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BY JONATHON M. DONAHUE

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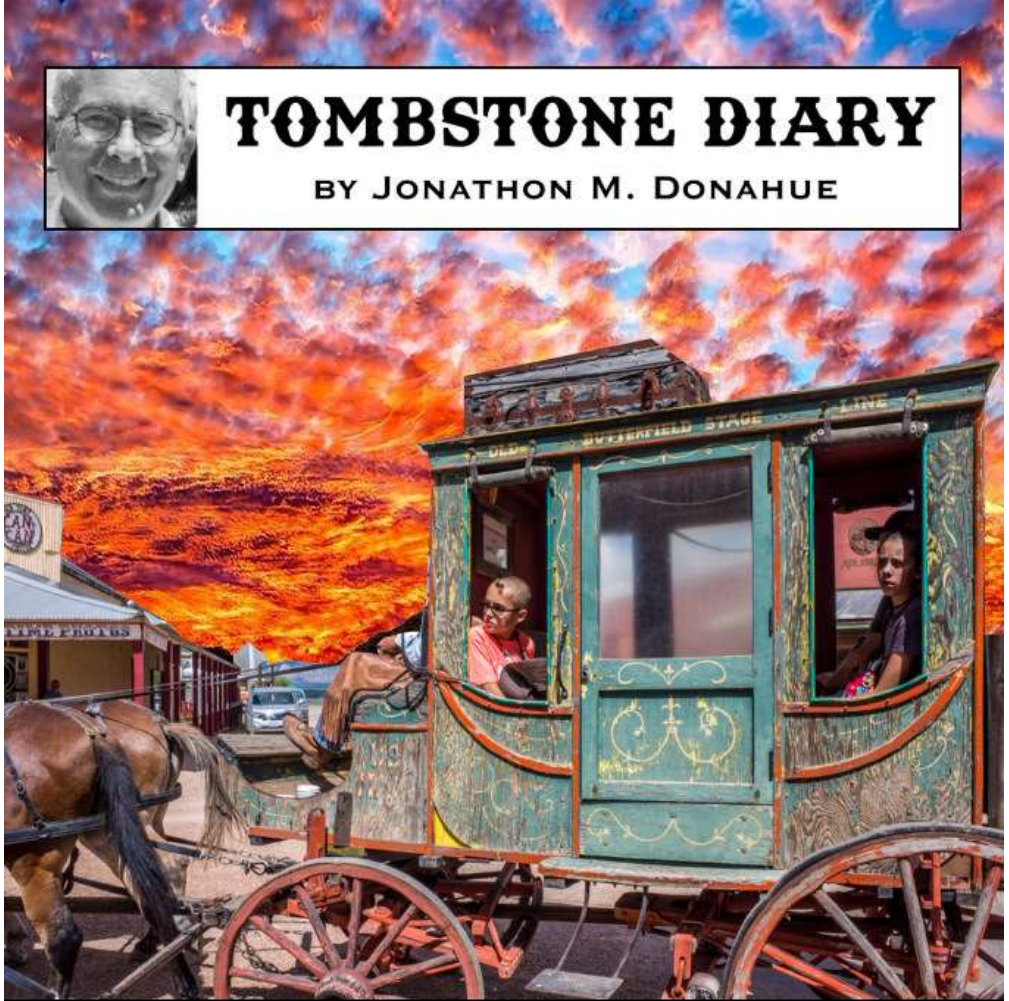
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TOMBSTONE DIARY

BY JONATHON M. DONAHUE



**Columns from
THE TOMBSTONE NEWS**



Introduction

I live in the heart of a secret oasis that you've probably heard of, but never visited – Tombstone, Arizona Territory, 'The Town Too Tough Too Die'. Made famous by a 30-second gunfight in October, 1881 – in the middle of an amazing silver boom that made my town the richest place in the West for a few short years.

Tombstone is special. Air so clear you can see 40 miles away. Tonight with a new moon, the planets Jupiter and Saturn to the south, plus Mars to the east are easily visible to the naked eye. Air that clear. Plus clean, pure water from springs in the Huachuca mountains, 25 miles away.

Lots to do, particularly if you are retired. Many civic improvement groups, plus theatrical and



historical societies to join. The past at every turn: a dirt-strewn main street with stagecoaches and riders on horseback. Classic long-bar saloons and tempting restaurants. Beautiful wood, brick, and adobe buildings carefully preserved. Unlike the new suburbs in the outside world, there is texture here. The substance and grit of the past.

We are a friendly town. We welcome strangers, not just for their tourism dollars but out of genuine interest in where they are from, how long they will stay, and what can we do to help them have a special and memorable visit. Like when you walk down the Allen Street boardwalk at sunset on a warm evening, with the faint streetlights coming on and suddenly the air – shimmers – and you are back in 1881, you are there, then, and the evening awaits. Enjoy!



Colonel Be passes on

2020-11-18

This is an obituary. Colonel Be Trinh, nicknamed 'Brown', passed away two days ago, struck down by the Covid-19 virus in Chicago. His daughter Lan married my brother-in-law David, and this was the first time that anyone in my extended family fell victim to Covid. Colonel Be Trinh was a good man. He had two brothers, and left his wife, two sons, and three daughters. A Vietnamese Army officer back then, he fought alongside US forces until the fall of Saigon. Got his family on a fishing boat, put out to sea, no food or water. They lasted four days before having to go back to land. Where he was arrested and imprisoned for 10 years. And then somehow they all came to the States and ended up in Chicago.



Covid-19. David and Lan were tested yesterday. It took two hours waiting in line. It will take six more days before they get the results, which means the Colonel's funeral may have to be put off this Friday. Covid explodes like a grenade. Lan's brother-in-law and sister and nephew are all positive. The nephew got it at Southern Illinois University. A typical American family, probably like yours, taking casualties in the dark, even after ten months because so many of our politicians won't even ask folks to wear a cheap paper mask, like Governor Ducey did this Wednesday. But real public safety plans? Don't count on it. You're on your own with this one. Not much going on out there in Covid-prevention land. But recent French research suggests that a simple flu shot can cut the risk of death from



Covid in half. And a new Dutch study, first reported by Scientific American on Oct. 27, found that healthcare workers who got the flu vaccine were 40% less likely to test positive for the coronavirus. So go to our Copper Queen Health Clinic and get a free flu shot!

Sadly, we have people with Covid-19 right now in Tombstone, quarantining themselves for two weeks. There will be more, hopefully not you. To avoid being stuck at home and cut off from friends and neighbors, wear a mask. Simple and inexpensive. They work – look at Taiwan, New Zealand, South Korea. They work. Because Covid is coming our way. California, Utah, and New Mexico all quarantine visitors now. There are field hospitals, tents! in the streets of El Paso. So wear a mask, and keep your family and loved



ones alive. Yes, it is particularly dangerous for older people with other health problems. But look around – that's us. Tombstone is sort of an old-age home without walls, isn't it? And Covid is nasty. You don't want to spend your last days in great pain, choking out on a respirator. Although my brother-in-law David tells me that they gave Colonel Be morphine near the end, so that he could breathe easier, and then not have to breathe at all.



Red sky in the morning

2020-8-12

"Red sky in the morning, sailor take warning."
The dawn sky was a bright scarlet red on Wednesday, but we are 500 miles from the vast Pacific, there are no sailors here, and so far very little rain. Which might be a good thing, because of all the mysterious seeds from China that are showing up in our our post office boxes. Folks around here are probably planting them, but without heavy monsoon rains who knows what will blossom soon?

Well, the Internet knows. You can find answers to anything on the Internet. Which is a truly new thing, since your counterpart in Zimbabwe has absolutely the same access to knowledge as you



do, which may be an issue for the next generation coming up. Problem -- it is very hard to tell whether information is accurate and truthful. Instead, we get wild fantasies like QAnon rants about Hillary Clinton's Satan-worshipping pedophile ring kidnapping and eating children to harvest life-extending chemicals from their blood. Honest to God, there are crazies out there that actually believe this stuff. The internet lets them all bounce off each other and amplifies their shared insanities. Same with the hundreds of thousands of different explanations about the mysterious Chinese seeds. Which turns out to be an online e-commerce practice called 'brushing', using fake transactions to enhance the reputations of online merchants. Sending out thousands of orders of low-value merchandise to random recipients apparently increases the



sender's reputation as an online fulfillment company, allowing it to attract more customers. If this is confusing, don't worry. The Wall Street Journal thinks it is ridiculous, and so do I. But reality is not half as much fun as imagining those seeds growing into huge two-story-high tumbleweeds, alien Chinese spores from space choking the streets of The Town Too Tough To Die.

Over the last 200 years, it may be that disruptive new communication technologies lead to widespread misinformation, chaos, and war. Steam-engine printing, before the Napoleonic Wars. The telegraph, before the Civil War. Newspapers that could print photographs, before the Spanish-American War and World War I. Film and radio, before World War II. Television,



before the Korean and Vietnam Wars. And now the Internet, before the Gulf and Afghan Wars and before what may be yet to come. Which luckily is another day's story, and not one you'll read about here.

Because I looked at my calendar the other day, and realized I've written this column for two years now. Time to move on, to get back to my artwork. With this, sincere thanks to all of you for reading it and for the advice and comments you've made. And also thanks to Dusty the owner/editor, and Samantha the reporter/desktop publisher, for their support and encouragement. The Tombstone News is one of the few independent small-town papers left. Subscribe to it. Support it. Or all you'll have left is the internet and those Chinese seed stories. Am



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signing off now, with a column archive
at <http://jon404.com>. Enjoy!



No monsoon this year

2020-7-28

Japanese scientist Masayuki Ikeda says that the next Ice Age will begin in 100,000 years. Thanks, Yuki. Because this evening I'm driving fast out of town toward Bisbee. Not very fast, but fast enough to get out from under the rainshowers falling on Tombstone. Off to the west, an orange sunset glows above the deep purple hills beneath a dark gray sky. Going the other way, more ominous clouds, and flash after flash of heat lightning with dramatic virgas touching down out on the Dragoons. Raining hard on those lovely Coronado National Forest campgrounds off Middlemarch Road, which was the Middle Pass over the mountains back when. Rain there, but not here on historic Highway 80 south of town.



One of our old National Trails, the 'Broadway of America'. And since I'm driving top-down tonight with the beautiful warm evening air all around, I'm really glad that scientists – at least Japanese ones – are pretty sure it won't get cold for a while yet.

Monsoon season. Not that much rain, but we still have another month to go. Need rain, much more rain to relieve our mega-drought. So far, not near enough, ask any of the cattle ranchers who were here before the tourists came and will still be here after they leave. It's not like back East, in Missouri where it rains a lot and you can graze three cows per acre. Here, the CCC outfit -- the old Chiracahua Cattle Company -- found out back in 1885 that you could only graze one cow per 150 acres... if you had normal rainfall, about 14



inches. And for several years now, a mega-drought, with farmers drawing down the natural water table in the Sulphur Springs valley. It's a beautiful but fragile land. Pray for more rain.

Warm rain, during the monsoon season from June 15 to September 30. Moisture from the Pacific, sweeping up and over Trump's black fence into Cochise County. Blissfully warm rain. And for this native San Franciscan, unimaginably warm. To live in a place like this with warm rain is an indescribable luxury, since I was conditioned for the first 18 years of my life to accept the damp chill cold of the rain and mist and fog of my native city as normal. Here? The warm monsoon rain is wonderful.

The strongest predictor for a heavy monsoon is



serious El Niño and La Niña weather in the Pacific. Not happening this year, and I am not the only person to notice this. Let me leave you with my favorite Facebook quote so far this summer, from Daniel Torres Scardaccione of Mario's Bakery on Allen Street --

"For a year that started with Australian brushfires and a near life experience with WWIII, and includes such great moments as COVID, Murder Hornets, and the downfall of Western Society... I am awfully disappointed in this season's monsoon." Me too, Danny!



God's flash cube

2020-7-21

Light, speed, distance. Top down, driving into a fiery sunset out past the Border Patrol station on the road to Benson. Towering clouds, golden-orange like the molten copper that used to pour out of the smelters down at Douglas. Higher up, the last of the sun yielding golden fleece in the deep blue evening sky, a treasure that Jason and the Argonauts would have killed for. Turning back to town, and off to the east all is dark black, occasional brilliant-white heat lightning, God's flash cube and I miss the little Kodak Instamatics that took great pictures without any effort at all.

Speed. Easy enough on our Covid-deserted roads to drive over 100, or if I had the new McLaren



parked outside the OK Café the other morning, over 200. But speed is an illusion. It really all depends on how close you are to whatever is on the side of the road. 100 mph is scary fast if you are on a narrow track with hedges close on either side. But on the freeway, not so bad, since President Eisenhower designed every mile of every freeway to be safe at 90 mph -- wide lanes, gentle bends. And then there's Charleston Road, to split the difference. Deceptively dangerous, curves cambered the wrong way, with the road actually trying to push you off it. And it will, when you are tempted by the frisson of speed to ignore both the changing speed limits and the suggested speed signs. If we ever had a road race between Tombstone and Sierra Vista, there would be a lot of cars crashed in the mesquite.



Distance. At the extreme, if you were going only 10 mph just one foot away from the weeds at the side of the road, the roadside would blur with the sensation of speed every bit as much as if you were doing 100 out on the road itself. 10 mph? That's horseback, 1881. And going only 10 mph on Charleston Road ensures that it will take much longer to get to Sierra Vista. Oh joy! Longer, before having to deal with the crowded Wal-Mart parking lot, or the crowds of Covid-infected people coughing at each other in Safeway. At 10 mph, I can delay my arrival by more than an hour. Makes for a thoroughly enjoyable trip, surrounded by the vast sky, with the faraway mountains a soft gray in the distance, and the raincurtain virgas teasing the parched earth with the promise of the thunderous monsoon soon to come. Of course, 10 mph is a little fast. Too fast,



since the folks at Disneyland learned years ago to limit the Autotopia cars to less than 9 mph, and they haven't lost any kids since. I started driving there when I was 11, and now 65 years later I think it's time to revert to childhood, under the azure sky and all the clouds with the Tombstone Hills on either side of the lovely open road winding down to our quiet San Pedro river.



TestaRossa and Solstice

2020-7-15

With a heavy rain finally falling last Tuesday, found myself comparing a sports-racing car from many years ago with the little Pontiac Solstice I bought recently. The racer was a red 1955 Ferrari 500 TR, with the initials standing for TestaRossa -- redhead -- as Ferrari cylinder heads back then and still today are painted a bright red. In the mid-1960s, I drove that car twice in Connecticut. It was old even then, no longer competitive. Like the Pontiac Solstice, it had a 2.5 liter four-cylinder engine, the same Lampredi-designed engine used in the type 553 Formula 1 Ferrari. With horsepower and torque specs very close to the Solstice, 60 years later. But since the Ferrari weighed only 1500 pounds – 1300 pounds less



then the Solstice – it was much, much faster. If you have 10 HP or more for every 100 pounds a car weighs, it will be fast. At 2800 lbs and 177 HP, the Solstice is – not fast. Later models had a supercharger and 260 HP... getting there, but still not near the old Ferrari for power-to-weight.

And then there's the real difference – the power band. As engine speed increases, horsepower and torque both go up. If you look at their progress on a graph, there's a point where the lines cross or come very close together, at a fairly high RPM. And when racing, if you keep the car's engine speed within 500 RPM on either side of that crossing point, you'll be going about as fast as you can. This was hard to do on that old Ferrari, because you had to get the engine up to about 6500 RPM to get into the power band. Max 188



HP came in at 7000 RPM, max torque 151 ft-lbs at 6000. There was always the danger that if you over-revved while shifting gears, the motor would fall apart. Or if you fell down below 6000 RPM, you just wouldn't be competitive. By contrast, an American V-8 motor from the 1950s developed its maximum power around 3000 RPM. Less stressed, more durable, which finally led to Ford knocking off Ferrari at Le Mans in 1966.

That old 500 TR Ferrari was a racing car that you could drive on the street. The Solstice is a street car that you can race on a track. Won SCCA classes SSB and T2 in 2006 and 2007, beating the Mazda MX-5s. But as a street car, its 4-cylinder 2.4 liter engine is very different than the old Ferrari's. A broader power band at lower RPMs for street driving -- max HP 177 at 6600 RPM,



max torque 166 ft-lbs at 4800 RPM. And you don't have to worry about over-revving the motor, since the automatic transmission TCM control prevents that. Like most automatics, it also shifts gears about one-half second faster per shift than you can with a manual transmission. And if you change it from D for Drive to a lower gear, you'll kick the engine higher into the power band, you'll get maximum power, and all of a sudden your mild and boring little vehicle becomes what it truly is – a modern sports car.

Outside, the rain is falling. Sitting on my porch, watching cars sluicing by on Safford Street. Cars that are so much better now than back when. Life is good. Time for my nap.



GM's orphans

2020-7-7

Today, a tale of two fascinating American cars, endearing in their imperfections. Both made in those years in and around the Great Recession. Both from General Motors, with their production canceled by order of President Obama as part of the GM restructuring. He was not a car guy. Drove a Ford Fusion before he went to the White House, generic, boring.

2010. We went for a weekend to Cambria, north of Santa Barbara on the coast near Hearst Castle. And were almost run over by a crowd of extremely excited Mary Kay sales ladies erupting from a hotel ballroom. We followed them out to the parking lot. The head saleslady had a drop-



dead beautiful pale pink Cadillac XLR two-seat roadster. My wife loved the little XLR, and I ended up buying one for her, a 2005 model. But not pink, as GM's deal with Mary Kay was that all their pink cars were taken back and repainted. Our XLR was a light gold color. Very dramatic edgy styling, a powerful Northstar V-8 engine on a Corvette frame lengthened 14 inches for a smoother ride, and about 2 inches higher so older people could get in and out more easily. That's if they could find the manual door lock release when the electric power failed, which it did for one older gentleman who unfortunately died, cooked in the car on a hot day. The metal top folded itself back into the trunk, and I was always worried that it might not quite get there – but it did. The last 2009 Cadillac XLR models were supercharged, very fast, and are highly collectible.



Fast forward to today, my first drive in a little bright red 2008 Pontiac Solstice roadster. Another model axed during the 2009 GM bailout. Like the XLR, a car with great styling but a very limited market. Back in 2009, I called Bob Lutz, the GM CEO, asking him to please save the Solstice by re-badging it as a Buick Skylark. Lutz had rushed the little car from concept to production just before the Crash hit. It was his design, his baby. But he responded that no, there was no bankruptcy wiggle room from the Feds, that they weren't car people, and that his Solstice sadly was toast, along with the Pontiac, Oldsmobile, Saturn, and Hummer divisions.

Beep-beep-beep! A first day's drive, if I could only get the Solstice started, only to be informed by 17-



year-old Maya that I had to wait for it to beep before turning the key. She has an older Pontiac sedan with the same ignition setup. And then off I went, falling right in love with my new little bright red convertible. Like the Cadillac XLR, it is not a perfect design. It has flaws – both of these cars had very small trunks. But both designs are very – American. Unique, exciting, each in their own way, rough edges and all. They are called GM's orphans -- abandoned in the Great Recession that also ended the Chevy Volt hybrid gas-electric car, which is another day's story. Beep!



Radioactive Thunderbirds

2020-6-30

Heard from my historian friends how Parisian physicist Marie Curie went through here around 1908, traveling after the death of her husband Pierre, searching for pitchblende containing radioactive thorium. Brought some of that radium stuff she was testing in a big Louis Vuitton case, stayed at the Arlington Hotel and somebody ran off with it. Since then we've had nothing but trouble. Found a giant radiated scorpion in my bathtub the other day, the ants in my yard are so big that the earth shakes as they walk about, and the deer at twilight gallop down Safford Street like thundering M1 Abrams main battle tanks.



