691, of the Southwest Community Police station about police report # 220314721. A report about the assault by my neighbor Tyson inside my bungalow a few weeks ago. The detective asked if I wanted a warrant to be issued to which I replied yes, adding I wanted the maximum possible paper trail generated. I also gave him the number of my landlord, Tiffany Anderson of AFJ Investment, to help locate Tyson. Said landlord has, as yet, not even replied to my email request for the repair of a missing window bar, a request prompted by the recent assaults, assaults of which I have made her aware. I was also asked to eventually visit the police station to view pictures and identify Tyson, a request to which I also agreed. Lastly, I brought up the unprovoked pepper spray attack two days before Tyson's. Should I be able to add the burglary/vandalism of some weeks ago, a burglary in which a DNA sample was obligingly left behind by the intruder, I may even qualify for the volume discount. We'll see... *A luta continua!*

Conclusions:

For some notion of the depth of the abyss all of us find ourselves in, take my predicament, a predicament I seem to be the first to have laid out publicly and *most* explicitly (incendiary sewage anyone should be properly ashamed of, if you ask me; but never mind), Gentle Reader™. Others having, in the past and for reasons best known to themselves, probably found discretion to be the better part of valor. Take the magnitude of my predicament, multiply it by a constant representing the number of unfortunates (with possibly many individuals of importance among them) similarly afflicted; say 'n', where 'n' tends to infinity.

Two outbursts, hysterical and near-hysterical:

1. My (non-official) sister, Colette Walczak of Santa Monica, now dead: became hysterical during a stay while I lived on Garth Ave., #3. I had to call police to get her to leave. During their visit, one of them quietly told me: "We'll get you your medication." Nothing if not helpful, some of these LAPD types, Eh?
2. My other sister, Irene Hawkins of Florence, Italy: became near-hysterical during phone call(s) about two to three years ago. I was so upset I, for the first time in decades, briefly saw a therapist. These incomprehensible outbursts never since alluded to and still unexplained.

While Colette lived, she played on my feelings for her; has her role since been handed to Irene? Am I now "job 1" for you? Poor devils. During Mao's long march, he was compelled to abandon his three children and, in the chaos, was never to see them again. I'm deeply saddened and more than a bit disoriented.

How many sacrifices have been made on my behalf? And me blissfully unaware of them, prima donna that I am.

Anyways, enough of my Obscure and Pretentious Malarkey™ (for now). I remain yr. purveyor of incendiary sewage (if such a thing is physically possible).

(signed)
Homo culpabilis

P.S. To my sisters, Irene and Colette (the latter dead of breast cancer in 2018): May our wordless tears, both yours and mine, eventually prove invincible.