

Stay Calm, We Have a White Flag

Written by Alex Baer

Thursday, 01 September 2016 18:20

Add another quote, maybe, to the lexicon of our self-confusion: "We have met the enemy, and we went through the looking-glass anyway."

This explains an awful lot, to my own satisfaction, from a run-on Trump to runaway tire-fires. We humans are our own best friends and our own worst enemies.

There's a whole growth industry now in trying to explain away human mishaps and miseries, from unexpected dumpster fires with elaborate comb-overs, to the hiring of newly-minted experts who can explain to us, on teevee, why it is that we are being bombarded by flaming drone-shrapnel wreckage and bowling balls -- or are about to be.

On Monday, an aerial Gold Rush began. A stampede of more than 3,300 civilians had signed up to take the first-ever FAA licensing test to become licensed, for-hire drone pilots. In a year, one report noted, we may have more drone pilots than the 171,000 private pilots now on the books.

There's money in them thar skies, especially as the notion of our sense of entitled convenience increases in parallel with our overbooked waking hours and/or sheer laziness.

So: Those short, humorous tales I remember relaying here, not that long ago, about cases of beer or pizzas being drone-flown to customers, on tests? *Uh-huh*. Of Amazon testing a drone-force to deliver your stuff to you before the order email arrives?

Yep.

Of fire-fighters having to cease operations whenever some drone hobbyist decided to break what little standards or rules existed to go joy-swooping around?

Sure.

Put on your shoes and socks, kids -- we're in the future now, and it's time to hop out and see if we can still spot where home is.

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For-hire Rules? Oh, *of course*, there are *rules*. You have to be at least 16, pass a written test and background check, only fly in the daytime, and within sight, and no higher than 400 feet.

There are rules about almost anything. *All rules, of course, are constantly obeyed.* (Please keep calm, and hand me that white pillowcase -- it'll make a terrific *We surrender!* flag when we wave it madly at the drone, on its next strafing pass...)

I can hardly wait to find out when, or even if, drones will have automatic-avoidance systems built into them, to keep them from colliding into us, or one another, en route overhead with someone's anvil-collection order from *Burly Blacksmithing*, or when the 16-year-old pilot's eyes stray from the console to get more pizza, check a text, or make a call.

* * *

Hobbyists, by the way, don't have to follow the rules, and require no licensing. Perhaps I shouldn't have mentioned that until after you've had your usual handful of Valium.

* * *

Privacy, I'm just now thinking, is a curious thing. We try to obtain it and are upset when it is taken from us -- however, we voluntarily share more information about ourselves than ever before. (This cheers the NSA, FBI, and CIA to no end, BTW.)

Our personal sharing of information, on social media, say, can become *involuntary* sharing, when our data records at businesses, or voter data files, are hacked, and twits and technogeeks poke about and play peekaboo with our *formerly-private-electronic-us*

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Should we bring up warrantless wire-tapping right about here? (No, because sooner or later I will incorrectly invoke a Benjamin Franklin quote which almost everyone else wrongly uses, too. Besides, I need to rest those overtaxed veins in my Trumped-out temples.)

Back to drones: Since **all** the rules are **always** followed by **everyone**, and at **all** times, *we have absolutely nothing to fear about drones, except fear itself*, right?

I'm hitting Pause now: Well, I'll let you know, right after grinning Amazon parcels, stray cases of beer, and roof-repair construction drones start crashing through the ceiling. Who knows -- I might even have clothes on by then, after my shower. (Heads up to attractive women with swimming pools: 16-year-old drone pilots will be buzzing you, as soon as their new website, *BabeSwarmink*, is up and running, pulling pool data from Google maps and area cleaners.)

Privacy: ☐ **The New Wild West** -- *read the book, watch the movie, wear the t-shirt, enjoy the mug, and so on.* Take heart, though -- it a few years, it'll turn out you were quite the trend-setter, sporting all those sexy drone-prop scars as *stylishly* as you do! (And you know, come think of it -- why *should* hair be displayed evenly, all over the head, and not just in select clumps and patches? On you, it looks, *uhm*, trendy, sporty, even futuristic and *stylish* .)

* * *

Well, take heart. At least, when we turn on our water faucets in America, we get natural gas from fracking or leaded water from groundwater contamination and pollution. In some countries, they get hot or cold running oil! *No kidding!* ☐ *How imaginative!*

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In some countries, too, they have troubles remembering to make platforms skinny enough to let trains into the station, or making them low enough to allow people to exit station buildings through doors and not windows. Thank goodness, in this country, being geographically over-endowed, we have less to worry about, having allowed our train systems to wither and rot. *No kidding!* □ *How imaginative!*

More handy phrases to clutch at: *Progress marches on.* □ *Technology is our friend. Take no prisoners* -- but, remember, surrendering is just fine, so keep that pillowcase handy.

* * *

[Cough, cough]

In an attempt to end this piece on a more upbeat note, versus a beat-up one, I leave you with this improved thought for **Us, the Human Story**: *We were born, we took a shot at things, and, if we hadn't, no one would have ever thought to come up with fire extinguishers and bandages.*

On second thought, *never mind.*

Today's Resources:

Went looking for the origins of Pogo's famous quote, "We have met the enemy and he is us," and found this interesting:

<https://humorinamerica.wordpress.com/2014/05/19/the-morphology-of-a-humorous-phrase/>

Droning on about UAVs:

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<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-08-29/pilots-for-hire-cramming-for-test-as-the-age-of-drones-arrives>

Franklin on safety and security -- the real story:

<http://www.npr.org/2015/03/02/390245038/ben-franklins-famous-liberty-safety-quote-lost-its-context-in-21st-century>

Faucet oil:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-37231840>

Train-station oopsies:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-37223043>

and:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-trains-idUSKBN0E021720140520>