It's a fact -- live here in Tombstone and you are up close and personal with nature, like the killer javelinas attacking our garbage bins at every turn. Birds -- flocks of mourning doves waking us up at dawn with their melodic cacaphony. Sparrows and starlings and bright red cardinals, so numerous they blot out the sun. Cooper's hawks larger than Thanksgiving turkeys. And Tombstone's secret, hidden for all these years from the folks at Arizona Office of Tourism -- the giant pterodactyls that hover over Charleston Road, trying to pick off visitors on Harleys or those teeny little compact cars that come here from California. Indians -- oops, Native Americans -- called the pterodactyls Thunderbirds. Still here, hatching huge eggs in abandoned mineshafts. They have good taste -- you can see them fly off with Racquel Welch in



'One Million Years BC'. Cowboys brought one down near the San Pedro River in 1890, the Epitaph reported on April 26 back then. Chased it on horseback, shot it down with their Winchesters, and cut off a wing tip to bring into town.

It's all Marie Curie's fault. Doesn't matter how much good her X-rays did for people, since we here on Goose Flats mesa are still paying the cost for all that lost radium. And so far none of the fine gentlemen and lady running for mayor have addressed this issue. Shocking! Anyway, it's election time soon. I never say whom I'm voting for, but will make an exception this year. I hope we can get past Republican vs Democrat politics and all vote for Tombstone's own Lori Kilpatrick for the District 2 Board of Supervisors. One of us,



to represent us out there. Need that.

Curious -- have you noticed that the land around here has already turned green – even before the monsoon rains arrive? The high desert is mysterious. Soon enough, you'll see an emerald-green transcendence that would make the Irish themselves turn green with envy, but yellow-green envy like those little Kias the Thunderbirds prey on. Cochise County -- The Land of Legends, all around us with seductive tempting vergils, and soon torrential sheets of rain and crashing lightning before the brilliant rainbows arc across that deep blue sky with the towering white clouds. An infinity of rainbows, always in the opposite direction from the sun. Coming soon, to a landscape near you!



SCADA, CDOs, and CLOs

2020-6-24

Fires in the hills, smoke rolling down I-10 over Benson. With the temperature going up to 101° today I'm very glad that we recently secured and spent \$1 million in grant money to upgrade our city water system. You get a lot for \$1 million. New city wells and pumps, and high-tech SCADA water management. Being 1000' below the springs in the Huachucas sure helps for water pressure, and the newly-relined 1.3 million gallon reservoir goes a long way to keeping us safe if fire breaks out down here in town. New pipes, new hydrants, and our volunteer firefighters are now on duty 24/7. For such a small town, we are batting way above average for fire protection.



Where there's smoke there's fire. In the financial markets now, plumes of smoke drifting up into the humid summer air above Wall Street. Smoke from smoldering mountains of corporate debt. For more than five years, both large and small companies have borrowed heavily thanks to the incredibly low interest rates set to keep the Great Recession recovery going. And Wall Street, sensing a chance to do a rerun of the CDOs that helped cause the last downturn, has now shifted to packaging corporate debt into new multilayer instruments called CLOs – Collateralized Loan Obligations. CLOs buy up risky corporate loans and turn them into supposedly safe bonds that are bought by banks, insurance firms and other global investors. Where the older CDO packages were based on mortgage debt, the new CLOs are made from the amazing \$1.2 trillion pile of



corporate debt – far, far larger than the home mortgage debt that triggered off the last recession. Huge.

Not that anybody worried this time around. The new CLOs are safer, with a much thicker padding of good debt at their top layers, and less bad debt at the bottom. But then along came the Coronavirus and a wave of bankruptcies. Suddenly, company after company – brand-name companies like Neiman Marcus, Hertz, J.Crew and JCPenney – went under. Debt from these "good" companies became bad debt overnight. Diversification hasn't helped. Industries like retailers and airlines were hit hard by the sudden shock of the coronavirus. Few industry groups were spared. The big rise in corporate borrowing in recent years magnified the Coronavirus impact



because companies entered the downturn with heavier debt loads. Since early March, about 30% of debt packaged into U.S. CLOs has been downgraded or placed on watch for possible downgrades, meaning it's going to get a lot harder real soon for companies to borrow for new equipment or new facilities.

The shockwaves, the smoke from the underlying CLO fire, is drifting out over the markets right now. Investors are starting to run for the hills, dumping their CLO positions. We'll see what happens through the summer – but the amount of shaky CLO leveraged debt is huge beyond belief. \$1.3 trillion. A trillion is a thousand billion, and a billion is a thousand million. Stay tuned on this one, folks.



Nurse Maya looked so beautiful

2020-6-17

I am dreaming. Young Dr. Donahue, the famous surgeon, picks up his pentatomic scalpel and carefully removes the last Covid-19 virus particle from the right lung of his patient. "Oh, Dr. Jon," exclaims Maya, the lead RN on the operating team. "It was so small. And only you could see it!"

In real life, sad to say, you can't see it. Follow this: One millimeter is .04", there being 25 millimeters in an inch. A micron is 1/1000 of a millimeter. The smallest dust particle that we can see, floating, dancing in mid-air on a golden shaft of summer sunlight, is 25 microns wide. Below that, particles are too small to see. Which is a shame for my young Doctor alter-ego, because a



Covid-19 virus particle is only 1/10 of a micron in size. Can't see it at all. Darn.

Nurse Maya looked so beautiful in her stylish yet protective Prada N95 surgical mask. We are catching a break here, because that teeny Covid-19 virus particle has to hitchhike on expelled water vapor, like when we cough or sneeze, to infect someone else. Her N95 mask protects against airborne particles down to one micron in size, smaller than the larger virus-plus-phlegm particles coughed out by an infected person. Particles that only travel 6 feet, some say up to 9 feet, before falling to the floor. And even if we only have those generic regular masks that Gov. Ducey wants us all to wear, we are in pretty good shape as long as we stay 6 feet away from other people. Right? Really?



Maybe not. Particles are one thing, but then there are microparticles. Recent research published by the National Academy of Sciences shows clearly that normal speech can emit thousands of oral fluid virus-containing microparticle droplets per second... aerosol transmission of tiny little droplets less than 10 microns (1/100 of a millimeter) in size. They can hang in the air inside a room just like dust particles, floating in mid-air even longer, as they are so much smaller, and invisible. These microparticles can hold enough virus to transmit Covid-19. And we emit these droplets not only through coughing or sneezing, but through talking, especially loud talking, yelling or screaming. Also through laughing, and, sadly, through singing. A single cough or sneeze can produce 100,000



microparticle droplets.

Scientists are saying today that you may want to avoid meetings in small rooms that last more than 30 minutes. One virus-bearing microparticle probably won't result in infection, but intake of several can. And the more people there are in a small enclosed space, the more microparticles there are in the air.

Takeaway? Most of us, like me, hate masks. But with the recognition of microparticle infection, you'll want to keep wearing it when you are around other people. Sure, the total number of infections in Cochise County is small. But it is rapidly increasing, each day now. Going to Fry's? Wal-Mart? Play it safe. Wear that mask. You don't want to end up on a ventilator!



In praise of Lazy Daze

2020-6-10

I am waxing my 1991 Lazy Daze RV. The old paint, untouched for several years, now gleams bright and shiny with its original depth of color. Made well, 30 years ago. With design elements from even earlier times, like wing vents on the front windows for smokers, before air conditioning. The main front windows roll up and down with crank handles. Like most Class C RVs then and now, my 23' Lazy Days is built on a small truck/heavy van chassis, here a Chevrolet C-30. The engine is huge – 454 cubic inches. It starts immediately at the turn of the key, same as any older Rolls-Royce. GM used throttle-body fuel injection on the 454 V-8 that year, coupled with a splendid four-speed automatic



transmission. The body, made at the Lazy Daze factory in Pomona, California, remains tight and squeak-free. All the little things still work: water, stove, air conditioning, bathroom. Simpler back then, probably because slide-outs were not yet invented, with all their complications.

The day heats up. It will be 94° by 11 AM, up from just 64° at first light about 5 AM. Summer is here so fast this year, and you can see why Hemingway got up before daylight for many years when he lived in Cuba, writing for several hours in the cool, then catching up on his sleep before evening came and it was time to hit the bars.

As I wax the old paint, I think about the recent protests. About the need to create truly equal opportunity for all the kids coming up, or we will



continue to waste huge amounts of human talent in a world that the Chinese, Russians, and Europeans would love to dominate. There is so much more money to be made when folks are equal. Here's a personal example – when I started in ad agencies back in the 1960s, there were no blacks. No latinos. A highly paid all-white workspace. We never thought about it. Never, even though many of us were very conscious about supporting the civil rights movement. But both we and the older people running the ad agencies totally missed the opportunity to develop and sell into the nonwhite marketplace. After all, we didn't have to. Because back then, times were better than they are now. People didn't have to work two jobs to get by. There was much more disposable income, enough for Mom to stay home with the kids. But today is different,



with far less of an economic cushion. If we fail to create real and honest equality of opportunity, the Chinese are going to eat our lunch. They are working hard to displace the dollar as international trade's key currency, and then reduce us to beggars at the gates of their new Silk Road economic empire. Look at the 'Chinese Professor' video on Youtube. Unless we are all truly equal and pull together, that's the future. And your next RV will be a Winnebago made in Wuhan instead of Wisconsin.



Cochise at China Peak

2020-6-5

On a clear day you can see forever. That's the way the old song goes, and at 7,125' high in the Dragoon Mountains at the top of China Peak, who could say it isn't so? Certainly not Chokonen Apache leader Cochise, Shi-Ka-Cheis, the Oak, drinking clear sweet water in 1870 from the small brook just down the mountain slope at what became China Camp years later, with the San Juan Mine opening in 1913.

At the peak, we are one with the sky, with the land 40 miles away sharp and distinct on all sides, a true 360° panorama. All the way to the Huachuca Mountains to the southwest and to the Whetstones to the northwest. To the towering



Chiracahuas, rising to 9,000' above Sulphur Springs Valley off to the east from our aerie in the Dragons. Signed my name on a scrap of paper in the little visitors' logbook container, took a photo of the old mountaintop geodesic survey marker, and then, regretfully, Jeff started his Polaris 900 RZR, and down we went, back to Tombstone, back to my home in the vastly different lower world.

Jeff Brown is Canadian, staying here this summer with his beautiful Roberta until the virus clears up and they can go back without being quarantined. He is an adventurer. They love going up in our hills and mountains, going along increasingly difficult dirt tracks that suddenly can turn to boulder-strewn passages to unexplored places. I had never been on an ATV before, and



its ability -- with an experienced driver like Jeff -- was simply astounding. Small, lightweight, agile.

Jeff's RZR has at least 20" independent suspension travel on each wheel. Which lets you -- slowly -- climb over huge boulders with the little RZR tipped at a seemingly impossible angle -- impossible to car drivers like me, anyway. But it didn't take long to relax and enjoy the ride, as earlier we had turned off Middlemarch Road to go straight up Forest Road 697, up the mountainside in the Coronado National Forest. Which, as you ascend, actually has far more scrub oaks than below. Jeff's ATV has grab bars for the passenger, and 4-point racing seatbelts that hold you securely in place. It also has EPS electronic power steering, 30" very offroad tires, a full roll cage, and Walker-Evans fully adjustable racing



shocks. Plus a winch, which I imagine connects to the Good Sam helicopter that comes to pull you out of places that Jeeps just can't get to.

Abandoned mines, closed since 1952, high up near the concrete slabs at what was Gordon's Camp in 1913, now called China Camp. Enough zinc, lead, and silver back back then to drive wagons straight up the rocky slope to get at it. People lived up here, too far away from town to go back and forth each day. The San Juan mines, all abandoned now, dangerous rotting planks over deadfalls inside the dark crumbling tunnels. But springtime outside, with a profusion of colorful wildflowers blooming amidst the tailings, new life in the soft breeze on this beautiful day in the Dragoons. Thanks Jeff!



Diana the Huntress strikes Sierra Vista

2020-5-29

Earl and Meg were found on the floor of their Sierra Vista home two nights ago. Both unconscious, but still alive, then taken to TMC in Tucson, and tested for Covid-19. She had it, he didn't. So they tested them again and he came up positive the second time. So far, as I write this, they live. Our St Paul's Episcopal deacon Heather was able to visit through the glass windows of their separate ground-floor rooms in TMC's Covid-19 section, with their beds turned so they could see her, and speak with their nurses holding the phone. Meg can talk, barely. Earl cannot, but he is conscious.

They are older. Old. He was on oxygen before the



virus hit. She is frail. They came every Sunday from Sierra Vista to our church here in Tombstone, up until two months ago, when the church was closed. Earl read passages from the Bible, and carried the offering plate down the aisle. They are both devout Christians, and after they went in the hospital, Heather sent out an MP4 audio-file prayer for their recovery. We listened to it in our separate places, praying that God has mercy and keeps them off the ventilators.

Before the time of Jesus, there were other gods. And it may be that the Roman goddess Diana the Huntress, wakening from her long slumber, is now stalking Sierra Vista and our Cochise County. Cold, merciless, unforgiving. Notching arrows to her bow, pulling the shafts back past



her ear, letting them fly into the lungs of the old and weak and helpless. Look at the gilded bronze statue 'Diana of the Tower', by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and you'll get the idea.

Sometimes life isn't fair. Earl, retired after a full career as a U.S. Army Colonel, and then married to Meg for so many years. Both in the hospital today because the government he served for so many years is now shockingly incompetent. No accurate tests. No test strips. No contact tracing. The old sacrificed to keep the economy going. To keep the stock market at record highs, as Covid-19 stalks fresh victims daily on the streets and stores and public places of our hastily re-opened towns and cities.

They tell me at church that we are made in the



image of God, and yet we continually elect politicians without common sense or compassion. Surely, our Savior is not as greedy as those in Washington profiting from rake-offs on the trillions of dollars spent on the pandemic. And they tell me at church that the 100,000 newly dead are God's will, and that God moves in mysterious ways. This may be so. But I'd rather have sufficient N95 masks, accurate Covid-19 tests, and a proven vaccine... so that our prayers to bring this to an end are answered sooner rather than later. From Proverbs 10:25: "As the whirlwind passeth, so the wicked are no more, but the righteous are an everlasting foundation."



Overclass

2020-5-22

The century-long struggle between capitalism and communism is over. In the United States, China, Russia, and Europe, societies have merged the old "isms" into something similar to both, yet quite different.

We are in a new world run by an educated and highly skilled overclass, increasingly separated from an unskilled and poorly educated underclass. This cuts across race and politics. Since most votes come from the underclass, successful politicians – like Trump, Pelosi, Putin, and Xi – all present themselves as "just like you" even while they are very, very rich with their children anointed as leaders of the new



managerial elites that run societies around the world.

The managerial elites cluster in and around key hub cities. New York and London for finance, San Francisco for high-tech, plus Tokyo, Moscow and Beijing as national power centers. The cost of living in these hub cities is shockingly high compared to elsewhere – to the agriculture and raw resource development areas, like ours. Overclass citizens in the hub cities make a lot of money. Average income in San Francisco is \$103,000. Costs are also high – a one-bedroom apartment in San Fran will run you at least \$3500 a month. Consequently, there are less and less butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers – middle class folks – in the hub cities. You have the extremely wealthy overclass, and their



underclass servants. The servants are often underpaid illegal immigrants with few skills, but protected by their hub overclass masters with "sanctuary city" laws.

Governments in the advanced countries portray themselves as democratic. Politicians proclaim that anyone can get ahead by learning more skills in the subsidized universities, and that anyone can vote. This is true, but in reality overclass children get ahead, while underclass children do not. Overclass parents will do anything to make sure their kids stay overclass – even bribing university officials to make sure that Skippy and Biffy get a place to guarantee their future. They know that learning highly marketable skills is all that will keep their children from falling out of the overclass down into the underclass, from



which there is no coming back. Advanced skills and family money ensure a small, permanent overclass always located in the key hub cities, or in their nearby affluent suburbs.

Maybe. Because there are cracks in the picture window. After just a few COVID-19 months, large companies have learned that they can send everybody home. 4G and cable-or-satellite Wi-Fi are more than fast enough to handle the fairly simple data that the overclass produces. It's not like your average executive is making 3D VFX videos. Today, it is possible to be a high-tech corporate manager while living in low-cost flyover places like Tombstone. And the continuing health crisis is creating a huge demand for Cisco Telepresence-like services for the home workplace, not like today where you



have to go to specially-equipped Cisco videoconference rooms in the hub cities for remote workgroup interaction.

Will there be an overclass emigration from the hub cities to our flyover country? Slowly, probably. A total lack of Starbucks out here, way too many pickup trucks, and of course everyone has guns. But there will be changes. We'll see.



Virus: nature at work

2020-5-15

Warm wind from the south, and a gentle rain of blossoms from my mesquite tree, falling, falling to make a lovely light-green carpet on the ground. Nature at work, pollen for the bees today, and seedpods coming soon tomorrow, to grow more mesquite trees.

Drifting pale blossoms, and also perhaps a few drifting Covid-19 germs, impossible to see, yet so light they could probably be carried on the breeze forever. They say we are at war with this new virus, but unlike the pilots of the Japanese planes over Pearl Harbor, it is not aiming at us. Uncaring, airborne, it just drifts until we inhale it, or touch a surface where it is landed and then



touch our eyes or nose. And then, like everything else in nature, it works to replicate itself. Quietly, so quietly that many of us will never know it's there, never develop symptoms, even as we unknowingly affect others. South Korea thought they had the coronavirus under control, but a 29-year-old guy went bar-hopping two weeks ago. He hit five nightclubs and bars in Seoul's party district, and immediately infected more than 80 other people.

Influenza viruses fall into four distinct groups, and the one that zaps us worst is called Influenza A. You probably heard about the H1N1 swine flu, close relative to the 1918 Spanish flu, with the last H1N1 pandemic back in 2009. The H in H1N1 stands for Hemagglutinin, and the N for Neuraminidase. H and N are protein spikes that



act like a pirate boarding party. It grabs onto a cell like a grappling hook, plunging viral particles into the cell. Once inside, the virus uses the cell's energy to replicate itself thousands of times. Then the N protein cuts them loose, and within a few hours, the victim can release 500,000 virus particles into the air with every cough or sneeze. The virus also mutates rapidly, to avoid the body's defenses against it. The 1968 Hong Kong flu was an H₃N₂ variant. Luckily, not as lethal as the original 1918 H₁N₁, which killed 100 million people worldwide.

But it's not all bad news. The most surprising feature of viruses is that they are a guiding force behind evolution. If the infected person survives, we sometimes retain a portion of the viral material in our own genomes. The result of



ancient infections may be found in up to 8% of the human genome – the genes that control memory formation, the immune system, and cognitive development. Genes that make us who we are.

Not that you want to catch it, hoping perhaps you might be protecting your great-great-grandchildren. Forget that. Because besides messing up your lungs, Covid-19 can also affect other parts of your body, like causing blood clots in your body's main aortic artery. Doctors are also seeing kidney failure, heart inflammation, and immune complications. Take away? Social distancing is the key. The whole enchilada. Particularly if you are older. If we just give others some space, we will live to see the mesquite seedpods fall later in the year, gathered from our



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streets and yards by spirit Apaches, to make nutritious bean paste before fall turns into winter.



At peace in the park

2020-5-6

I am sitting in the gazebo at the City Park. It is 8 AM on a lovely warm May morning. My friends and I are easily spaced at least 6 feet apart on the circular wood benches. Sip my coffee, half-asleep, enjoying the morning sun, as three guys talk about music. They all know a great deal about that subject, and I learned, listening, that there are at least 75 chords. After that it gets complicated but still delightful to hear experts talking about the arts. Rare these days. Another fellow shows up and then we really start talking about art. He has been to Italy, and tells us about seeing Michelangelo's Pieta and David sculptures up close, the workmanship, the details, the beauty. And another friend allows as how he



really loves Raphael's paintings. Tombstone is such a special place. So relaxed, so easy, if you allow that.

About 50 BC, Marcus Terentius Varro noted that "Divine Nature makes the fields, Man makes the cities." A quote carved above the entry to the Santa Barbara City Hall. Like other Romans of his time, Varro believed that since the only thing that made Man different from other animals was language, Man, lacking instincts, had created Law to ensure order. And from that, his belief that any man who defied the law was insane, and of less worth than even the least animal. He would have had a very hard time watching the recent protests against the Coronavirus stay-at-home orders. It is interesting to speculate whether our American defiance and disregard of the law will lead our



society to collapse far sooner than Rome did.

