

Hope in a Time of Headaches and Leaf Blowers

Written by Alex Baer

Saturday, 24 November 2012 20:36 - Last Updated Saturday, 24 November 2012 21:48

The only problem with thinking critically, and having any hope, is that doing so within range of any other illogical humans instantly provides no shortage of subject matter able to receive profoundly heavy, unyielding criticism.

One supposes that the added problems of searing, splitting headaches and becoming radically entrenched in depression about the plight of the species are no picnics, either.

Unless one wins the lottery or is born a Dubya or Mitt, one must take the bad with the good in this life, we all learn quickly enough, and to greater and lesser degrees of satisfaction about this arbitrary arrangement of things.

We realize we've never been consulted for an opinion in the matter, yet are expected to live that reality all the way through -- knowing there are always more grindstones than we have noses in stock.

So, we try to take the bad with the good, and do the best we can with the whole mess. Then, we try very hard to find some portion of happiness in that equation, without confronting the sensation that it will always feel like settling for less.

Down that dark alley dwell thoughts no perky, positive persons should e'er be exposed to, lest their attitudes be debunked, downsized, downgraded, and left stranded, down in the mouth, down in the dumps...

Linked to the awareness of an unfortunate assortment of realizations, there's no telling how far down someone might spiral, becoming down at the heel, down and out, down on one's luck, down on life, and with no chance of getting one's down payment back on the Life Entrance Fee. (There's no receipt, just time payments.)

It's enough to leave one downtrodden in the downturns and downtrends, needing some downtime downtown. *Needing□ something.*

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We humans always have needed a little something to get us through this life, from before the time of the Great Pyramid right on up to the Great Comets of the past, and the promise of a couple more passing through next year.

Humor usually does the job pretty well, as in this exchange from the 1950 film *Harvey* with James Stewart heading the bill as Elwood P. Dowd:

- Dr. Sanderson: I think that your sister's condition stems from trauma.
- Elwood P. Dowd: From what?
- Dr. Sanderson: Uh, trauma. Spelled t-r-a-u-m-a. It means shock. There's nothing unusual about it. There's the "birth trauma," the shock of being born...
- Elwood P. Dowd: That's the one we never get over.

Yes, and twenty years later, while we were all still digesting that one, social comedian-critic-commentator George Carlin came along, making us think as we laughed, telling us he was a "birth survivor." It struck a note in us, and a deeper Truth-in-Laughing trend was begun.

As you probably know, George had many fine things to say about life and death, and everything else in between -- almost none of it appropriate or amusing to your garden variety evangelist, basic televangelist, standard preacher, or regular church-goer.

George would have said to hell with them: Let them go one place for *their* sense of hope and sensibility -- Fantasy and Myth -- and let the rest of us could go somewhere else for *ours* -- Truth and Humor.

George made a point of rejecting the state of hope -- he had no interest in how things turned out. Emotional detachment was his advice to us all, that we might have more options for life response, rather than maintain a small set of possibilities which fit inside a much smaller box of a reality made smaller each day.

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And I think: It's good to have teachers, reference points, and guides in the journey -- no matter how difficult some of the advice is to take.

In the end, we are, as Mark Twain, Will Rogers, and others have observed, all ignorant and stupid -- just on different things. All of this is difficult to come to grips with, in the broader, cosmic scheme of things, as well as in the gritty and nitty-gritty bits of daily life.

It is here, in regular life, where I discover the greatest blessings of hypocrisy, should anyone choose to select that route. Hypocrites have no need or requirement to justify their higher beliefs with their own thoughts and actions. It's the perfect *say-one-thing-do-another* lifestyle that usually works so well for churchgoing Republicans.

It sounds like a bogus Saturday Night Live spot: *With Hypocrisy Brand Belief Systems, there's no need to confront oneself or one's own actions, nor make any realignment toward truth or one's stated beliefs and convictions.*

Using that method, I guess it's possible to find a policy for Peace and Love for all mankind desirable, as is loving one's neighbor as oneself -- without any obligation to square those lofty goals against the reality of supporting the bankrupting of your country in trade for endless war, and while cursing your neighbors for various infringements and personal reasons.

In this one example, I find myself working through some of these same issues that hypocrites find easy to ignore. I still have some small measure of hope left for humanity, despite my being old enough to know better by now.