Evening, and 94° out on the porch. Or you could say, Tucson -15°. And we won't talk about Phoenix. This is a hot spring. Hot enough for me to fill my bathtub with cool fresh water and enjoy the evening, enjoy the sun setting through the branches of the spring-green mesquite tree out in the yard. My house is small, which is why the bathtub is out on the porch. The first time I got in it two years ago, howling sirens erupted on Fremont Street as every one of our marshals took off down the highway. Of course I thought they were coming for me, that I had violated some local custom of not getting in the bathtub on your porch. But no. Sitting in the tub today, I thought about Archimedes, a Greek scientist circa 250 BC. How one day stepping into his bathtub filled to



the brim, he discovered that the volume of the water that slopped out when he got in was equal to the volume of his own body. And if you are designing ships, this is still essential math if you want the actual hull water line to end up as calculated. Archimedes went on to invent the first "death ray", an array of curved mirrors that focused sunlight on the sails of an attacking enemy fleet. Quite a guy, and fun to think about as the sun goes down and it's time to go back inside.



My shining city on a mesa

2020-5-1

Light. I wake in early morning as the sun's first rays come in the window, turning my white lace curtains a golden orange. Each morning, beautiful light here in The Town Too Tough To Die. Light that an artist would gladly die for, natural light with a clarity unsurpassed anywhere else. Light from a heavenly star, our Sun, shining through the cleanest atmosphere imaginable, thanks to our being a military no-fly zone. No airplanes, no particles of unburned JP-5 jet fuel blurring and blocking our views of the mountains on three sides of our city.

Our "shining city on a hill", as John Kennedy said in 1961, quoting pilgrim John Winthrop, as did



Ronald Reagan in 1980. Tombstone, sparkling in the sun as you come in from Hwy 80 or Charleston Road. A shining city on a mesa, out in the middle of nowhere, but shining every bit as brilliantly as the die-struck Morgan silver dollars from the New Orleans mint. Tombstone silver from the Lucky Cuss and the Goodenough and the Tough Nut and the Contention, coming back into town on rattling stagecoaches that were so tempting to robbers back in 1881. Holdup! And then a few days without cash money in town, and thirsty miners trading a .45 long round for an ounce of whiskey, for a 'shot', how about that.

For a photographer, the light is best in early morning or late afternoon, with shadows at every turn creating deep mystery. But there's also something special about the light at high noon.



Flat light, the light of hot days in the desert hills, the light of 90° midday heat. Hot days on Goose Flats Mesa, but always with gentle and sometimes not-so-gentle breezes. And then as the summer wears on, July and August, that midday light softly filtered through the torrential monsoon rains.

But I'll take light in the late afternoons. Especially here, where at every turn you realize, over and over, that you are in the real West. Magically transported away from all the bland cities and suburbs, back to a world of boardwalks and adobe and stucco and sometimes peeling paint on wood buildings built 140 years ago. Late afternoon light brings out every detail, and you can feel – you can understand – what the people who built our buildings wanted to represent with their designs.



Back then, for businesses, feelings of solidity and stability. Though often, like our old homes, with added touches here and there of classical antiquity – pillars, pilasters, and parapets.

And porches. Is there anything more delightful than sitting with friends in a Tombstone home or garden, watching the light, the always-changing light, falling on your street and neighbors passing by – or on your desert garden, with its lovely unique ocotillos, cacti, and blooming flowers that you have carefully chosen – ones that the deer will not eat? And then as evening falls and the sun sinks into the Whetstones to the west – twilight, that beautiful time with Venus the evening star now bright above the setting sun. Light. Light so special in Tombstone – our shining city on a hill.



Deep State squared

2019-12-22

This will be my last column for a while (I promise). Today, about the Deep State, since many folks are concerned about the entrenched politicians and government workers who are totally out of touch with normal people – and in some cases, actively trying to take our money away. True enough.

Then there is the next level deeper down. Where the Deep State can be seen as an ongoing cyclical system with two components: the Warfare State and the Welfare State. Taking turns with different administrations to feather their own nests, always for the best of reasons. Usually fighting for federal money, but now and then coming together



to feast on the carcass of our nation's fiscal solvency. Like last week, when Congress passed a \$1.4 trillion federal spending bill – with a lot of new money for a new Space Force, and a lot more new money for government employee extended parental leave.

But then there's the real Deep State. The Artificial Intelligence tidal wave is piling up right now just offshore of every American town and city. The crest is now higher and higher and almost ready to break and wash away millions of jobs -- both good jobs and bad. Highly-paid jobs, like accountants, and less well-paid, like warehouse workers. Expect 30% unemployment in five-to-ten years. Three million Americans who drive vehicles for a living -- from long-distance truckers to Uber drivers -- will lose their jobs within 10



years. Automation has already eliminated 4 million US manufacturing jobs since 2000. Fast-approaching AI algorithms will displace cashiers, fast food workers, customer service reps, admin assistants, wealth managers, lawyers, and insurance agents... and many teachers. Already, the US workforce participation rate is down to 62.9%, the same as El Salvador and Ukraine. And each 1% drop in the labor force means 2.5 million people are no longer employed, dropped out. Gone for good, as the Fourth Industrial Revolution tsunami crashes ashore.

Welcome to the new Deep State, brought to you by high-tech's "faster, cheaper, better" mantra, inventing products with ever-increasing profits from AI and applied robotics. And then all those New York investment bankers start demanding



AI productivity increases in fields they know something about, like replacing the whole US auto fleet with self-driving cars, and automating the whole fast-food industry. And they themselves will soon be on the scrap heap, it being so easy now to model financial forecasting and decision-making.

The real Deep State triumphant. The cresting wave breaks and the most secure job in 2030 will be changing sheets in motel rooms, and a few other complex-task physical jobs that are tough to automate, like nursing. Big changes, and sadly no government planning on how to lessen the social disruption. No prototype contracts to Boeing for low-cost shipping container housing units. Only vague talk about universal income for displaced workers. But you can imagine what's coming



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better than me, and it's your turn to think about all this anyway. Next year, I'm back to drawing and painting!



Content marketing wants You

2019-12-4

Promoting tourism: we are in a new age, this Age of Content Marketing. Not like the old days where all you had to do was make an ad touting your product's benefits. Back then, ads and PR were one-way messages, pushed out into the void, hoping someone would notice.

But not today. Content marketing, it turns out, strives for interactivity with the customer. Tries to get customers to reply to your tweets or posts on popular social media. But to get people to notice and respond, you must have a story. A very good story, a compelling story, a story that makes people happy or sad or mad – but never bored during the 10 seconds you have to get their



attention. Of course, stories – storytelling – hey, that's what we do, we humans. Stories around a campfire 100,000 years ago in the African veldt. Stories, this time with beautiful drawings of animals left behind in the caves at Lascaux, 20,000 years ago. Stories carefully written in hieroglyphics of the different exploits of the pharaohs. And then stories in what we call writing, like Homer's Iliad and Odyssey – stories about the Trojan war and its aftermath written about 700 years before Christ. The stories are still a good read today. On a hot summer afternoon, the Greek hero Achilles driving his chariot on the sands before the walls of Troy, struck down by an arrow in his heel from Paris, the guy who ran off with Spartan King Menelaus' wife Helen as well as Sparta's gold treasury. Money, sex, and revenge -- timeless.



Content marketing for Tombstone. We have our tales, often told, about Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday and the gunfight. But let me tell you a story you have never heard before. After Josie moved out from Sheriff Behan into the San Jose House, there is no record, none at all, of any interaction between her and Wyatt before the gunfight. Right after the gunfight, she goes back to California. A year later Wyatt finds her in San Fran and they live together forever. So here's the story – something happened, something secret – something hidden, mysterious, and romantic – between those two during the six months after she moved out from the Sheriff but before the gunfight. Something way beyond platonic – stolen kisses, a passionate affair, conducted under moonlight deep under city streets in some



forgotten mining stope. A stope abandoned for silver, like maybe the played-out Way Up or the Gilded Age, but a stope that had a glowing Ruthenium Crystal luring the two lovers like moths to the flame. A magical crystal with its vivid magenta aura, that in today's New Age terms was the locus of the focus for the unseen ley lines that guide lovers' lives. And the story for our tourist – to know that the incredibly rare ruthenium crystal is still there, sending out its psychic energy to the streets above – well, I think that's enough to get a lot of people here from Sedona, don't you?



Copyright: who owns what?

2019-11-25

The firm we hire to manage the new City Marketing Department will provide content (text, scripts, photos and illustrations, videos and animations) for our website, blog, social media pages, YouTube channel, ads and PR releases, billboards, and other media outlets.

Since the 1989 Supreme Court Reid decision, content is automatically copyrighted to its creator at the moment of creation in a tangible form. I take a photo of Schieffelin Hall. Click! It is copyrighted to me. I can give it to you, but you had better get a written release from me. Or, let's say a year later when Budweiser makes a Tombstone beer ad and you give them my photo to use... I could sue both you and Budweiser for



copyright violation.

In the good old days before 1989, I could subcontract ad copy, photos, illustrations, and airbrush art from outside vendors. It was understood that anything they sold me was mine, on payment. This was a simple system and I can't remember any major copyright disputes over the years. But today, the explosion of copy-paste digital media often makes it impossible to know who actually holds the copyright for anything. Example: Atomic Media makes a video that is actually produced by their sub-vendor, Amazing Films. We would want statements from both Atomic and Amazing that all material in that video has copyright releases. And then cross our fingers – because the Amazing Films video itself might contain sub-videos made by other parties, with each sub-video having different script



creators, still image creators etc. Ouch! But that's enough about copyright. Who actually owns the content?

"Well," you'd say, "That's easy. The City of Tombstone bought it from the vendor, so we own it." And in the old days, that would've been true. But today, content ownership can be murky. Problems occur when the client-vendor relationship is breaking up, like who gets the car after a bad love affair. Content ownership must be made very, very clear by contract at the start of the business relationship. Weak contracts can result in nasty problems down the road with your content basically being taken hostage by the vendor, and you might have to go to court to get it back.

At our end, we will make sure that while our content may be stored and distributed on vendor



or sub-vendor content management systems -- that the content itself remains our property at all times. As for content copyright and ownership agreements, the simpler and clearer we get things at the start, the less problems we will have later -- which will give us more time to create compelling Tombstone stories. Stories are what it's all about in this content marketing world. Stories focused on what our tourists want to know. Stories that address and solve their needs. Stories which leave a lasting impression that we will go out of our way to help them get what they want. Stories from the heart, from *The Town Too Tough To Die*. Our stories!



Rainbows and an RFQ

2019-11-20

Coming back from TMC Tuesday evening. Chill air, light rain, low clouds above the hills to the south. Rain clouds, dark gray against the last pale orange light of day, and here and there puffs of pure white vapor. Then home, and more showers today, with a beautiful glorious rainbow off to the northeast. So many rainbows here, always 180 degrees away from the sun. Our Cochise County: Land of Legends, Home of Rainbows.

TMC. Part of the Mayo Clinic Network, it turns out. Which is good for my Mary, with a persistent bladder infection that defies all the antibiotics. The doctors, nurses, and helpful volunteers were all pleasant and competent, so I had no fears that when she went for her biopsy, they might mess up



and send her back with six toes or something. A good experience, and earlier on this visit to Tucson we discovered Red Lobster, a real treat with several kinds of luscious shrimp for her, and glazed chicken for me. But I am not comfortable driving in Tucson at rush hour in the dark. If you slow down, they beep at you... but if you drive fast to keep up, it's like being trapped in an X-Box video game.

Back in town. More rain, lightly pattering on my old tin roof. Heat comes on, and the home wraps us in its warmth, snug and secure. She watches a chick flic on Amazon Prime, looks like 18 women discussing relationship issues. So I go to the City website at

<https://www.cityoftombstoneaz.gov/rfps-rfqs/>...and find the RFQ document "...City Branding and Marketing." Where we are looking for an



"experienced and qualified Marketing Firm/Agency for a comprehensive and full marketing plan to reflect our unique community." Now, you know that my career was in advertising and PR. And I can tell you that this RFQ, simply, is a gem. A rare government document that is clear, easy to read, and precise as it lays out what we need to professionally market our city. Such a small city, but with a huge brand name. The section "Project Overview and Scope of Services" is particularly elegant. In a few short sentences, it covers the key task areas where the successful applicant will have to show real-world experience. Takeaway? Go to the website and read the RFQ. In a time of endless political bickering and non-performance, you'll once again appreciate the luxury of living in our little town, where our small and perennially underfunded



city government somehow comes up with gems like this RFQ. It lays an excellent foundation, a starting place for what will soon become a major effort to ensure sustained tourism in the future. And here's to the sweet spot -- more tourists, but not so many more that we will disintegrate into a Disneyesque stew of politically-correct outsiders telling us how to live, here in our little town on a mesa out in the middle of nowhere. Our flyover oasis, and best kept like that!



Shootout at Schieffelin Hall

2019-11-12

At 7 PM on a chilly Tuesday, I am in Schieffelin Hall for the City Council meeting. Feeling buzzy, fighting a slight cold and trying to stay awake after a long day. Counting the globes in the ceiling light fixtures, one-two-three-four... over and out. But what's this? Suddenly aware of the Mayor pounding his gavel and the Marshal's deputies pulling their guns and firing at the violent screaming protesters pouring into the auditorium. "Lock him up," they yelled. "Lock him up! Stop Dusty from annexing Douglas!" As the oncoming crush of bodies came near, with the flames from Molotov cocktails licking up the walls, I decided that this was all too much like the recent riots in Hong Kong, and fell back to sleep.



A sleep disturbed by another commotion. One of my OK Café breakfast friends at the speaker's stand, demanding that the Mayor be impeached. "Do it now," he thundered. "Dusty traded our lower city parking lot at Sixth and Toughnut for 38 more stagecoaches! Impeachable offense!" Which brought everyone to their feet yelling and shouting imprecations from one side of the historic old hall to the other. "It's déjà vu all over again," I thought, channeling Yankee catcher Yogi Berra. All too much like the current squabbles in Washington, for sure, and I was glad that I had a slight fever and was able to drift off again, counting the globe lamps high above... 10-11-12. "Wake up, Jonny," said my friend Keith. "What?" I replied. "Is it over? Did they impeach the Mayor?" "What are you talking about?" He laughed. "Have



a bad dream? Hey, let's go. Meeting's over, nothing much happened tonight." And yes, a bad dream. But life can be a dream, la vida es sueño, and we are so lucky to be here in Cochise County where our biggest gripe is about over-zealous Marshals. Over in Hong Kong, the rioters are firebombing the police, who are shooting back now, desperately trying to keep order without bringing in PLA troops from the mainland. And in Washington, a bitter impeachment hearing which will cause so much raw anger and broken friendships both in that town and across the country. Another bad dream that you can't wake up from, not entirely. Just lucky to be here, in our flyover oasis, free of violence and vicious political confrontations.

Beg, borrow, or steal – but go see 'Midway' at the mall theater in Sierra Vista. This is a dramatic



action-packed thriller about the naval battle that turned the tide in the Pacific during World War II. Excellent acting, superb plot, and one of the very few Hollywood movies that's actually historically accurate. Amazingly technically accurate, too. You'll also get caught up on state-of-the-art VFX techniques. Shockingly detailed live-motion renderings of Japanese and American ships as they were, even though in the non-VFX world they are all gone now; though some recently discovered, like the IJN Akagi carrier and the USS Grayback submarine, would give the lie to that. Great movie, a must see!



Merchants vs. crafters

2019-11-13

An interesting issue came up at the City Council meeting last Tuesday. They talked about a permit for an extended Farmers Market in the City Park – for five days from November 25 through November 30. The permit was approved for food vendors, but not for craft vendors as it was felt that those would take away business from local stores. On the surface, this makes sense.

Protecting local merchants who pay local taxes. However, we may have shot ourselves in the foot. Every small town along the southern California coast has a weekend at this time of year where they close down the main street, put up scores of vendor tents, and provide a fun experience for all those Xmas gift shoppers. 'A rising tide lifts all



boats', and their mainstreet merchants welcome the influx of new customers. But here? You would think that our merchants would welcome anything that would get more folks to shop here. However, it's not like we are a little town like Carlsbad, Encinitas, Solana Beach, Del Mar or La Jolla sitting right next to a 2.5 million population center. Anyway, might be fun to give it a try next Christmas season.

Curiously, another permit was immediately approved to allow City Park use for Native American tepee display and for Native American craft vendors to sell their wares. Same kind of issue, since many stores in town already are selling Native American gift items. But there were no objections to this one. It is good to be a Native American these days.

I wish – I really wish – that every single Allen



Street merchant would join the Chamber of Commerce. Our city government tries to listen to merchants' complaints and issues and then help out. But what can you do if the merchants won't join the Chamber to present a united message on their concerns? Sure would make it easy on Dusty if he had a popular Chamber to advise him on things like Street Fairs, or no Street Fairs. An active Chamber, like the southern Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, is a lot of fun – monthly dinners, a lot of socializing, new contacts. But surprisingly, our little Chamber already has something the larger ones don't. Her name is Valerie Lancaster, and she does the website, Facebook, and Instagram and will instantly post any sales message from any member. She's good -- her Chamber website and Facebook get a ton of hits. Very valuable for any



member who wants to take advantage of her social media skills – at no charge beyond the small yearly Chamber member fee. Valerie will also post event notices from any of our civic groups, as long as your event has a city permit – even if you are not a chamber member. Not so bad!



Obsolete

2019-11-5

At 75, I am obsolete. "A dinosaur," my son tells me, a few minutes after he sends a beautiful brochure about his architectural IT company. A beautiful brochure that he and two friends made in an hour at his kitchen table, none of them having graphic art experience, but then. "There are templates, Dad," he says. "Hundreds of them. All really good. You just fill in your own words, add some free images of happy people, and you're done."

And so I am obsolete. At least half of me is. My lifelong career in PR and advertising was all about words and images. Started out as a commercial artist, then an art director, then a year as a copywriter and finally worked as a



creative director at several ad agencies. Along the way, good clients – Avis, Volkswagen, posters for American Airlines. Ads, brochures, and PR for lots of companies you've heard of, and even more for companies you've never heard of. And because I started in the 1960s with the offset printing revolution, the images always came before the words. Suddenly easy to print photographs with offset, easy to build a good ad around a compelling image. And now, with the templates, that whole image side of my skill set – the side that could always create a compelling ad layout – is totally obsolete.

Should have seen this coming. Way back when, we would always try to use an existing photo rather than paying for a photo shoot. And then it was just a matter of coming up with the headline and some body copy to hang around the photo.



Today, the big difference is that there are hundreds of thousands of photos easily found on the Internet, instantly available for small fees. But what is really different today is the automation – if that's the right word – of the layout process. Using a template, you don't have to think about where to put the photograph, or how to arrange the text. Old-timers like me might say, "But that template ad isn't unique, isn't original." And we would be missing the point. Because for an agency, the whole idea of an ad is to get a customer to your client's door. "If you can't do that, you are a phony and ought to get out of the ad business," said Bill Bernbach, my boss at DDB in the '60s. How you do it doesn't matter one bit. And believe me, those potential customers can't see any difference between a template-produced ad and one "hand-made" in a



layout program like Illustrator.

It's not all bad. At 75, I can console myself that there probably won't be any AI-generated ad copy for at least the next five years. And now I can enjoy just selling the words, without having to produce the final print or web-ready ad or brochure. Back to where I started at 18, doing PR for Radio City Music Hall in NYC. Today, writing PR copy, text for blogs, words for web sites, ads and marketing collateral. Writing? Even that's changing, like dictating this column using Dragon Anywhere. Make a few edits, send it, done. Obsolete!



Racism is a good deal

2019-9-3

Racism is a really good deal for some, like me. Which I found out recently when a liberal friend snarled at me to "check my privilege." She pointed out how lucky I was to be born a white man in prosperous California, etc., etc. You bet! But I failed the political-correctness test by not feeling particularly guilty about the accident of fate that set me on a course to having a very nice life, while others, like non-white females, were behind the eight-ball at birth and stayed that way. Happily, I never had to compete against Blacks, Hispanics, or Chinese during my long career in ad agencies, PR, and high-tech multimedia design. And I never thought about about the luxury of playing in a ballgame where only folks who



looked like me could play.

There's a lot of talk these days about racism. We all agree that it is bad, and that we should do something about it. And, over the last 50 years, we have. Up to the point where establishing equality under the law runs into real life. The point now where we Whites sub-consciously realize that the pie is only so big, and if we let "them" get a bigger slice of it, we will have less. True that. Thing is, there are a lot more of "them" out there these days, and they are getting better at grabbing their slice of the pie. So we can get angry, vote for politicians who promise to bring back the good old days, and, if we really get worked up, go to El Paso to shoot Hispanics in order to get the rest to go back to Mexico. The guy actually believed that, you can read his rant online.



Thing is, the past... is past. Good or bad, it's gone. Real life? Only thing that matters is what's next. Next: 1.6 billion Chinese coming to eat our lunch. Plus all those folks in India and Europe. Rapidly increasing international competition is making our American pie smaller and smaller. And I would put this to my White friends: would you rather have a fair share of this smaller pie, allowing anyone to grab a slice without prejudice... or do you want a future fighting over scraps of a really, really, really small pie? Because, way I see it, if we don't all pull together, racism will destroy our ability to compete. If we don't get past our differences, and start stressing our similarities, we will become increasingly non-competitive. With AI and robotics coming fast upon us, we have to -- truly have to -- all be on the same page, united. With honest-to-God job



opportunities that leverage every person's talents. Because almost all those 1.6 billion Chinese are a single ethnic group, called Han. They aren't wasting their future pulling in different racial directions. And neither should we. We want a better tomorrow for our children than living on welfare in stacked shipping containers with government TV. We owe them a better America, a competitive America. And that starts with dumping racism once and for all!



Chiaroscuro in September sun

2019-9-8

September morning in Tombstone, Arizona Territory. First sun, lighting up the Palo Verde tree across the street, Old City Hall up the street, and the flag on my porch, stirring in the first morning breeze. All lit up, glowing in the early light, against a dark gray sky that teases a monsoon rain today, forget about that. The landscape is illuminated against a dark background, and you can look up Florentine artist Paolo Uccello's 15th century set of three paintings about the Battle of San Romano. He was the first artist to notice this natural effect, which artists call "chiaroscuro," later used by Da Vinci, Caravaggio, and Rembrandt. The third painting in the triptych, "Counterattack of



Michelotto da Contignola," really shows it off. Egg tempera with walnut and linseed oil on a poplar wood panel, today in the Musée de Louvre, over in Paris.

Rolling stop update: it's that first one, after I start off, that I semi-ignore. That first stop sign. After that, I regain consciousness, and continue on my way with errant thoughts, like why in Russia stop signs have Cyrillic letters that are pronounced just like our 'Stop' -- but when chasing someone, the cops yell "Stoy!" at you. Go figure.

A real life note: the only thing that matters is what's next. Next! Like 1.6 billion Chinese coming to eat our lunch. Plus all those folks in India and Europe. Rapidly increasing international competition is making our American pie smaller and smaller. And I would put this to my friends: would you rather have a fair share of this smaller



pie, allowing anyone to grab a slice without prejudice... or do you want a future fighting over scraps of a really, really small pie? Because, way I see it, if we don't all pull together, skin-color racism and ethnic divisions will destroy our ability to compete. If we don't get past our differences, and start stressing our similarities, we will become increasingly non-competitive. With AI and robotics coming fast upon us, we have to - - really have to -- all be on the same page, united. Because almost all those 1.6 billion Chinese are a single ethnic group, called Han. They aren't wasting their future pulling in different ethnic directions. And neither should we. We owe a better life to our children than living on welfare in stacked shipping containers with government TV. This is not a joke. Spain is non-competitive, and Barcelona is moving poor people into container



stacks as you read this. We owe our kids a better America, a competitive America, and that starts with dumping racism once and for all.



Meet your Marshal: Deputy Valenzuela

2019-8-28

Bright red and blue lights flash in alternating kaleidoscopic patterns as Deputy Valenzuela pulls me over for what one might call a 'California stop', on Third turning right on to Fremont. You know, the kind of stop where you just keep rolling – just a little bit – before resuming your normal speed. And I, as a native San Franciscan coming here after living the last 30 years in San Diego... well, guilty as charged, and lucky to get off with a warning. From an extremely polite, courteous, and highly professional officer, by the way.

"We told you so," said my friends Mary and Gordon. They are both from Minnesota, where people actually stop at stop signs, imagine that. "We knew you'd get pulled over," they chorused.



"And you've got to quit driving fast on Charleston Road." Now, even though it was fun the next morning being acclaimed as the latest victim of the evil Marshals, I spent a good amount of the day trying to understand why, in fact, I habitually roll through stop signs and have no compunctions about driving way fast on roads with a lot of curves. This was officer Valenzuela's fault. If he had been nasty or threatening, I would have just dismissed my traffic stop as another bureaucratic irritant. But he hadn't been nasty, just the reverse. Which forced me back upon myself to try to understand some long-term habits that aren't exactly optimum.

It goes back. The thrill of stealing cars in high school, drinking with my friends, trying to drive up San Fran's twisty Lombard Street hill before some tourist started down. A few years later,



racing an old TR-3 one summer back east, and then working for Lotus on their Can-Am racing car project, which got us out to Indianapolis wringing out the car, driving round and round on a tire-test contract from BF Goodrich. Speed. And over the years since, a love for fast sports cars. Rolling stop after rolling stop, without thinking about it. Winding road after winding road, as fast as I could go, without thinking about it. But this day in Tombstone, because Deputy Valenzuela was so unfailingly polite, I am brought up against the flaws in my own nature, with the realization that I actually have to change old ingrained habits and reflex patterns.

We will see. My friend Bruce, with his degree in psychology, tells me that it will take at least 10 long drives to start hardwiring new instincts.

Drives at least as long as going to Sierra Vista and



back, at or slightly below the speed limit, and actually stopping at signs – waiting until the car truly stops, rocking slightly backward against its springs. Over the next month, day after day. Should be easier than quitting smoking. One thing's for sure – under 35 mph, you can actually see the flowers, and smell them too, hopefully when we finally get some monsoon rain coming down in sheets from the lightning flashing in that dark gray sky. Wish me luck with this. Because it may be that with speed, less is more.



Shanghai Cadillac

2019-8-20

Less than a year ago, GM opened another new Cadillac factory in Shanghai, replacing about 1200 low-paid Chinese workers with 496 industrial robots with even lower overhead costs. You'll hear a lot more about this sort of thing in the near future – like devices from Flippy Corporation replacing human hamburger-makers at McDonald's and other fast food joints. But behind the scenes, there's a much deeper revolution taking place right now. AI programs are suddenly at the point where they can think and make decisions for themselves without having to draw on human-provided databases for information.

A high-tech company called Alphabet keeps



popping up, shaping our uncertain future in various ways. In a previous column, we saw how Alphabet's subsidiary Loon is making high-altitude balloons that can network with each other to spy on very large areas. And Alphabet, the parent company of Google, is running another subsidiary outfit called DeepMind, which does artificial-intelligence research. DeepMind has created AlphaZero, a computer program that has totally mastered the games of chess, shoji, and go. It took AlphaZero less than 24 hours to achieve superhuman levels of play in these games. Danish Grand Master Peter Nielsen likened AlphaZero's chess play to that of a superior alien species. Key point: AlphaZero does not depend on a huge every-possible-move database to draw on. It creates its own logic based only on the rules of the game. And its winning strategies are often utterly



different than those used in the past by human grandmasters.

Are we at the start of a new age of human history? Like the 15th century, when the printing press and the Age of Reason superseded the earlier Age of Religion? This time around, we now have the Internet and its insatiable need for data displacing our earlier Enlightenment values, with their search for truth based on analytic human reason. By contrast, the Internet culture ratifies knowledge based on the accumulation of data. And, going back to AlphaZero, that data can now be self-generated. AlphaZero uses 5000 Google TPUs – Tensor Processing Units – to create and analyze millions of data points in just a few seconds. Untouched by human hands, as the old saying goes. Which certainly will create problems for those of us left behind by machines that are



better – far better – than we are at our various jobs. Machines that can perform those jobs with minimal if any human-aided training, and, like the robots in Shanghai, machines that don't need a paycheck.

The AI revolution – let's call it the Age of AI – has moral implications. AlphaZero wins at chess by thinking differently than humans. In the near future, if a self-driving car has to choose between killing a child or its mother, we won't know how it made its choice, whatever that choice might be. But all is not gloom and doom. As with AlphaZero, we can follow the progression of AI-events and then ourselves learn new and better ways to attack difficult problems. An interesting future, right?



Trapped in Tucson without an ESA

2019-8-14

Irritable tonight. Bad enough being stuck in Tucson when I should've been home at the City Council meeting, bingo at the Oriental! But no. Stuck here in this endless grid of cars and fast food joints and weird little businesses, and I almost kicked the latest faux service dog to cross my path. Actually, an ESA. An Emotional Support Animal. Which usually is a dog, but doesn't have to be. It can be any animal that you feel gives you emotional support – like a llama, alpaca, crocodile, or peacock. All of which have qualified, as their depressed, insane, or otherwise messed-up owners have gone online to buy Emotional Support Letters from a myriad of faux service-dog psychologists. Of course, you don't have to be



really depressed, insane, or messed-up to get that letter. All you have to do is come up with a credit card, and, just like that, your dog, cat, or talking parrot can go with you just about anywhere.

This has led to problems, like on airlines. Now and then, ESA pot-bellied pigs run wild in the cabin, and then there was the peacock that went totally ballistic, and now Delta, cruel unfeeling Delta, is demanding that you have a veterinary health form, your animal's shot record, and a signed testament to your pet's behavior before they'll board your furry little friend. Luckily, for a few dollars more, you can get those extra documents from your favorite online 'ESA mill'. Keep that credit card out – because they'll also sell you important stuff like 'Service Animal' doggy vests and tags, none of which are required for ESA animals, but they sure help getting your



pet onto an airplane, or past a nasty landlord, or into any other place where, in the old days, nobody in their right mind would've allowed a dog... like restaurants.

The explosion in the number of ESA animals has caused havoc. Delta Air reports an 84% increase in animal incidents since 2016. Mostly urination, defecation, and biting. Worse, comfort hamsters have been accidentally flushed, and dogs have stormed the stage at performances of Cats. These days, we are all part of a zoo where entitlement, biting, pooping and pretty much anything else goes. Unchecked fake ESA's continue to proliferate. Pet owners just plain lie, stating that their assorted creatures are "service animals". Thing is, only dogs (and, God knows why, miniature horses) can be legal service animals. A legal Service Dog is a highly trained \$20,000



super-animal that can lead the blind, or detect imminent seizures. These dogs are protected by federal law, as you would expect. They can go anywhere, protecting their truly handicapped owners. Though these days, just like us, they are increasingly being bitten and barked at by the ESAs.

No relief in sight. We are an anxious society, what with 24/7 news alarms, shootings, financial crashes, violent video games and TV shows, and terrified millenials. And cuddling 'Man's best friend' is probably better than Prozac or Valium. After 100,000 years of evolution, man and dog are truly bonded together. So I have to lighten up. A few dogs defecating in restaurants are a small price to pay for social stability and calm, right?



Gorgon Stare

2019-8-4

Hot summer days, watching gray cloudbursts falling on the Dragoons, wondering when the rain will get here in any significant amount, maybe by the time you read this next weekend. Odds and ends: first, finding that our new Marshals' drone has been completely upstaged by US Southcom military wide-area surveillance tests using experimental high-altitude balloons. The test flights over the Midwest, launched from South Dakota and rising to altitudes up to 65,000 feet, are "intended to provide a persistent surveillance system to locate and deter narcotic trafficking and homeland security threats," according to the Sierra Nevada Corporation, an aerospace company that makes the balloons. A rival balloon builder and operator, World View, is also carrying



out multi-week test missions. Its stratospheric balloons are able to hover over a five-mile-diameter area for 6 1/2 hours, and larger areas for days at a time. The new balloons deliver a cheap surveillance platform that can follow multiple cars and boats for extended periods. Raven Aerostar, who launches the Sierra Nevada balloons from South Dakota, also makes balloons for the Alphabet subsidiary Loon, to deliver Internet and cell phone service from the stratosphere. Alphabet is the parent company of Google, how about that. The balloons can network with each other, allowing an extremely wide-area Sierra Nevada nine-balloon video capture system called Gorgon Stare. More. My stepson Nathan, a top-flight patent lawyer back in Washington DC, is watching a patent application which claims that products of



an AI artificial intelligence program are themselves patentable. We did something like this back in the 1980s, using Interpreter BASIC to create recursive-logic routines that themselves produced new software. But that was extremely limited compared to current research, where the new DABUS system has progressed from creating abstract art, to inventing new interlocking food containers more easily grasped by industrial robots. As current law stands, patents cannot be issued to non-human creators. But since AI is going to be how we invent things in the future, the whole intellectual property system will have to be revised.

Lastly, oil. You'd think gasoline prices would be sky-high, what with the tensions in the Gulf. But no. Even though global oil demand rose last year by 1.4 million barrels daily – thanks to China and



India – new oil production thanks to fracking is way up. The US alone accounts for 88% of the huge growth in global oil production, easily overcoming the 800,000 barrels-per-day loss of product from sanctioned Iran and Venezuela. Even at a low \$55 a barrel for West Texas light sweet crude (the fracking good stuff), US exporters are doing really well now that we have cut off Iranian competition. For the first time, light sweet crude is now more than 20% of the market. And, thanks to the sanctions against Venezuela and to declining production in Mexico, the less desirable medium sour crudes are below 40% of the market. Which is causing a delightful medium sour crude mini-shortage, which benefits US oil platform producers in the Gulf of Mexico. Take away? That \$2.60 at the pump in Sierra Vista is just great, in the middle of summer, with



TOMBSTONE DIARY

BY JONATHON M. DONAHUE

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everybody traveling. What a deal!



VFX for an exciting future

2019-7-29

I literally stumbled into a job at a top New York City ad agency back in the '60s. Awkwardly tripping over the carpet, and the receptionist laughed, but they took a chance and hired me to do art at that wildly exciting moment when offset printing displaced older letterpress. Offset made using photographs easy. I think visually, and that was the start of a great career. Years later in the late '70s, another wildly exciting career moment. "You mean we can write something called programs that cause this... microcomputer? To make choices? Really?" And then last Saturday, coming out of the movie show in Sierra Vista, it happened again. The third moment in my life when I realized that things had... changed.



Drastically, dramatically, with no going back. This time, it's called VFX, Visual Effects, and the vehicle was an entertaining movie called *The Lion King*. Which we will get to in a minute. But first. And so important. There are these... moments... when you stumble onto something new. So new that if you learn to do it, you will be one of the first people involved. At least five years before they start teaching it in college and the door slams shut to entry in this new career, unless you have a college degree. At the start of what we can call a Big Change, everything is chaotic. There are no rules. The first people invent the techniques and processes that later are followed rigidly by latecomers. There is tremendous opportunity in the chaos of technological change. This is capitalism at its best, and it is wonderful and exciting if you can



get in on the start of a truly new thing and ride it all the way to the bank during a new career that will last for many years. Right now, you can grab that brass ring again... VFX, this time around. The Lion King cost \$250 million to make, and brought in \$700 million during its first week of a worldwide launch in about 100 different countries. There are no human actors. All the characters... talking lions, birds, evil hyenas... are digital. More importantly, the background Kenya-like landscape is also digital. Because Disney hired VFX creator MPC Motion Picture Company (owned by Technicolor). And MPC bought a Unity Engine, software that powers the most popular video games, like Grand Theft Auto 5. MPC then created a 58-square mile Kenya-like virtual landscape, with major scenes following the background design of the original 1994 cartoon



Lion King.

And this is where it gets interesting. MPC projected the virtual landscape inside a blacked-out old warehouse in the Playa Vista area of Los Angeles. Imagine that you are the cameraman, and – just like in a regular movie – you take your gear onto the set. But this time, a virtual set, and you are wearing a VR headset. In that virtual world, you decide on your shots. Then, real-world operators "shoot" the virtual environment by moving their tracked real-world viewfinders -- movements mirrored by virtual cameras in the virtual environment.

Since a virtual landscape can be used over and over, producers of films like our 1994 Tombstone are lining up to rent the VFX talent. MPC's hiring agency, The Focus, has hundreds of unfilled jobs. High pay, screaming good future. Jobs for artists



and writers and directors and producers and programmers and mathematicians and set designers and dolly grips and lighting experts and cameramen... you get the idea. Intellectual, physical, art-side or STEM-side. There's a hot new VFX job for people of ALL abilities and talents. It's a gold rush! If interested, explore the industry links on my website at <http://jon404.com/vfx>. And maybe we'll see your name on the credits of the next Tombstone movie!



You can't indict the President

2019-7-24

Wednesday morning. Maybe like you, watching the Mueller hearings in Congress. Key takeaway: something called the Justice Department Office Of Legal Counsel decided that a sitting President cannot be indicted for a crime. Both sides are going along with this. Troublesome, as it could allow Presidents to continue to commit crimes during their remaining terms in office. Imagine if President Obama had been caught illegally selling US Gov't Ford Fusion vehicles (a car he actually liked and owned, OMG), he would have had a green light to continue selling off every single Gov't Ford Fusion to underworld contacts (also not car guys). While apparently a President can be prosecuted after leaving office, it seems that



they are 'above the law' while in office, thanks to the opinion by this obscure government department. Not good. With this, back in the 1920s, President Harding could have continued to sell off the US Navy oil reserves to his Sinclair Oil friends. But Harding died in San Francisco after a trip to Alaska, before the 'above the law' concept could come into play.

Sad to see all those politicians stuck wearing jackets and ties on a hot day in DC. Too hot back east to yell and argue. More interesting this morning to catch up with our Chinese friends half a world away, via their government website. They are starting to reduce their US Treasury bond purchases as part of the ongoing trade war.

Which is making precious metals investors very happy. Gold and silver are up about 13% since the squabbles began. But both sides are starting to



make peace offerings. China is getting quotes from Midwestern farmers for soybeans, and Apple is asking Trump for an OK to move Mac production to China, with Buick asking to allow imports of their Envision SUV from China. Since new car sales are declining around the world, it's probably better for everyone to get along, ahead of a possible recession.

But the big worry in China right now is whether your kid will pass the 2019 Gaokao national college entrance exam. Gaokao is like a hyper-SAT. Don't pass? No future. No fallback position over there, like our wealth of junior colleges allowing for a later career restart. The Chinese system is more like Great Britain, more like France. Want a bright future, particularly in fast-growth high tech? Better pass that Gaokao, kid. Like here, the test is heavy on STEM subjects, but



with an added twist. It demands that the student think a bit outside the box, stressing problem-solving innovation. This might be - maybe - the start of a deep cultural shift, as China through the centuries has highly valued copying and improving work done before, rather than new invention. But the Gaokao test is not without critics. Children born in poor families often go to poor schools, same as here -- but flunking the Gaokao slams the door, unlike here, where it's not the end of the world if you crater your SATs. America is truly the land of opportunity, which is why so many risk everything to come here. But that's another day's story!



Random thoughts, ICE and Tyrian purple

2019-7-17

Random notes this week, relaxing in my old tub out on the porch of my little house. Hot days, cool water. Like being at the beach, without having to fight the parking meters and the other guys in the lineup for what passes for a wave in the dog days of summer. Random thoughts about the new facial recognition technology. Last week, it came out that the FBI and ICE are harvesting state DMV drivers' license images to build a huge facial recognition database. So far, 21 states are cooperating – turning over drivers' pictures without the driver's consent. This is a big deal in places like New York City, with computerized cameras watching people at every intersection. But not so much in Tombstone. Our hats,



mustaches, and beards must drive the software nuts – at least for the guys. And we are always about five years behind in technology – the Marshals just got a drone – so the only facial recognition around will probably be at the Border Patrol post, sooner rather than later. In the meantime, enjoy your anonymity.