Also: My neighbors are enthusiastic, church-going Republicans. This automatically uses up 2-point-162493 strikes of the three strikes I usually and freely grant almost anyone, anywhere, anytime.

The fact that my neighbors are also in deeply passionate, overheated, perpetual, unbridled and sweaty lust with fossil fuels and all motors, and all motorized things -- and own every possible outdoor mechanized object made, up to and including a 3-ton tractor, with a whole family of fine

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tools and attachments --just takes it way over my preset limit of strikes allowable in this universe and timeline.

My neighbors achieved their record high score before any judging was done of their hard-of-hearing hollering back and forth outside all day and all night, or the comings and goings at all hours -- complete with boombox-vehicle serenades, the percussive counterpoint of slamming car doors, and the assorted soloists and choirs of laughers, revelers, and others who are convinced that behaviors at 3:19 and 2:04 a.m., should be identical to those regarded as normal at 2:04 or 3:19 p.m.

There are other things, but there's really no need to get into the various details that takes their final score up to 134, 952 strikes. It's probably enough to know they are way the heck *OUT*, without getting in to the various sideline circuses.

(Since you've asked, here's just *one* of the circuses: animals. They have a caged rooster on the front lawn that goes off, like an out-of-reach alarm clock you can't swat, starting at 5 a.m. and every 19 seconds thereafter, as an insurance snooze alarm. Then, there was the Braying Donkey Episode, somewhat akin to incoming mortar fire at any and all points of the day and night. Then, there were and are the multiple dogs allowed to roam and run free, or, stupidly -- even for having originated at the neighbors' place -- laying calmly down in the middle of the road, forcing traffic to stop and honk repeatedly to get them to move.)

And, of course, it's just splashing gasoline and napalm on the smoldering barbecue at this point to understand that saying anything about any of this will only make things worse. You know how this works.

The mere act of Saying Something makes you a complainer -- someone so incredibly unreasonable as to be beneath contempt and without any hope of salvage, no matter how logical the argument, how common-sense the observation and sense of clear violation, or how small the requested change in any outrageous behaviors.

(I had thought about calling them up each morning, minutes after being awakened 2 hours early, every day for 700 and more consecutive days, but, you know, the Sheriff -- that the neighbors know from church -- would soon be at the door with an arrest warrant, citing

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harassment.)

It's all fairly amusing, except for one thing: An item of infamy is also included in this mix, which only tears things to finer and finer shreds -- if one cared to dwell on such things and not put some on headphones and try to change the mind channel to some other program.

See, to put a fine point on things, it is my personal belief that leaf blowers are omens of planet-wide societal collapse, are a sign of the final curse of mankind, and clear evidence of the apocalypse, already unleashed upon us.

Consider: Leaf blowers use gasoline to make air move, at the expense of horrific noise and expelled pollutants and CO2 into the air. These outdoor torture devices have variable speed controls, which morons find irresistible and positively delight in, creating endlessly unpredictable rhythms of rising and falling sound -- short revs and long bursts, all mixed into its sonically sore symphony.

Whatever happened to rakes? Rakes are cheap. Rakes quietly move items from here to there, and allow easy pick-up and removal of debris or items from any area -- no gasoline required, no noise or other pollution. Blowers shove things out to the curb, where they are abandoned -- free to later blow back on that same patch of grass, so the cycle starts up again.

Nope, mandatory motors must have been legislated while we were away: *Everything must now have a motor, folks -- it's the law.*

Leaf blowers scree and howl, producing nothing but endless squalls of stink and noise -- especially when leaves and debris have become very wet, after a day or two of rain. When such stuff is wet, leaf blowers can't move *squat* from A to B -- not unless you are moron enough to stand over one tiny patch of ground, attempting to *dry out* the items in that patch, and the grass underneath, too, in order to recreate the miracle of dry-world friction occurring once again.

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This drying-out technique is one espoused by my neighbors, an approach that is mandatorily done by endlessly fussing with the speed control, as if you were Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*

impressing

chicks

by revving your motorcycle in unpredictable, calculated, knowing, sexually suggestive, two-stroke bursts --

Vrooom-vrooom. □ Vrooooooooooom-vrooom. Vrooom-vrooom.

It must be delightful having no one else occupying your own personal world and planet, no one else to stop and consider. Probably as much fun as making up your own rules, just as billionaires do. Without money, they say, one is *crazy*; enter piles of money and one is magically promoted as an *eccentric*.