Random thoughts about color. All my life, a love of color. At six years old, entranced by alternating deep red and light cream leather panels on a fireman's helmet at the local station, and by the crimson-red and gold lettering on the fire engine. Read a history the other day about ancient Christians and Romans, which got me thinking about the color purple, and how back then only the emperors could wear purple silk, with Julius Caesar starting the trend with his all-purple "toga purpurea." This was long before the discovery of



our bright aniline coal-tar dyes, circa 1856. Roman Tyrian purple came from Phoenicia, on the coast of the Mediterranean north of Israel – today's Lebanon. The purple dye was extracted from the glands of thousands of putrefied crushed shellfish left to bake in the sun. Cloth was then dyed in purple shades from light lavender to violet. This was a very expensive process. It took 10,000 shellfish to produce 1 gram of dyestuff, which would only dye the hem of a garment. Very expensive. By the year 300 AD, 1 pound of purple dye cost 150,000 denarii, or 3 pounds of gold. A pound of pre-dyed wool would set you back 1 pound of gold. The highest quality cloth was called "dibaptha," meaning "twice-dipped" in the purple dye. Tyrian shellfish purple dye was extremely durable and long-lasting. For the Romans, the expensive purple indicated status.



Where only the Emperor could where the full purple toga, magistrates and senators could wear the "toga praetexta" which had a purple border. So you get the idea about purple. With our modern aniline dyes, it is a very vivid and powerful color. My high school football uniform was purple and orange, orange being the complementary color to purple. Luckily there was also a lot of white, which was a big help. Because it's hard to find colors that go with purple. Silver? Gold? And then red – my granddaughter once put a deep red geranium on a piece of purple cloth, and it was lovely. Purple!



Progressive grievances

2019-7-9

Facebook's recent suppression of free speech actually started a generation ago, back in 1996, the last year that Buick made their huge jellybean Roadmaster station wagon. Best in black, though it may not be allowable to say that these days. But that year, Kimberlé Crenshaw published "Critical Race Theory." Her new pseudo-philosophy of Intersectionality tried to show how different aspects of social and political discrimination overlapped with gender. Now, out there in University Land, this was like throwing red meat to pit bulls. All the different victims-studies departments were now able to connect their various grievances to everybody else in the whole big world outside Academia. Which of course they



did, and are still doing today.

Intersectionality allows you to immediately call anyone who disagrees with you a racist. This was much more satisfying than the earlier post-modernist nonsense of writers like Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. And today, 25 years later, the secular church of "Racial Equity" has branches at every college and university, and in many government agencies, and in large corporations like Facebook and Google. Racial Equity, it turns out, is quite different than the earlier racial equality that almost all Americans subscribe to. By using almost the same words, we fail to notice that racial equity is actually thinly-disguised fascism. On campuses from Berkeley to Yale, speeches and comments disagreeing with racial equity are banned. The very institutions that were supposed to protect us against a real-



life Fahrenheit 451 are themselves burning the books. And after 25 years, progressive ex-students moving up in mega-corporations like Facebook and Google are banning tweets and posts that they find offensive.

There is pushback, and not just from conservatives. The academic destruction of our universities, and the cheapening of our degrees, has led to a fracture among liberals – with many moving center-left, away from the progressives who have hijacked higher education. Best way to hit back at fanatics? Humor, like *The Grievance Studies*. Three writers wrote 20 totally fake academic papers, seven of which were published in highly respected journals. Papers like "My Struggle to Dismantle My Whiteness: a Critical-Race Examination of Whiteness from Within Whiteness." It would be funny if it weren't so



serious. Recently, Racial Equity students took over Evergreen State University in Olympia, Washington, demanding that white students leave the campus and recant the unfair privilege of their whiteness. Which they did, very much like public confessions during Chairman Mao's cultural revolution.

My take is that the progressives have gone too far. Donald Trump stood up to them, and was elected. Their fake controversies – like whether transgender athletes should be allowed in the 2020 Olympic Games – no longer excite attention. Their attacks on our shared American values are ignored. And their attempts to rewrite American history – to portray our exceptional accomplishments as racist and colonialist – are laughable. Bottom line? If you have a kid going off to college, pick the place carefully. And ask



our politicians to pull funding from universities
preaching Racial Equity!



Hijacked symbols

2019-7-2

Late last week, the first monsoon rain. Whipping in from the south, up from the Gulf of Mexico, sheets of water rippling down my Fourth Street, but all too brief. This is the time when the hot parched Land implores the Sky for relief, and finally, after teasing for many days, the Sky relents and the cooling rain turns our hills a brilliant emerald green. Coming very soon now, maybe by the time you read this, time for new windshield wipers, maybe.

After being censored recently by Facebook for using the words "Second Amendment" and "conservative", I was pleased to see a full house at Schieffelin Hall for Curt Schilling and (gasp) other conservatives. And surprised to learn that



other folks there, including Schilling, were also censored by Facebook – the Sewer of the Internet. Please help! Please help us hit back – large corporations threatening our First Amendment right of free speech are a new thing, an evil thing, and must be confronted and stopped. Delete that Facebook account -- let freedom ring!

The summer silliness of the world outside our Secret Oasis continues. Nike corporation ran into a buzzsaw when they put a small Betsy Ross flag – the one with the original 13 states' stars in a circle – on the back of an Air Max 1 Quick Strike Fourth of July sports shoe. Putting aside the inherent tackiness of using our flag to sell product, it seems that this was a big mistake. Because the team captain of their brand, Colin Kaepernick, immediately complained that the



Betsy Ross flag was connected to the slavery era. Guess so, Colin! Sorta like maple syrup or crosscut handsaws! No wonder Sears went under, all that stuff, all those shirts and shoes and blankets, takes you right back to plantation days, so insensitive. And, to make matters worse, several Ku Klux Klan chapters back east have adopted the Ross flag, as well as a few fringe white nationalists here and there. Good God. So Nike pulled their new product, but not before our Gov. Ducey pulled a \$1 million Arizona Commerce Authority grant for a new Nike facility in Goodyear.

Summer silly season. But it bothers me to see corporations and radicals hijack my favorite things. Always liked the Betsy Ross flag, and I think it's a better alternative than adding star after star for new states. White Power symbol?



Give me a break. And I'm still irritated by gays hijacking the color purple. It's hard enough to find other colors that go with deep purple, without having to worry whether, if straight, you are misappropriating a gay culture token. Gold and purple? Sort of. Silver? Better. But not Orange. My high school football uniform was purple and orange, and in San Francisco, this had both straights and gays running for the exits. But here it's summer, and high time for the monsoon rains to come next week and wash all this nonsense down Tombstone Gulch into the San Pedro River, down to Benson, and wherever else it goes after that.



Donald as Donna... deepfake?

2019-6-24

It is next year, three months before the election and I am watching that viral video on YouTube like everybody else in this country.

"Good evening," says the President, from the Oval Office in the White House. "Tonight I want to share with you that I am identifying as a woman. I hope you will accept me, Donna Trump as your first woman President, here before Liz Warren or Kamala Harris or whoever else they nominate at that Dem convention. I want you to know tonight that we got here first! And of course I am staying married to Melania. Which lets her break ground by being the first gay First Lady, something those progressives can only dream about..."

It's a "Deepfake." A new word for your fast-



expanding 21st century vocabulary. Deepfake. Artificial intelligence-manipulated media that can make people appear to do or say things that they never did or said. We are on the cusp of a technological revolution that will drastically transform how fake news is made. Advances in AI with better algorithms and data that will make it extremely difficult to assess the veracity of videos. The cynical nature of social media amplifies the problem. Like Facebook, with their business model aimed at maximizing viewing time in order to sell ads. Result? Shocking, nasty, and conspiratorial content is pushed to the top. Like Deepfakes. We've seen a crude example of it already – the video of a drunken Nancy Pelosi stumbling around Congress. But that's a crude "shallow fake." The real stuff is coming, very, very soon.



In fact, it may be coming soon to a smart phone, like yours. The phone rings. It's your Mom on Skype or Facetime. She's calling to see how you are and she also needs some vital piece of information to help get a loan. No problem, but then later your identity is stolen and your bank accounts are cleaned out. Mom? An identity thief? Of course not. But your phone can now video-record and identify your face with astonishing precision. Which leads to the AI technology that makes video lip-and-facial-movement replacements so accurate. Like the young Carrie Fisher who appears at the end of Rogue One, except she's dead, out here anyway. Deepfake. The real objective? To create an atmosphere of distrust in what our own senses tell us. Senses honed by 100,000 years of evolution to trust our eyes and ears. Beyond the



short-term benefits to this party or that winning an election, the real winners will be mega-corporations on the right, or progressives on the left. Both are out to weaken and destroy our unique American exceptionalism and individuality. They are out to destroy our faith in our Constitution and in our Republic. They wish to replace our God-given freedoms with those grudgingly granted only by large corporations and by the government. What to do about it? Call them out as the liars that they are. And trust your senses, your real senses, instincts and common sense. Call them out! Let freedom ring!



Angry at Facebook. Very.

2019-6-18

I am angry tonight. No, not about the New Yorker article, since about 80% of our tourists come from Phoenix and Tucson, and I doubt even 1% from Manhattan. No, they are basically writing to please their own inbred sclerotic audience, and at our end, who cares.

But tonight we have a problem. A big problem. Made a poster an hour ago for Gordon Anderson at the Larian Motel, to help promote baseball star Curt Schilling's appearance during the upcoming Buffalo Soldiers/Freedom Days weekend. Sent the poster to a friend of Gordon's, who used it for a post on Facebook. But when she went to Boost the post – where you pay Facebook a little bit of money to send your message to a lot more people



– Facebook refused. "No," they said. "It is unacceptable. Here at Facebook, we are very uncomfortable with you using the words 'Second Amendment' and 'Conservative'." What? Really? Really. Welcome to Neo-liberal Stalinist Russia, right here in Tombstone, right now. Facebook is using the Internet to try to control our God-given right to freedom of speech. Which, last time I looked, was the First Amendment to the Constitution – protected by the Second Amendment. Basic rights, thrown in the dumpster by the Facebook people at their headquarters in Menlo Park, California. Or maybe rejected by an unseen algorithm running on a server at their place in Mumbai, India. Offshore that attack on democracy! But, because like so many others we need Facebook to promote events, I re-made the poster



rapidly so that 'Second Amendment Talk!' became 'Celebrity Panel Talk!'. And 'Red-hot conservative panel discussion' became 'Red-hot very interesting panel discussion'. And 'Meet well-known conservatives' became 'Meet well-known public figures'. By golly, didn't take long to get politically correct! Because those folks on the coast know best, with their \$1,000 suits and perfect white teeth, you betcha.

You get the idea. What's interesting is that the poster they are censoring is a JPG image.

Someone or something – human or AI software – is scanning that image as it goes to be Boosted.

Converting text in pixel form to machine-readable text, wicked fast. And evil. At St. Paul's Episcopal, maybe I can get Deacon Heather to exorcise Mark Zuckerberg, right? Because Facebook is censoring a simple message – that



conservative commentator Curt Schilling wants to talk about Second Amendment freedoms during a conservative panel discussion here at Schieffelin Hall on Saturday evening June 29th. Which you might want to go to, since Schilling is a bright guy and makes a compelling case for his point of view.

I am an Independent. But whatever your political persuasion, Facebook is making a direct attack on our freedom as voters to get information without censorship. How dare these people try to tell us how to think? Stupid little Bay Area bureaucrats trying to set themselves above the rest of us – just because their companies made some money using that same Internet that DARPA developed on our nickels? Facebook is the sewer of the internet. It stinks, and we need to flush the toilet!



Letter to the editor

2019-6-10

To the Editor, New Yorker Magazine
in response to your June 3rd 'The Wild West
Meets The Southern Border' article

Enjoyed your recent article on my Tombstone, as it was so laughably typical of a New Yorker's perspective on anything west of the Hudson, or maybe Queens. A predictable neo-liberal take on the West. By a writer who claims to be Mexican, sort of, and doesn't remember that her sainted Geronimo enjoyed capturing Mexicans and cooking them upside down over small fires. The Apaches and Mexicans hated each other here, and fought violently on a north-south axis, neither noticing the Anglos moving in from the east until



it was too late.

Her comments on Tombstone are frivolous, lacking depth and substance. She didn't bother going to the Old Court House State Park, or take the Goodenough Silver Mine Tour. Total lack of awareness for local history, of how Tombstone came to be and was the richest town in the west for a short time, and why. And not one word about cold beer on a hot day at the long bar in the Crystal Palace Saloon. Because we are not Disneyland, but a living town with the clearest air in the country... no airliners, no smog, a military no-fly zone. I'd say the best place anywhere to retire, but then you'd want to come here and check that out for yourself. Certainly the safest. The reverse of NYC, as we all have firearms, and zero burglaries or assaults.

Her progressive east-coast bias comes out



repeatedly with comments about guns and locals so-not-like-her helping catch illegals. Actually, the Minutemen folks left years ago. Trump's National Emergency isn't so much here as in the cities, like yours, as you welcome and pay for all those valued immigrants from Mexico and Central America. But we still have cross-border thefts, often on a large scale. Imagine that it's a hot July day and you are bouncing along in an old Toyota on a 53,000-acre cattle ranch, checking water tanks in the separate 1000-acre pastures. And off down a hillside, you see a Mexican tractor-trailer truck, with two guys stealing unbranded young cows. The Sheriff is two hours away. Do you let them take your property, or jack a shell into your Winchester and start shooting? No NYPD out here, trendsetters!

And how terrible that Mexico lost this area! Never



mentioning that Presidente Santa Anna happily accepted \$15,000,000 in 1853 dollars for the Gadsden Purchase. And here in town, your writer Luiselli did not interview even one person from the old Mexican-American families. Not one. Like my neighbor Madeleine Perotti, or my Councilwoman Anna Salcido, or my friend Benny Entzminger, whose Sanchez relatives were here way before Ed Schieffelin found silver and Tombstone became the richest town between St. Louis and San Francisco. Of course, my neighbors' comments about guns and large-V8 pickup trucks might have driven her Manhattan readers into their wildly expensive safe spaces... so perhaps it's best that she didn't interview anyone who actually lives here, right? Like old Lionel Martinez, Chevrolet mechanic for 40 years, with at least that many Chevy relics gracing



his property just down the street from my 1910 kit house. And she might have interviewed our Mayor, Dusty Escapule. His Basque ranching family came in the 1860s, long before President Grant moved the local Apaches 200 miles north. He is equally at home securing \$500,000 grants to restore our historic buildings, as he is riding an ATV out over the Tombstone Hills to maintain our 7" 1882 city water pipe, cleanest water in the world, straight from the springs high up 25 miles away in the Huachuca Mountains.

Progressives like Luiselli rewrite history in their pursuit of perfecting a better world. Back east, you might as well, since you can't even keep the Four Seasons open. But leave our past alone. It is not yours, and my town is not a tasty little bagatelle to be disrespected by shallow journalists who can't even get off the main street for five



minutes and learn about our land. Yes, our Allen St. gunfights are great fun, but we are also pretty good at reinventing ourselves here, with the advent of excellent Cochise County wine tastings. Our unique high altitude, hot temperature terroir recently brought in a new company, Equine and Wines, planting a 2,000-acre vineyard on Davis Road right outside of town. It's historical, after all. In the 1880s, Tombstone had the best wines from around the world, at the Grand Hotel, the Alhambra, and Kelly's Wine Room... and the then-new exciting brut Champagnes from France. The past is our future, which is delightful. Tombstone is the true west, alive and well, and we hope to see your readers soon. Come enjoy my town!



Dead Soldier Hill

2019-6-3

25-year-old Troy Martin's Apache great-grandfather, panting in desperation, runs exhausted up the side of a small hill near Peridot, back in the 1880s. Bullets ricochet off nearby rocks as Army soldiers climb up the hill behind him. Nowhere to go, nowhere to hide, and at the top of the cone-shaped hill he pulls back his bowstring, chants a prayer, and shoots an arrow straight up into the sun.

There are times when you can go back into the past. I was at that hill a week ago, off a little dirt track on the San Carlos reservation. Only two days away from an earlier wine-and-cheese party at a trendy restaurant on a trendy sidestreet in Scottsdale. Interesting people, very affluent high-



achievers. Which of course wasn't me, being from Tombstone. So the next morning I drove east across what seemed like the flat bottom of an ancient sea, then straight up Highway 60 through dangerously rocky canyons into the Superstition Mountains.

I wanted to see and experience where my grandfather Tom had worked and lived long ago. He came from back east in 1904 to Morenci, and then after a long 1917 labor strike, moved to Miami and ended up managing the Inspiration Copper Mine until it went under in the Great Depression. This is a harsh land. Rocky, severe. A few miles east, I came into Globe. Larger than Miami, successfully reinventing itself after the 2008 crash. Lots of artists, and several beautiful old buildings now restored and repurposed. They told me that the Indian reservation east of



town had lovely rooms, at a very low price. The Apache Gold Casino. But bad water – very alkaline, which I drank to get a sense of the land beyond the slot machine glitz. And ended up the next morning talking with young Troy Martin at the front desk. "No," he said. "People my age – no, we don't speak Apache. Only a few words. My friends – my friends are all over the world," he said, holding up his cell phone. "We are all connected, and it's not just about here anymore." He thought for a moment. "But when I was very little, my great-grandfather told me a story about back then, after your Indian Agent John Clum left our 'Hell's Forty Acres'. A story about a strange hill, because cactuses only grow on one side of it. Only on one side. Because my great-grandfather told me that when the soldiers chased him up to the top of the hill, and when he was sure that



there was no hope and that he was going to die that day, he shot his arrow straight up into the sun, and all the soldiers coming up the hillside turned to cactuses. Drive out there, and you'll see."

And it was so. The little hill, with the cactuses frozen in their charge up that one side only. The past comes into the present with the afternoon breeze, and who can say what the future will bring?



A speech by Calvin Coolidge

2019-5-28

Breaking news – your City government's shortest-ever meeting, all of only seven minutes last Tuesday evening, as the Historic Preservation Commission voted 5-0 to approve a new signage application. Why the rapid approval? Because the folks at City Hall are giving out a Signage Packet to every new business coming into the Schieffelin Historic District. Packets are there for existing businesses as well. In this case, the applicant took the Signage Packet to their sign maker, who followed the City Code to the letter – fonts, colors, sign sizes and placement. Once in a while, things work perfectly here. Like the recent Wyatt Earp Days weekend... perfect weather, perfectly delightful crowd, and everyone had a perfect



time. Perfect!

Tonight I read over Calvin Coolidge's 1924 Memorial Day speech at Arlington Cemetery. Too long to repeat here, but he went on about how 'Being an American citizen was the envy of Kings.' He also said that in order to maintain our democracy, our Republic, each of us has to agree to give up some of our freedom. Not much, but some. Each of us, he said, as individuals, or as state governments. And that without this voluntary giving up of some freedom, we would have chaos. Each state would be in conflict with its neighbors, and no person would submit themselves to the laws of their towns or cities or states... let alone to federal law. Anarchy and chaos.

Of course Coolidge lived in a very different time. More recently, the McCarran Internal Security



Act of 1950 was the start of a large number of laws, culminating with the recent USA Patriot Act, that took away a great amount of the personal freedom that was enjoyed in the past. So many intrusive laws. In our time, they are always passed in the name of security and for the greater good. And we agree with each law that is passed, without noticing their cumulative effect. Frogs in a slowly-heating pot. Coolidge never had to take off his shoes before boarding an airplane, but then, he didn't have an airplane to board. He had the privacy of space and time. No credit card transactions monitoring his every movement, no high-definition cameras at every turn beaming his image live to facial recognition software. And if he was politically incorrect, he had no fear of being shunned on digital social media.

On this last Memorial Day, like most of you, I



remembered people in my family who had served, and sometimes died, to safeguard our freedom. My Dad, in the Army, in France and Germany. My Mother's two brothers, who flew over Germany. My Grandfather, in the Cuban war. And my Great-Grandfather, who fell at Gettysburg. And all of us -- each of our families has similar stories. But we would not want them to have served and died in vain, as we sideslip into a future where omnipresent technology runs our lives. My hope is that you will join with me in resisting any further efforts to reduce or erode our rights as Americans. As we ramp up toward the next election, talk to your politicians. Let freedom ring!



The Wizard of Tombstone

2019-5-21

June 8, 1881. Schieffelin Hall opens on Fremont Street. Seated 450, with another 125 up in the gallery, closed now as we sit near the stage last Friday night waiting for the Tombstone Repertory Company to perform their 'Wizard of Tombstone'. This is quite a place, and you'll read more about it in a minute or so. But first, about the play.

Beg, borrow, or steal \$10 -- but go see 'The Wizard of Tombstone' this Friday or Saturday at 7 PM, or on Sunday at 3 PM. Because this is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to experience thespian excellence equal to anything you'll ever see in New York or London. The script is that good. The actors are that good. Their interaction and timing



are perfect, as they make full use of the stage, gracefully moving to and fro without missing even a single line. For whatever reason, this is not your usual small-town play. It should be on Broadway, although the repeated references to historic Tombstone and its people would be wasted on any audience back East.

Our Kenn Barrett wrote 'The Wizard of Tombstone'. Realized somehow that L. Frank Baum, who wrote the first Oz book at the Hotel Del Coronado near San Diego, obviously knew that little Dorothy Gale, swept up into the sky by that furious Kansas tornado, actually landed in the high desert just outside of Tombstone, just a few months after the O.K Corral gunfight. Got that? And the play just gets better and better as it goes along. Sparkling dialogue, rapid-fast repartee. The actors are superb. Leads: Robin



Stockmar as Dorothy, Thomas and Andrew Groleau as Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday, Chris Cain as Ike Clanton. And then there's Lilla Barrett as Big Nose Kate, doing a stunning turn as the Wicked Witch, absolutely knock-out five star New York Times reviewer perfect. Once in a while, rarely in a lifetime, the magic happens on stage, and Lillas's BNK Witch performance equals anything ever seen on the boards, just beyond the limelights on our Schieffelin Hall stage.

Writer/director Kenn Barrett brings it all together -- Oz aficionados will find their Tin Man, Cowardly Lion, and those bright ruby-red shoes, right here in Tombstone, where of course it all happened. Thanks, Kenn and the Cast and Backstage Folks! One last tip -- after the play, as you walk out through the lobby past the actors, have Lilla the Wicked Witch blink at you. Those



eyelids! Unbelievably good show, down to the smallest details. Go see this play. It is not a movie, and won't be back this way again.

History. Schieffelin Hall, March 1882. Morgan Earp and Doc Holliday enjoy the smash hit "Stolen Kisses" presented by the travelling Lingard company, and then later that night, Morgan is shot dead at Campbell and Hatch's. Schieffelin Hall repeatedly hosted famous performers -- Eddie Foy, Lily Langtree, Lilian Russell, Lola Montez -- and Lotta Crabtree, whose brother Jack ran a livery stable on Fremont next to the San Jose House. Stories to think about the next time you are there, inside those thick adobe walls that went through the 1882 7.2 Sonoran Quake without damage. Quite a place. Enjoy it this weekend!



A video for Keever

2019-5-15

The optimum length for an Internet video is now only 30 seconds, says the instructor at a digital marketing seminar recently in Tucson. When I retired doing multimedia in 2009, we had all of five minutes to tell a story. Today, only 30 seconds. Any longer, the viewer will click off and go elsewhere. For some material, even 10 seconds is too long. You have to tell an actually interesting story, he says. Expensive production values work against you... people just think it's more corporate BS. Build in UGC -- User Generated Content. It might not be professional, but sure is believable. Keep it simple, keep it genuine. Less than 30 seconds, the time it took for the gunfight at the O.K. Corral. Honest, organic, personal.



Demographics? Old people on Facebook, young folks on Instagram, Trump on Twitter. Way it is. After 60 years of television programming, we are a 30-second society – with our attention-spans conditioned year in and year out by TV commercial lengths.

But I hope you will promise me to remember Robert Keever Lopez for longer than 30 seconds. He got that middle name from Dr. Charles Keever, who delivered him at the old Tombstone Hospital back when. Fast forward 62 years. Our Keever was a good guy. He had lived in Hawaii at one point, and loved it. He was a musician – talented, played in several bands, helped build the first stage at Big Nose Kate's with his father. And he had friends all over town, from the Four Deuces to BNKs to the Crystal to Doc Hollidays and out to Johnny Ringo's and Crazy Annies. And



everywhere inbetween, all of us who said hi as he walked all over town. For forty years, without any serious problem except an occasional unwanted trip to Bisbee. Forty years here, walking around safely -- well, sort of safely -- and then he goes to Tucson for one day and is run over twice in 30 seconds and dies.

It rained the other day just as we came out of the Crystal on the way to Docs. The Crystal, where he had his own Beatles playlist. Outside in the rain, all remembering Keever who would have been there if he could of. And probably was, definitely somewhere up in the huge bright double rainbow arcing over Allen Street. Free now of any pain or ailments or problems, free to lift one at a bar in the pastures of heaven, while here on earth, here in his Tombstone, tears falling like summer rain. So if you remember Keever still, now that 30



seconds have gone by and then some, go by Mario's Bakery and talk to Jeanie. They are planning a proper memorial. Something we can all help build and be part of and by the time you read this she will have it organized. Give her a call, 520 266-9101, at 513 E. Allen St., j7isabel@gmail.com. Let's make sure Kever is remembered for 30 years, instead of 30 seconds. Forever singing his favorite Beatles song --

You say it's your birthday
It's my birthday too, yeah
They say it's your birthday
We're gonna have a good time
I'm glad it's your birthday
Happy birthday to you.



Reputation over all else

2019-5-8

With vertical-display Influencer videos taking over the world on Instagram and Tik-Tok, Samsung is introducing the Sero, a \$16,000 43-inch TV that can be paired with your cell phone and flip 90° on its stand to a vertical position. But Influencers are far less a concern these days than Regulators. Regulators are, well, all of us. Posting our comments about companies on Trip Advisor or Yelp, with the motel or restaurant owner living in fear of a bad review that they have no power whatsoever to counter or undo. Regulators – again, many of us – also post criticisms of others, often anonymously, on social media like Facebook. Plenty of that going on. In a digital world, we are moving into a



"reputation economy." Our personal Brands – carefully nurtured so as to present ourselves as helpful and non-threatening – tend to only make us more similar and indistinct. The branding culture insists that everybody has to live according to the same rules and regulations, and our unique characteristics that make us human are discarded. To be accepted, you have to follow the new morality code where everything has to be liked and everybody has to be respected. If you hold negative or unpopular opinions, you will be shut out of the digital conversation. You will be shunned if you are not part of the herd. Upside is that all this opens the door to a new and highly profitable business arena – "reputation management." New firms like ReputationDefender® will "Bury negative content, promote what's positive, and protect



from online attacks." For a lot of money, they will help us become good but dull corporate conformists, whitewashing our imperfections in order to both sell and buy things at an advantage over others. And the people most in need of reputation management – desperate for it, in fact – are the most afraid of losing their only valuable asset – their reputation – as they have few tangible salable skills. The young Influencers and older media commentators, having only their digital selves to present to a fickle marketplace, may be the forerunners of a branding future for everybody else.

But not in Tombstone. People here don't seem to care much what others think of us. We certainly don't care enough to try to change our variously flawed personalities. Perhaps it's because we live in a place where you can't really be better than



anybody else, no matter how hard you try. There is no corporate imperative here to be part of a homogenous group. You can't go up the ladder, since there is no place to go to. No boss to suck up to, no lesser folks to look down on. No exclusive social groups to belong to, not in this little oasis so distinct from the outside world.

Tombstone is special. And luckily too insignificant, too far away from the big cities, for anyone out there to want to spend precious time and money trying to change us from "The Town Too Tough To Die" to "The Town Where Everybody Is Politically Correct." No, we are safe from the Regulators. For now, anyway.



Beef in low earth orbit

2019-5-6

Enjoying a hamburger down in Benson, reading about how Instagram wants to be the new Amazon, using young Influencers to sell products. Lost on me; I don't do Instagram and can't comprehend Facebook. So I found myself thinking about the hamburger instead. Where did the beef come from? Turns out you can label beef "USDA" if it is processed in an American plant... but the meat can come from somewhere else. Which led to an idle daydream about rail guns in China flinging cows out over the Pacific, perhaps LEO shots in low earth orbit, with re-entry direct to the freezers at Arkansas-based Tyson Foods, Cargill Meat Solutions of Wichita, and National Beef Packing in Kansas City. Three companies,



plus JBS of Brazil, that make up 85% of the market, compared to 25% in 1977.

Another semi-monopoly situation. Because each year since 1980, almost 17,000 cattle ranchers have gone out of business, says the Open Markets Institute. Small farmers, mainly. And the legal confusion over beef labeling sure hasn't helped.

Back in 2008, Congress mandated that only animals born, raised, and slaughtered in the United States qualified as "Product of the USA."

Then Mexico and Canada, who ship 2 million live cattle a year to the USA, complained to the WTO – the World Trade Organization. Backed by the major processors, they won their case in 2012.

Made in America? Forget it.

Small farmers, represented by the 5,000-member R-CALF, believe that mandatory product labeling will allow domestic cattle to command higher



prices. During President Trump's first 90 days in office, he issued a "Buy American" order covering federal purchases, that included "country of origin" labeling as a trade negotiation goal. But this went nowhere in Congress, as beef labeling was not part of the new Canada-US-Mexico NAFTA trade deal, the USMCA. Dead in the water.

Back home that day, I looked up "Arizona ranching" in the National Geographic archives. In September 1953, their lead story was "Tucson to Tombstone." With a two-page photo spread, one large aerial shot, showing some 500 cows coming into the large old Cowan Ranch corrals. Today, the beef industry here is smaller but still significant. About 300 Cochise County farms, like the Double U Ranch near Tombstone, have more than 50% of their total sales coming from cattle.



Comes to about \$60 million in output and 290 jobs. And overall, cattle sales account for 19% of total Arizona agricultural sales – the third-highest agricultural products sold.

Bottom line? Write your Congressperson and your Senator. They probably can't bring back "Product of the USA" beef labels. But they can, and should, include "Product of the USMCA" as a labeling requirement in the new USMCA treaty. The payoff? Well, on those dark new-moon nights, you won't have to duck anymore when you hear the whistling sound of a cow coming in overhead from Shanghai. And we will have a much better shot at food safety for our families if we know where the beef is actually coming from.



Influencer

2019-4-23

Influencer Jessy Taylor had a very bad day. Wiping tears from her eyes, the 21-year-old cried non-stop about the injustice of it all on a recent YouTube video. "I'm nothing without my following. I am nothing without my following," she wept. Seems that Instagram deleted her 100,000-follower account. "I want to say twice to everybody reporting me - think twice because you're ruining my life, because I make all my money online, and I don't want to lose that." According to the influencer, who said she previously worked at McDonalds and as a prostitute, she is not cut out for a 9-to-5 job because she has "no job qualifications" and brings "nothing to the table." Taylor said that although



she made \$500,000 from her Instagram account over three years, "that money does not last. You go to the Gucci store a few times, you pay a couple of months of rent here in LA... I'm not rich like I used to be."

I guess being old here in Tombstone, you get out of touch with the world out there beyond our beautiful little oasis. So I called my girlfriend Mary's granddaughter, who at 16 knows all about this stuff. "What on earth is an Influencer?" I asked. "Somebody like Donald Trump or Nancy Pelosi?"

"No, Jon," she replied. "OMG, you are so out of it. Try MattyBRaps, 15-year-old Matthew Morris, with a cumulative social reach of 23.4 million followers. Or JoJo Siwa, also 15, with 16.7 million followers. She teamed up with JC Penney to sell a line of bedroom decor, accessories, and a JoJo



doll." We are in the big leagues here, folks. These Influencer kids make a lot of money. They are paid very, very well for seamlessly weaving corporate product pitches into their online videos. The ultimate Influencer? Perhaps Ivanka Trump, also way cute with mega-millions of followers, who sells her own line of products to the adult market... clothing, bedroom accessories, baby items, etc.

But Ivanka isn't an Influencer in a true sense. Unlike Jessy Taylor, her world won't vanish in a flash if she loses her Instagram or Twitter accounts. Not totally a digital construct, she won't disappear if her social media melts down. But Jessy did, and maybe she is the future, just a little bit ahead of the curve. Consider: in a few short years from now, will we all be only as relevant as our personal digital brands? Will our reputations



be only as good as our number of followers? And with our incomes rising and falling with those numbers, how long before we lose our old physical-world job skills, and become as worthless as Jessy Taylor when a social media service pulls the plug?

As we go deeper, ever deeper into a digital universe, we might not want to wonder about what's real anymore. It might be better to just assume that anything seen onscreen is changeable and evanescent, as we learn to rapidly change our personalities to suit the moment, in the hope that unseen others out there don't throw the switch and cause our myriad of pixels to swirl up and vanish in the clear blue Tombstone sky.



Coronado™ Aircar test drive

2019-4-15

April morning, 2042. Mary and I shopping for a new aircar in Tucson, with my Link® streaming how great I'd look in the new six-rotor Dodge Coronado™. She'll love it too, says Link®, and Mary's Link® also streaming how great it would be to buy that emerald-green one, goes with her eyes, take it down to Tombstone for the day, mega fun. So off we go through the Kolb port in the Bubble™, past the cracks in the aging sky-blue plastic, jetting up and over and out to the east along Sky 10. All the food factories just outside the city belching brown and black smoke into the tangerine sky, and then mile after mile of yellow-green farms growing soy for our favorite Bigger Burgers™, and Link® saying "Whoa, Two!



Take a dip down to Pilot® and try the new Cosmo Bigger Burger™ with extra Synth-Bacon." Pass on that one, with Benson coming up at 200 mph. Benson. Only 138,000 people, and a small Bubble™. Link®: "The Amaretto! Way great starter home, you and Mary looking so good, fit in so good, in the exciting Villages At Vignetto™, now from the low \$5 millions!" Banking hard right over that old development on the airpath north to Tombstone, at 500 feet over the classic Nilson Amtrak Station, unused now cuz the trains all left when the maglevs came. Air outside clearer as we rocket up over the hills, away from the cities. Tombstone as always too small and poor to have any electrostructure at all, save one old Link® tower. "Jon! Mary would look so cute in that new RoadWrangler™ outfit from Boss Spur®, and Jon you'll be so proud walking next



to her down the Boardwalk® with your new Stetson LinkPort 5X Hat™, both of you so cool, like, so Western, true that!"

Love Link®. Can't imagine how people used to live with those clunky computers that were outside their bodies. Yo implant. Anything you want to know – anything at all – zap. And InterChat™ for personal conversations, with the Companies® monitoring and passing along timely helpful hints about things to buy and do that make your life so much richer and more fulfilling. Link® way best bro, ultra rad, as the Coronado™ executes a perfect three-point landing atop the old town high school, which is what they did back before MySchool®, back when kids actually had to learn things themselves. Beyond old, bad boring.

Walking through town. Link®: "Delicious Street



Tacos at Tina's SuperStore™ across from the Bird Cage™," got that, ate four, way raving good, only \$147 new dollars. And then two glasses of Maison Escapule Cabernet Franc™, Tombstone AVA label rated 94 by WineLink Advocate®. But outside Doc Hollidays, the achingly deep blue sky suddenly turned jet black as an 80 mph microburst roared in. "I've lost my Link!" cried Mary, as thick clouds of red dust swirled all around us. "Call the Coronado™ to pick us up, Jon!" But my Link® was dead too: "Error 404! System malfunction." Mega scary, no Links®, cut off from everything, stranded out in the middle of nowhere. Fade to black.



Every man a Rembrandt

2019-4-10

"Every man a Rembrandt," went the slogan for the paint-by-numbers kits sold by Craft Master in the 1950s. Dan Robbins, who died last week at 93, invented these coloring canvases predrawn with areas that had numbers which corresponded to small tubs of oil paint colors that came with the kit. After first finding that abstract-art kits did not sell, Craft Master produced a wildly successful lineup of scenes that anyone could paint – landscapes, cathedrals, New England barns, Swiss villages, as well as images of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. Their most popular offering was a replica of Leonardo Da Vinci's "Last Supper," as well as his "Mona Lisa".

Da Vinci was actually the inspiration for paint-by-



number, noted Robbins. Because Da Vinci, like other Renaissance artists, used a large "cartoon" – a huge piece of paper that lines could be drawn on, holes then punched on the lines, and charcoal blown through the holes to transfer a painting's outlines onto a damp fresco wall, ready for the colored areas to be painted by apprentices, with the master doing the final detail work. But art history aside, the Craft Master efforts were derided, deplored and disdained by fine art and cultural critics. As time went on, the term "paint by number" became a byword for conformity or lack of originality. But the art critics rarely recognized that art is a business. That artists through the ages have always used the latest technology to turn out work faster, cheaper, better – just like any business.

Today is a golden age for artists inspired by



Robbins, Da Vinci, and Rembrandt. Same as any generation back to the Paleolithic cave paintings at Altamira, 5% to 10% of us like to draw, like to paint, like to mess around with art. And in this new century, we have the most amazing technology to help us produce work very, very rapidly. Here's how:

Start with your favorite digital camera photo, or an image found online. Print it out on light card stock paper, either at home or at Staples – 8.5 x 11, or 11 x 17. Spray the back of it with 3M Photo Mount, and stick it on a same-size piece of inexpensive Masonite or foamcore board from Hobby Lobby. Next, spray the image with a protecting coat of Krylon KO1305 Gallery Series Artist Aerosol, and -- you're ready to become the next Painter of Light! Just like wildly successful Thomas Kinkade, you can now paint over the



digital photo printout with acrylic colors, which also dry rapidly. On a tight budget? You can mix just about any color from these six – Burnt Sienna, Quinacridone Red, Ultramarine Blue, Primary Cyan, Phthalocyanine Green, and Primary Yellow... plus Titanium White and perhaps Payne's Gray. Like Kinkade, you may just want to add only a few touches of white highlights here and there... or you can overpaint the whole image. As for style, that's your call – but as the Impressionists found out in France in the late 1800s, you can really jam out pix fast if you make them out of lots of little dabs and dots. Art is great fun... go for it!



Concorde Noir

2019-4-2

Equine & Wines Master Sommelier Doug Frost states in his introduction to 'On Wines' that "wine is grape juice with alcohol. It has flavors some find enjoyable." Which inspired me the other day to purchase a small bottle of 190-proof Everclear, and then to mix 1 ounce of this 95% alcohol-by-volume liquid with 8 ounces of Welch's grape juice. I am a high-tech guy, and the idea of waiting five years to actually grow something didn't make sense, as I could produce a delightful sweet summer wine, très doux, with its tastefully appropriate 'Maison St. Jon' label in less than 15 minutes. My Concorde Noir sure beats those fake rosés they sell in the Hamptons each year. It has a delicate bouquet suggesting blueberries, pecans,



and the occasional radial tire.

The weather is warm now, and I invited some friends over to sit on the porch, have a glass of Concorde Noir, and relax in the sun. We talked about everything, from whether the Titanic's second cruise would've been up the San Pedro River if it hadn't hit that iceberg, to appropriate speculation about the Arizona Cardinal cheerleaders coming soon to our City Park. A fine calm day, and after they left I remembered comments by my favorite philosopher, Epicurus, who lived in Athens around 300 BC. He ran a school called 'The Garden', as he felt that there was nothing better than sitting around with your friends, drinking wine, and talking about whatever as you watched the weeds grow. "The purpose of life is to avoid pain," said Epicurus. "It's about maximizing pleasure."



Which rapidly leads you to a simple life, since an obsession with acquiring material things yields transitory pleasure but long-term pain as the bills come in. Life's purpose is to attain a happy, tranquil life, characterized by Ataraxia – peace and freedom from fear – and Aponia – the absence of pain – and by living a self-sufficient life surrounded by friends. According to Epicurus, death is the end of the body, the end of pain and suffering, and therefore should not be feared. He believed that the various gods around at that time did exist, though they had no involvement in human affairs, and did not punish or reward people for their actions. And this, even though I am a faithful member of St. Paul's church here, coincides with my own view of the universe.