Without money, it's grin-and-bear-it, and take-the-good-with-the-bad, take it or leave it --won't change anytime soon. And, yes, I'd like to know, too: Who agreed to these rules?

Taking in a wider view, again: It's November, and a few leaves have dared to fall on a patch of grass and driveway.... Obviously, it's not a pastoral scene of rest -- it's ample opportunity for the predictable onslaught of at least five solid hours of running and revving the leaf blower over the whole, *leaf-infected* area.

The urge to counter-bellow over the cacophony and neighbors' shouts back and forth to one another over their own racket, becomes strong, saying "It's November -- for your own God's sake, put the damn thing away, at least until spring!"

But: Saying Something immediately puts the Speaker of Those Things at fault, and risks being thought microscopically petty, without any patience, devoid of understanding, and a curmudgeon and grouch who is at core a dictatorial neighbor with some dark need to rule the neighborhood with an iron fist.

Today, the leaf blower -- tomorrow, the world!

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(If you shout that last part out real loud, in the voice of the Peter Sellers character, Dr. Strangelove, from the movie of the same name, it's far more satisfying to do, as tension relief and release. *Trust me*: It helps force and jump-start some laughter, which is always a better course than acid reflux, migraines, and other sure signs that you are helpless and have totally lost this round in the game of life.)

Hope is too much to ask, at such times, when the sheer stupidity of your fellow man is so glaringly obvious, phosphorescently florescent, the dim-bulbs still enormous bright under mammoth, lightning-arcng spotlights.

I know I am not the *brightest bulb in the drawer*, nor the *sharpest knife in the marquee*, but I'm pretty sure I could manage to suffer through winter and live if a few leaves were to fall on the lawn or driveway as winter closes in -- and not unleash the motorized dogs of war upon the scene.

I think the leaves, over here, on this side of the fence, need not fear an impending air strike or above-ground nuclear or fueled-air burst -- but could count on an opportunity to slowly return to nature in the traditional way, perfected over millennia: *decay*.

In many ways, I imagine I should be thrilled the neighbors are in love with gas and motors. It could always be worse.

(Hang on a sec, please, while I think how that could possibly be...)

Thanks for waiting. OK, the neighbors *could be* fond of flame-throwers and entranced with gleefully splashing around various eat-away acids, and totally sold on a grand finale of a white-phosphorous-and-thermite casserole for the Thanksgiving weekend.

Yes, I suppose that could be and would be worse -- although, at first thought, it still seems vaguely impossible the neighbors could possibly kick it up a notch any higher.

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Seeking counter-warfare opportunities in music and movies seems best -- anything one can turn up and make louder, to drown out the neighbors. This is how modern life operates, with so many of us jammed together in the sardine cans, all of us twitching our noisemakers.

Sorry about your luck, if you wanted a quiet day at home. *You want peace and quiet in an era of noisemakers, go win the lottery and buy yourself an island somewhere, Mac.*

It's a cooperative effort, this life, no matter how much we might prefer otherwise. Although what is far less clear is how one is supposed to successfully cooperate with psychos and sociopaths.

You birth survivors over there -- help out those still suffering from birth trauma, OK? □ And, you realists -- try to prop up those who have varying degrees of hope left. □ Triage, people, triage!

Giving advice is easy, a real snap -- plus, you can learn lots about life that way.

At least, that approach provides me *plenty* of time to thumb through these military surplus catalogs, and learn that all sorts of interesting things are available...

... but, for the right amount of money and with the right connections.

Crap. I just realized we've come full circle -- back to winning the lottery again. Oh, well -- the headphones are right here, and I wouldn't mind my 34th screening of *Dr. Strangelove*.

It's certainly a strange love we have to have for our fellow man. And, a strange patience, too.

Great Comets of 2013: http://www.alamogordonews.com/ci_21649181/two-possible-great-comets-coming-2013

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The Quotable *Harvey*: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0042546/quotes>

Carlin on living life and having hope: [NOT "family friendly" or "office-safe," as the euphemisms go, as you no doubt already expect]: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9KKUfLeSPQw>

Dr. Strangelove on wiki: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dr._Strangelove

Dr. Strangelove on imdb: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057012/>

As a public service, we held off listing this one until *after* Thanksgiving: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SU8iRYbnAb0>

Thermite vs. liquid nitrogen, and, a car: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdCsbZf1_Ng

Finding laughter in almost anything: <http://www.despair.com/demotivators.html>