But a second Epicurean attempt to maximize



pleasure as an instant winemaker ran into a snag when I tried to add a bit of vinegar to Ocean Spray cranberry juice plus the Everclear, so it would taste more like real red wine. But no. This produced a strange result, where you could taste both the sugar from the juice and the tart vinegar simultaneously but separately. Which is actually good, because if all of us Tombstone residents could bang out \$50 bottles of Chardonnay or Cabernet Franc – well, our nascent wine industry would suddenly be in big trouble. But they are safe from our uncultured barbarian attempts to scale the heights of good taste. Concorde Noir won't ever get a 94 rating from Wine Spectator, that's for sure!



Desolation at Bachman Springs

2019-3-27

On a warm spring day, I am walking through desolation, the remains of the Bachmann Springs golf course development out on Middlemarch Road. At 1,710 acres, it was originally set to have 1,100 homes, luxury homes so close to the golf course designed by Tom Fazio. Along the entrance driveway, rows of palm trees, just like those on the road to Mary Pickford's place near San Diego, are dying for lack of water. But the water is there. Two springs, and they put down 11 wells back then, good for 4,000 gallons per minute. Good water, so clean they planned to bottle and sell it on the Bachman Springs label. Good clean water for the three-story five-star hotel and spa. Looked around for it, but no, never built. But the irrigation pipes and pumps are still



in place, waiting for the next owner.

And this is a mystery. Why isn't there a new owner? For a place already developed, the infrastructure anyway, with water-- lots of water-- and electricity all in? But there were probably endless lawsuit tangles when it went bankrupt, even though Tom Bachmann had the place blessed by Apache, Navajo, and Tohono O'Odham spiritual representatives.

A soft breeze, and sparkling ripples on the large pond behind the equestrian barn. It is spacious and airy, with beautiful varnished wood stalls that could probably hold about 20 horses. The barn is in very good shape, and it is a crime to let it go unused. Perhaps some local horse club could make a deal with the present owner or with the County. It is a new structure, with a roof in good condition, and just needs a few days of sweeping



up trash on the floor to get it back in use. The trash is a jumble of old developer records and plans and spreadsheets. It made me feel sad. People obviously put a lot of work into this place and then it tanked, I guess back in the real estate crash.

Desolation. Not even any ghosts of the rich and famous from Los Angeles and Phoenix, gone before they even had a chance to live here.

Bachmann Springs. So I left to go back to town, remembering a sonnet by the English Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Ozymandias'. Written in 1818, but it still resonates out here on Middlemarch Road:

I met a traveller from an antique land

Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,



And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless
things,

The hand that mocked them, and the heart that
fed:

And on the pedestal these words appear:

‘My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:

Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!’

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away.”



Stuck on Tombstone Territorial Estates

2019-3-11

It is spring, and I am stuck in a gully out in Tombstone Territorials Estates digging out sand behind a wheel to get my little white van on the bumpy dirt road again. Laughing because it's been fifty years since the last time I had to dig a car out of the sand. And I'm here because years ago, probably on another beautiful spring day, someone at my St. Paul's Church decided to buy seven lots in what was a soon-to-fail subdivision. Seven being a special number to Christians, of course -- all sorts of references to that number in scripture. Which led me to this day, deciding to take a look and see the seven lots that our church owned.

As church treasurer, I thought maybe we could



sell the land to raise money for parish maintenance. But no. "Jon," said Rich Bennett of Realty Executives, "Forget about it. That land isn't worth anything. Sorry to disappoint you, but the place went broke before your lots could be developed. No electricity, no water, no nothing." And when I finally arrived at the lots on the correct dirt road, it was true. Just high desert, gentle hills, and lots of small brambles that tugged at my jeans as I walked to the top of a rise. And then I thought, why not just forget about the lack of electricity or water? This place was beautiful. The view went on forever, out across a wide valley to the far away Whetstones. A soft warm breeze, and a dark line of clouds near the horizon maybe bringing rain. East wind, rain -- "Higashi no kaze ame," as the old Japanese code phrase went, the signal that launched the attack



on Pearl Harbor. But today in Tombstone, it was peaceful and quiet, with what's left of Tombstone Territorial Estates innocently ignoring the latest National Emergency.

The high desert sure can slow you down. At a bramble-evading 1 mph, you have time to look, to really look, at all the tough little plants coming into springtime bloom. Curious small cactuses with fuzzy gray branches, that on closer inspection are actually a lovely light purple color, bursting with yellow rose-like flowers that themselves are dotted with small sky-blue markings. Fresh deer tracks here and there, and inch-wide holes for snakes or gophers or whatever small creatures call them home. Our seven Church lots, as it turns out, are very beautiful.

But not to be developed. No, not even by planting



vines to save a few bucks on sacramental wine for Communion. We'll leave this land in its natural state. Maybe as a retreat, a place to come by foot or Jeep to cut ties with a hurried world for a day or so, during this Lenten season. To give up the temptations of Wal-Mart and Fry's and the Mall for awhile, out here on this beautiful land that our Lord created for our use and pleasure, so close to town, in these gentle hills.



Hillary and Simulation One

2019-3-6

Hillary Clinton decided not to run for President last week, and I can tell you why. It has to do with Simone and Ananova and particularly Xin Xiaomeng, but we will get to that. Because two years ago, at Paramount Studios in LA during a break on the NCIS-LA sound stage, I went over to talk to the video guy.

"You are editing the actors' video stream in real time, right?" I said. "So if Hillary Clinton was here making a speech, could you make her appear – nicer? Sort of mild, instead of sort of harsh?"

He could, he said, given the extremely powerful computing equipment that the TV show used.

"But you want to go talk to the sound guy, Jon. Video is easy, sound is tough." Across the room,



the sound guy stood next to an even larger collection of computer servers, electronic mixers, and rack mounts crammed with indescribable equipment.

"Yes," said the sound guy after a long pause. "We could do that. Real-time, on-the-fly filters and transforms. Yes. What? You want her to sound like a southern belle? That would be hard. But nicer, sweeter, softer... lose the harshness... yes, we could do that." And I went home that day thinking that maybe the next presidential election would be very different, particularly the debates, where nobody cares what the local audience is seeing – it's that huge TV viewership that counts. Enter Simone. Simulation One, where a desperate producer creates a digital actress to stand in for the star who just walked out. Al Pacino falls in love with Simone, who looks amazingly like



beautiful actress Rachel Roberts. But this is a movie. Cut to Ananova, the BBC's digital broadcaster who could read TV news 24 hours a day, a few years ago. Unlike Simone, Ananova had more of a cartoon character appearance. Just setting the stage for this week's huge digital breakthrough, as it turns out.

Her name is Xin Xiaomeng, the first female digital news anchor on China's Xinhua state media. She is cute, and cheerful, projecting sincerity and honesty and other take-'er-home to-Mom qualities. And she is totally human. Totally, even with subtle body language. You just can't tell that she's a carefully programmed AI bot. Next generation up from last year's male Xinhua newsbot, Qiu Hao, the first to feature realistic hand movements while speaking. Xin and Qiu. A nice couple, but still far away from replacing



Rachel Maddow and Sean Hannity. Far, far away, right? Maybe. Which gets us back to Hillary, finally upstaged by Xin and Qiu and the new politico-bots soon to follow. Hillary, like Donald definitely not a droid, exits stage left, and there you are.



Shout out for free speech

2019-3-22

It's been several weeks now, but I'm still thinking about President Trump's talk demanding free speech on our college campuses. As a classic liberal, I'm totally with the President on this one. If American students can't say and advocate what they feel without fear of being attacked, of what use is a university education? Are our young people at school only to be cowed into submission by neo-communists or neo-fascists? And what was really shocking to me was the antifa attack on young Hayden Williams, who had set up a conservative outreach table at the University of California in Berkeley. Because he set up last February in Sproul Plaza – the very place where the Free Speech movement started back in the 1960s. Talk about irony! Anyway, with this, a



shout out for President Trump – standing up for our First Amendment freedom of speech.

Dust. Tonight, desperately cleaning my house ahead of the visit by Mary's very nice Minnesota sisters tomorrow. Thinking about my Dad's older sister Elizabeth, as a young bride up at Globe in 1922. After her first child, she moved to her Mom's place in LA, and years later always remembered sweeping her dirt floor down at least 2 inches while she lived in Arizona.

So I can't complain. Actually, the dust is interesting. I guess it comes in through my front door screen, mostly, and also through various cracks and crevices in this old 1910 house. Softly, imperceptibly, the dust gets thicker as the days go by. If I were a better person, I'd probably dust one room each week to stay ahead of it. I've always admired and envied people who were organized



like that. But sadly, it isn't me. The good news is that the dust is – just dust. It is very different than dust in the big cities in California. That dust is mildly toxic, a composite of petrochemical sludge and the remains of an infinity of worn down brake pads. But here in Tombstone? It's just dust, and harmless enough -- buy another box of Kleenex if you sneeze a lot.

I also promised to reduce various piles of clothes and books before The Visit. My God, I knew I had a sofa under all that stuff! But there are benefits to spring cleaning. Like this evening, taking a break from dusting, out on the porch looking at a glorious sunset – all the oranges and reds and mauves and purples, at the end of a beautiful warm blue-sky day, with soft white clouds, Tombstone in spring, with the land starting to turn St. Patrick's emerald green, all around.



A final note – am very excited about this week's announcement of the huge Equine & Wines vineyard project. This is a big deal – lots of new jobs, although some of us will need a bit of speech therapy. 'Shardonnee? Cabinet Sawfignone? Pinenut Greegoh?' Hey, we'll get there.



Buffalo Soldiers: desparate fights in the hills

2019-2-26

I was going to write this week about my speculation that Pres. Trump is a Russian agent, but my Republican friends here went into shock with a chorus of "Jon, don't go there." So forget that one. Instead, let's take a last look at Black History Month, as February slides into March with *The Green Book* winning best picture at the Oscars, and its co-star Mahershala Ali winning best supporting actor. And a sort-of-black guy, Remi Malik, took home best actor for a stunning performance in *Bohemian Rhapsody*. On the other side of the coin, Empire actor Jussie Smollett is accused of trying to lynch himself, a pretty good PR stunt claiming racism, homophobia, and the assorted sins of Donald



Trump in an attempt to get more pay from his employer.

But let's take this back home to Tombstone.

Where, roughly 135 years ago, truly serious black history was written by the Buffalo Soldiers in the southwest, fighting the Apaches across Arizona and New Mexico, sometimes all the way to the Red River in Texas. The fierce warfare went on for many years, until Geronimo finally surrendered in Skeleton Canyon out near Portal, with Tombstone photographer J. S. Fly documenting the event. There were 14 Congressional Medals of Honor awarded to black soldiers during the Indian Wars. The citations accompanying the awards were brief, back then. As you read the following, imagine that you were there, in the hills, in the scorching heat, often outnumbered and surrounded by an implacable



enemy. Apaches able to march 40 miles a day without water, often with newer and better rifles than yours. Imagine yourself there. The sun is beating down. It is not a movie. What are you going to do? Today, we remember:

Corporal Clinton Greaves, 9th Cavalry, 1877 -- "While part of a small detachment to persuade a band of renegade Apache Indians to surrender, his group was surrounded. Cpl. Greaves in the center of the savage hand-to-hand fighting, managed to shoot and bash a gap through the swarming Apaches, permitting his companions to break free."

Henry Johnson, 9th Cavalry, 1879 -- "Voluntarily left fortified shelter and under heavy fire at close range made the rounds of the pits to instruct the guards, fought his way to the creek and back to bring water to the wounded."



Thomas Shaw, Sergeant, 9th Cavalry, 1881 --

"Forced the enemy back after stubbornly holding his ground in an extremely exposed position and prevented the enemy's superior numbers from surrounding his command."

Isaac Payne, Trumpeter, 24th Infantry, 1875 --

"With 3 other men, he participated in a charge against 25 hostiles while on a scouting patrol."

One of those other three men, Sergeant John Ward, also received the Medal of Honor for gallantry in that fight that day.

And the simplest citation of all, to Private

Augustus Walley, 9th Cavalry, 1881 -- "Bravery in action with hostile Apaches".

Bravery in action. The 9th Cavalry, and then the 10th from our Fort Huachuca chasing Pancho Villa across the border in 1916. The 93rd Infantry Division, training here before deployment to



Europe in WWII. You want black history? Look no further than these hills, this land they fought and died for -- duty, honor, country. Never forget!



Paradox in paradise

2019-2-19

There is a paradox in paradise, a paradox every bit as dark and mysterious as any. Under a full moon the soft falling snow carefully builds its rounded shapes on our roofs and porches, on the hoods of our cars, on the branches of the mesquite trees on every street and alley. They call it the snow moon, and so it was, a supermoon casting its even glow throughout the night, and even still at dawn.

Is there anything more beautiful anywhere than that soft snow clinging to the countless mesquite branches? We live in paradise. From time to time, others have too. Norman Rockwell, in his little Massachusetts town of Stockbridge, so near the turnpike bringing all the tourists from Boston,



and paradise is lost. Pismo Beach on the central coast of California in the 1950s, folks in their campers and trailers and motor homes living right on the beach, digging clams in the sun, with the breakers crashing and almost, but not quite, drowning out the sound of the convoys of tourists arriving on Route One, and paradise is lost. It is the paradox of paradise, and we are not immune. Our oasis offers separation and protection from the overwhelming mall culture outside, yet without tourism we would become just another windswept ghost town without much to recommend it. And so our paradise depends on an uncertain balancing act. Imagine that you are Charles Blondin walking the tightrope over Niagara Falls in 1859 with your long balance pole, but this time with a horde of tourists dangling off one end of the pole, and our beautiful mesquite



trees, landscapes and sunsets on the other.

Something like that.

The good news is that we won't lose our paradise overnight. Probably won't until Tucson builds up over 1 million people, and that's a few years away. In my experience, the signal that the end is near is the first appearance of parking meters. When I was a boy in San Francisco, they came to my neighborhood, and my Mom and her friends went out with a hacksaw to destroy them – only to be told by our neighborhood cop "Now Glenna, let it go, you know they'll just put new ones in tomorrow." The parking meters came, and my San Francisco went on to become what it is today – paradise lost.

In a fantasy world there are opportunities to greatly increase the tourist flow. All the merchants could get along, support their



Chamber, and actually create interesting events that would draw people in greater numbers. We could discover magic crystals in the Tombstone Hills with far more curative and psychic powers than those in Sedona. And we could lengthen our Tombstone International Airport runway from 4,300 feet to at least 7,000 feet, so as to fly in 747s full of tourists from Berlin, and maybe giant A380s coming all the way from Beijing. But perhaps our civic and mercantile squabbling and discord is our salvation. Because today, the snow rests softly on each and every mesquite branch, and I am in paradise, and losing it can wait.



Democracy in action

2019-2-12

Democracy in action at Schieffelin Hall last Tuesday evening. In a scene very much like Norman Rockwell's painting "Freedom of Speech" in his classic Four Freedoms series, speaker after speaker directly engaged Marshall Bob Randall about overzealous police enforcement. There are conflicts here. My inalienable right as a small-town citizen to get drunk enough to still be able to drive home, and then to drive home. Versus the rights of my fellow citizens to drive to and fro without being impacted by, well, me. There are laws of course. And the fatal verdict of a breathalyzer reading, no matter what my protests of having only one, well, maybe two or perhaps three Bud Lights. Yes, there are conflicts here. Bar owners



complaining about the fall-off in tourism due to over-enforcement. "Why," one said, "We just aren't getting as many motorcycle riders anymore." And I didn't have the heart to speak up with the news that our hordes of motorcycle riders are going away, ghost Harleys no longer thundering through the night, even Rolling Thunder back east canceled this year. All those older guys are hanging it up, not even riding the new trikes here anymore. And the young kids in the cities, with their café racer rice-rocket Suzukis and Kawasakis – hey, they don't even know we are here.

Nor do they care. Tombstone is a great town for grandparents. Older folks who loved Western movies, who have heard about Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday and Ringo and all the rest. People like us, people like all the older folks at Schieffelin



Hall on Tuesday night. But like the motorcyclists, we are slowly going away, and the younger generation had better start looking for magic crystals or rare ruthenium deposits out in them-thar hills, to build tourism up again.

Heard some good things Tuesday night. That there is no Arizona law for public intoxication – so those of us who live in town can happily walk as erratically as we want down those boardwalks to get home. That our marshals do not get a rake-off from the DUI money that the state collects.

That Marshall Randall sets performance metrics based on percentage reductions of crashes and DUI incidents. That there is no ticket quota for the new police car out on Charleston Road, no need to make a certain number of arrests with it in order to keep the grant that pays for it.

Left unsaid, unfortunately, was the hidden cost of



the extremely high-tech maintenance for the anechoic spatial light modulation coating on that new vehicle. Using adaptive optics driven by an on-board computer, the car presents an image of whatever is behind it to oncoming drivers. You don't see it at all, just a slight shimmer given its refresh rate of 5.6 milliseconds. Now, is functional invisibility actually entrapment? The courts will have to sort that out. In the meantime, take it easy on truly dangerous Charleston Road, with its negative-camber turn surfaces and deceptive decreasing-radius curves. It ain't Daytona with high-speed banking, guys!



Super Bowl: our capitalist fiesta

2019-2-6

Like me, you probably watched the Super Bowl last Sunday. 100 million of us did, which makes the best possible audience for people trying to advocate one thing or another. Entertainers trying to jumpstart their careers by channeling Colin Kaepernick's police brutality protest, even though his last Super Bowl start was seven years ago. Since then though, with so many police departments adopting video cameras, both real and fake brutality claims have gone way, way down. And unless I'm wrong, all the agitation is coming from older baby-boomers. The young people are off in another direction, and don't care much about the NFL and the whole football thing. But 100 million TV viewers still make the Super



Bowl the perfect PR vehicle. The best bandwagon to jump on. Whether you are kneeler Kaepernick, or anti-kneeler Trump. Strange that a football game would become the vehicle for freedom of speech, and also for endless praise for our military, who are actually out there defending that same freedom of speech. So many people wrapping themselves in the flag, at a football game of all places. But when Gladys Knight sang the national anthem, all the puffery and fakery fell away as she sang our shared song so clearly and truly. That was beautiful, and the game was good too.

I also enjoyed the Super Bowl's unrestricted ode to capitalism. Only 11 minutes of actual playing time, and over 100 commercials! Most, it seemed, for Bud Light, whose many ads had me wanting to run over to the Crystal with my \$2.75. Just



imagine, \$5 million for a 30-second spot. A critical observer might complain that few of the commercials were for genuinely new or interesting products. But I can tell you, Bernie Sanders and his new young sidekick Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez have absolutely no chance promoting socialism against this onslaught of product ads. Not to mention the President's "America will never be a socialist country" State of the Union speech. Glad to see someone stating the obvious – it's amazing to me that anyone could advocate increased government control in this country.

True fact – capitalism has brought more material prosperity to more people than any other economic system ever invented. But capitalism is weird. There is no big daddy, no maximum leader controlling things. No Lenin, no Hitler, no Mao,



no Maduro. All you have are millions of independent entities each acting in their own interest, cooperating or competing with others. All in a reasonably free marketplace with minimal government controls to ensure product safety. This drives socialists nuts. There is no political class or intellectual class running things. None needed, none wanted. And luckily, after about 100 years of progressives and socialists actually running things in other countries, we have very clear data on how that works out, or doesn't – think Russia, Cuba, North Korea, or Venezuela. Turns out that if you just leave people alone to handle their own affairs, you'll have a decent society, better than most others out there in the world. Not so bad!



Mourning doves at dawn

2019-1-30

Woke up this AM to the call of a morning dove, actually a Mourning Dove, which sounds like a coyote waking up after a hard night at Doc Hollidays. You'll find these birds all across the United States. 20 million of them are shot each year both for food and for sport... even though they can fly at up to 55 mph, which you would think would help them evade the shotgun guys. Here, that call is a sure sign of the advent of warmer weather, along with sunrise coming a little earlier each morning. At the winter solstice last December 21, it was dark as night at 7 AM. But not today, just a month or so later. The days truly are getting longer, here in Tombstone anyway. And, with the doves coming back as



nature's thermometer, it's warmer now too. Not in Minnesota of course, which apparently has turned into a gigantic ice cube, except for the people who have escaped to our wonderful warm RV parks... 1100 spaces in Benson alone, not to mention the great places we have here in Tombstone.

My sports car friends in California think I'm nuts to like RVs. But I do. Basically, it's easier to design a Ferrari or Lamborghini than a motorhome. Think about it – somehow, you have to take all the functional components of a house and stuff them into a box that can cruise all day at 75 mph without falling apart. Water, heat, air conditioning, a stove, fridge, TV and DVD player with perhaps a satellite dish, sinks, shower and toilet, with storage tanks for both fresh and wastewater, and a generator that can produce



enough electricity to power all this. And then since they sell these things more to Mom than to Dad, you'll have a nice kitchen table, large windows, cabinetry, carpets, a closet, countertops, and a very comfortable bed big enough for at least two adults. And the newer RVs have slide-outs, making for a far more comfortable living space than any studio apartment in Manhattan or San Francisco. The downside? Well, even if your brand-new RV costs \$300,000, you'll get a ticket if you try to sleep in New York or San Fran. Or park it for more than four hours in Del Mar, where the local homeowners get really mad when they see somebody living in an RV and not paying the high local taxes. There is also 'trailer trash' status prejudice, going back to the Great Depression... even though today many of the RVs in our



campgrounds are worth more than the average home. Go figure!

Recommended read: "Team of Vipers" by Cliff Sims, who worked with Trump in the White House for more than a year. He's a good writer, and, being a Republican who actually likes the President, presents a very entertaining and probably more accurate account than the usual 'tell-all' diatribes that are being published these days.



A totally stupid government shutdown

2019-1-23

The mesquite tree in front of my house is shedding its soft feathery leaves. In the middle of January. What? A little late, compared to those gorgeous late-fall orange and red maple displays back East. But no. My mesquite, like yours, keeps its leaves to protect the small new buds from the winter freezes, waiting for the stiff January winds to clear the decks for the warm weather soon to come. I think that's what's going on, anyway.

Didn't do too well years ago back in Botany class, daydreaming about crossing redwood trees with marijuana plants.

The government shutdown continues, as I write this last Wednesday. Our politicians can't compromise. And since compromise is the



essence of politics, it makes you wonder why we have them at all. Programs like NOAA's Weather Service are critical, saving lives by accurate disaster prediction. Government big data analysis -- did you know that the Department of Agriculture can give a farmer planting and harvesting info for any one of our nation's 26 million fields? And the Department of Energy is still very actively taking care of all those nuclear warheads, all that nuclear waste, as well as running ARPA-E to invent and develop truly new energy sources. I deeply value our government services, like the Patent Office, making a profit year after year. And on the humane side, the food surplus programs that are keeping 39 million folks going with SNAP, and act as a pretty good hedge for those farmers, too.

It's all too serious, so the shutdown finds me re-



reading 'Boomerang: Travels in the New Third World', a very funny book by Michael Lewis. How bad can it get? Hey, there's Greece... totally broke, financially dishonest, shaking down rich countries like Germany for cash to get by.

"The Greek state was not just corrupt but also corrupting. Once you saw how it worked you could understand a phenomenon that otherwise made no sense at all: the difficulty Greek people have saying a kind word about one another. Individual Greeks are delightful: funny, warm, smart, and good company. I left two dozen interviews saying to myself, "What great people!" They do not share the sentiment about one another: the hardest thing to do in Greece is to get one Greek to compliment another behind his back. No success of any kind is regarded without suspicion. Everyone is pretty sure everyone is



cheating on his taxes, or bribing politicians, or taking bribes, or lying about the value of his real estate. And this total absence of faith in one another is self-reinforcing. The epidemic of lying and cheating and stealing makes any sort of civic life impossible; the collapse of civic life only encourages more lying, cheating, and stealing. Lacking faith in one another, they fall back on themselves and their families."

We aren't there... yet. Some places, some small towns, a few large cities, you can see cracks in the picture window. But Tombstone, nah. Can't happen here, right?



1917 Kodak Brownie 2

2019-1-15

Time passes. Bought a 1917 Kodak Brownie 2 from the Antique Mall at Eighth and Fremont. Only five dollars, but then another seven dollars for a roll of black and white 120 film – and then 20 more dollars for developing eight – count 'em, eight! small 4x6 prints. And just when I thought that was my absolutely last roll of film ever, I found another delightful old Kodak camera – this one a 1956 Pony 135 Model C, also five dollars at the Antique Mall. Both cameras feature automatic nothing. The 1917 Kodak is actually beyond nothing – only a lever that clicks the shutter, and a film advance knob. You take it on face value that the preset shutter speed and aperture will deliver a decent picture in daylight, and it does.



50 years later, the 1956 Kodak Pony gave you some control, with adjustable shutter speed and aperture. The lens is much better, with its mildly radioactive thorium coating. Each camera sold for about \$200, in today's money.

Back in film days, all the worry was up front. Taking the picture. Estimating the light, guessing at the proper control settings – unable to see a preview of your picture, and then having to wait until some unknown person far away developed your film and hopefully still made prints from over-or-under-exposed negatives. Today, the front end's easy. The cameras are all automatic, and you can see what you took immediately. All the worry is now on the back end – all the time that it takes using Photoshop or Lightroom to adjust RAW images for either screen or printout. Changes!



I have a relative in Manhattan Beach, which is actually in California, who makes lattes. Takes him an hour to get it just right, being a laser engineer. Which is almost an hour longer than it takes David at the Antique Mall to make one. He makes cappuccinos, too. Better than Starbucks, and Better than Bisbee. A delightful treat, right here in Tombstone, how about that.

I hope by the time you read this that the government shutdown will be over, with paychecks on the way to the 800,000 laid-off workers, like the four guys out at our Border Patrol station. Volunteering, staying on the job during those icy-cold mornings and nights. Making a difference, like the huge drug bust you read about in last week's paper. And with this, a real shoutout to the folks here in town who gave so generously for morning coffee and pastries and



food for the border patrol guys during the shutdown. Folks like Carmen and Janet at the OK Café. Steve Goldstein at the Longhorn. Gordon Anderson at the Larian Motel, and David at Ethan's Coffee Corner at the Antique Mall. Casey and Tanya at the Crystal, and Debbie Mangels at T. Miller's Mercantile. Rich Bennett of Realty Executives... and everyone else who helped, or is helping with this. The Town Too Tough To Die has a huge heart!



Up from slavery

2018-1-7

Are we still suffering from the effects of slavery here in Tombstone? Maybe so. I hear frequent complaints that it's hard to find people who can fix things – houses, cars, business equipment. Hard to find a gardener, let alone an experienced ranch hand. There's a shortage of people who can do manual work and who are good at what they do. A recent re-read of Booker T. Washington's 'Up From Slavery' gives some insight. He noticed, back before 1900, that southern whites grew up without any practical skills, as most real work was done by their slaves. Manual work – manual labor – was devalued and looked down on. This attitude has spread from southern whites to our whole society. Today, we still deprecate



manual labor. Vocational training is at a low ebb in our high schools, even though every president since Clinton, including Trump, has signed legislation advancing billions of dollars for our community colleges. Thing is, you can't convince American high school parents that a technical apprenticeship program is of equal value to college prep classes. As a result, both whites and blacks today are still suffering from the legacy of slavery long ago. Some educators over the years, like Booker T. Washington at his Tuskegee Institute, tried to ensure that each student had a solid mixture of academic education and vocational skills. Washington believed that both together made for the best possible training for the next generation of American citizens. Makes sense to me, but can you sell that to a high school kid's Mom or Dad?



It gets worse. After the Civil War, during Reconstruction, the freed slaves came to depend on desperately-needed federal government help, which was supposed to be temporary but then became the ancestor of today's wide range of entitlement programs. Today, in the absence of apprenticeships and vocational education, we have 39 million people on food stamps alone – one out of every eight of us unable to make a decent living. Huge numbers of both whites and blacks are not only dependent on the various forms of welfare – but believe that this is normal, and something that you have a right to, being an American citizen. And, by and large, most people in our society accept the reality of perpetual widespread welfare. That is shocking, and sad, and deeply un-American.

Can we escape from the legacy of slavery? Yes. It



starts with our schools. Recent Tombstone visitor Lt. Col. Allen West, USA (Ret.) pointed out that the most important election is for our local school board. We can make sure that board members place equal value on apprenticeships and vocational training as they do on college prep courses. We can also continue to support Cochise College with its wide range of vocational programs, by demanding that our politicians get the college more money for new programs that place students in apprenticeships with local businesses. The good news? Politicians from both parties at the federal level are on board. So let's get to work at our local level with more job skills training!



Snow, falling softly through the night

2019-1-2

The snow came late Tuesday night and the streets were white as the sun came up behind the clouds. A soft, steady snow. Quietly falling, quietly filling in the cracks in the pavement and the buildings, all of Tombstone hushed and quiet as the snowflakes danced and fell and stayed on the ground. We can't exactly call it the Blizzard of 2019, but a snowfall like this only happens about once every 10 years. It is rare, and beautiful. The soft wet snow making a delicate tracery on the branches of the mesquite trees. Cold enough for ice, at 28° around 7 AM. City workers carefully sprinkling rock salt on Allen Street corners. A few trucks, slipping a bit, sliding a bit through the slush. Peaceful and quiet on this Wednesday,



January 2, the eighth day of Christmas.

Now if you're concerned about global warming, lighten up. Turns out that the holiday season weather here is as changeable as ever, if we go back 136 years and read over George Parsons' Diary. What strikes you, over and over, is how the weather and the temperature can change dramatically from one day to the next. So we can enjoy this snowy day, with the reasonable certainty that one week from now it will be sunny and over 60°. Nothing new about this – as you can see from these typical Christmas-time entries in Parsons' Diary:

1880 – December 25... Fine day, grand weather.

1881 – January 1... Cold weather these days.

1881 – January 6... Fine weather.

1881 – January 10... Cold now nights. Bright, clear grand weather these days. Fine climate, best



I've yet struck.

1881 – December 25... Christmas day and a charming one.

1881 – December 30... Beautiful weather again.

1881 – December 31... Magnificent days.

1882 – January 1... Year ushered in by fine weather.

1882 – January 9... Cold morning.

1882 – January 13... One of the most disagreeable days I have ever known in Tombstone. Cold and frightfully windy.

1882 – January 17... Snow yesterday. Light fall. Much blood in the air this afternoon. Ringo and Doc Holliday came nearly having it with pistols.

1883 – January 2... Unpleasant weather. Bad Indian business again – close to town. Two men killed.

1883 – January 3... Rain last night and today.



Mountains covered with snow. Unpleasant day.
1883 – January 10... Couldn't very well have fairer weather anywhere for winter weather. Snow is melting on mountains. They look very beautiful in their white mantles.

1884 – January 1... New Year's Day and a cold and disagreeable one. Huachuca Water Company main burst by cold. No water. Bad times.

1884 – January 8... Fine weather. Ran for stage and had to wait half an hour. Dark as Egypt at 6 AM. Cool ride on top.

1884 – December 27... Rain set in again. Storm worse than ever as I started and I had an intensely disagreeable ride through rain and hail and wind.

1884 – December 28... Storm at it all day, and gulch running a river of water with terrible force. Mustn't go out today. Roads in terrible condition.



So there you have it. Tombstone winter weather. Could be bad, usually good. And if you don't like it, just wait for tomorrow!



Merry Xmas!

2018-12-26

Merry Xmas! And before you get on me for sloppy writing, consider that our 'Xmas' derives from the initial letter Chi (X) in the Greek Khrīstos (Xpīotoc)... then later from the Middle Ages 'Xp' as an abbreviation for Xpīotoc... ending up with 'Xpes masse', Christ's Mass, and here we are. I used to think that Christmas was invented by the Romans to sell Christianity into Germany, following the destruction of three Roman legions in the Teutoberg Forest in 9 AD. It took them another 250 years to get back across the Rhine, the next time with Christianity happily co-opting the Druidic tree worship, merging the Christmas tree with their end-of-year Roman festival door wreaths.



Christmas goes way back. It was first recorded as an event by Clement Romanus in 70 AD, and celebrated by early Christians across the Roman empire, like Clement of Alexandria around 200 AD. Christ's birthday was formally dated by the early church as December 25, back in 336 AD. Everyone agreed on December 25th back then, as it came at the time of the winter solstice on the Roman calendar, exactly nine months after the Immaculate Conception on March 25, the date of the vernal equinox in springtime. Even better, Dec. 25 followed the end of the Roman Saturnalia festival, Dec. 17-23. Keep the party going! And going! Because in 274 AD, alarmed by the growing popularity of Christianity, Emperor Aurelian cooked up the Sol Invictus festival, dated right on top of Dec. 25 and continuing for 12 more days. Yes! The 12 Days of Christmas!



Five golden rings! Calling birds! A partridge in a pear tree! 12 days to give gifts, from St. Stephen's Day on Dec. 26 to the Feast of the Innocents on Dec. 28, and on to the Feast of the Epiphany on January 6.

Think about it-- isn't it amazing that Amazon hasn't totally commercialized the 12 Days of Christmas? We seem to have abandoned the ancient two-week holiday festival in favor of a single day, and then we pull the plug on all those beautiful glowing Xmas lights. What a shame! We could give increasingly valuable gifts each day, culminating in something really superb, like... a Bugatti Veyron? 253 MPH on Charleston Rd, hallelujah, he is risen indeed! But even better than the most expensive merchandise, we can take these 12 days to enjoy our families and friends. To re-connect the ties that bind us in this



tiny community. To set aside the disputes and spats of yesteryear for these 12 days, or at least until that March 25 vernal equinox, when the days are warmer, and the song of the turtle-dove is heard again in the land. And so until January 6, have a Merry Christmas. There's still time to send out those cards!



The border at Christmas

2018-12-18

You'll read this before Christmas, or maybe during the holiday season, Christmas having 12 days. And you might take a minute to think about what that newborn child would have thought about the border, at least after he grew up. He wasn't like the other Jews, back then. Believed he was the Messiah, and spoke often about the necessity to love your neighbors, and to go to great extremes helping the poor and the unfortunate... to give the coat off your back, and your cloak also. How would he have dealt with the desperately poor people of the caravans pouring into Tijuana? Certainly would have wanted to see them fed and sheltered. But let them into today's holy land, the United States of



America? I don't know. Tear down that wall, Mr. Trump? I don't think so. Because without that wall, we will only replicate the poverty and crime and fear and squalor of the countries to the south. And bringing increased misery and despair to America doesn't seem like a particularly Christian thing to do.

The border. Reality is that 12 million illegal immigrants are creating growing pockets of extreme Latino poverty in places like the Central Valley of California. Towns that are now so poor that people cannot pay to have the trash picked up. Towns where an influx of poor young men turn to crime, so much easier to sell drugs to Anglos than to pick cotton in frighteningly hot fields near El Centro. Towns where the traditional Mexican respect for the elderly is gone, where nobody walks around the town square anymore



on Friday nights. Where our original families of Mexican heritage, so many dating their ancestors here to well before the War of 1848 -- these first citizens of our land are themselves deprecated and decimated by the increased lawlessness and crime of the newcomers.

Thing is, we desperately need to seal off the border to buy at least 10 years time. Time to integrate the illegals already here into the American cultural values of sustained hard work, respect for the law, and civic order. Of course we are not perfect – but we are a lightyear ahead of Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador in our pursuit of civic virtue, and in our ability to create wealth without hindrance from a far less corrupt political system. "But then," Jesus might say. "What of the desperate poor still to the south? Those who will never be able to be helped



by your country? Will the camel be able to go through the eye of the needle before you rich Americans can enter the kingdom of heaven? Are you not your brother's keeper?"

Maybe, just maybe, we can square the circle. A few days ago, Mexico's new Presidente López Obrador called for a \$30 billion 'Marshall Plan' for Central America. Tonight on Tuesday, President Trump committed \$10.6 billion to help... we easily have more than enough money, enough capital, to be of assistance. And to also properly secure our border, while at the same time alleviating the conditions that lead the caravans to break against it like frustrated waves pounding on a rocky shore. Jesus would surely approve.



Absolute power

2018-12-11

As we move into a time of angry political disagreement, can't we step back a bit and honestly wish that the President and Congress calm down, get along, and pass laws that benefit us all? Hoping that our leaders set aside the destructive lure of unchecked power, as illustrated by this passage from Tom Clancy's book, 'Executive Orders'. It's about a President, but absolutely applies to every member of the House and Senate as well --

"God, it's like a narcotic, Jack Ryan thought, understanding just then why people entered politics. No man could stand here like this, hearing the noise, seeing the faces, and not love the moment. It came through the stage fright,



through the overwhelming sense of not belonging. Here he was, before four thousand people, fellow citizens each of them, equal to him before the law, but in their minds he was something else entirely. He was the United States of America. He was their President, but more than that, he was the embodiment of their hopes, their desires, the image of their own nation, and because of that they were willing to love someone they didn't know, to cheer his every word, to hope that for a brief moment they could believe that he'd looked directly into each individual pair of eyes so that the moment would be forever special, never to be forgotten. It was power such as he had never known to exist. This crowd was his to command. This was why men devoted their lives to seeking the presidency, to bathe in this moment like a warm ocean wave, a moment of



utter perfection."

'Absolute power corrupts absolutely', the old saying goes. And angry uncompromising party politics will only lead to the destruction of our Republic. The old sayings, like 'divided we fall', are as true today as ever. What amazes me is how close we actually all are politically -- nobody wants unchecked immigration, nobody wants the truly helpless to go without aid. These are good times. Lots of jobs, and peace. Do really have to spend the next year arguing with friends and neighbors? After all, in small towns like Tombstone, life's too short to waste in endless debates about things that really don't affect us that much, here in Cochise County, 2,255 miles away from the rancor in Washington DC. Over Christmas and Hanukkah, would you join me in praying that our President and Congress all



remember the good motives that got them into politics in the first place? The days when they were first sworn in, all wanting to help make America a better place for everyone, no matter who. Before time went by and they were slowly trapped in the quicksand of bitter party politics and deals and lobbyists. These days, Washington is a mess, but perhaps prayers from people of all parties can help our leaders build a more perfect union during the year ahead. Here's hoping!



Patrick Murphy bombs Naco

2018-12-3

There is a little border town called Naco a few miles southwest of Bisbee, 32 miles west of Douglas. You've probably been there, maybe to play golf at the RV park on the US side. Although small, Naco is an actual Port of Entry into the USA, and these days has its share of Army soldiers in their BDUs, moving large shipping containers to and fro for barricades, and stringing shiny silver concertina barbed wire atop the already towering black steel border wall.

There's nothing much on the US Naco side, nor on the Mexican Naco side either. Big news here happened back in 1929 during the Cristero War, one of the Mexican revolutions. Patrick Murphy, a drunken Irish-American pilot flying an old



World War I DH-4 'Jenny' for the revolutionaries, mistakenly dropped bombs on the American side two days in a row, blowing up the post office and frightening the locals back into their saloons.

Sadly, only one bar, the Gay '90s, is still open on the US side, just a short walk from the border.

But most people cross la linea by car, to buy inexpensive medicine at the Mexican pharmacies, or maybe to drive another hour south to Cananea.

One day last week, I parked my van and walked around town on the Mexican side, which is run down with absolutely nothing going on. But a magic moment -- walking by the loudspeaker outside the bright yellow Super Mercado El Fuerte Sinaloa, it switched from hard rock to Für Elise, Beethoven's bagatelle No. 25, oooh.

Crossed the main street, relaxed with a couple of local guys my age in the park, and we agreed that



the large copper statue of Presidente Hidalgo was excellent, and that he was also, with his famous Grito de Dolores, the call that began the War of Independence from Spain in 1810.

Going across, the Mexican border police were searching every car, looking for weapons. No Second Amendment rights in Mexico, señor. But they were friendly, and it was a warm sunny day, and I was not in a hurry. Returning was easy enough. Had to wait in the midst of a few huge Mexican semi-trailer trucks for the US Army soldiers to move containers out of the way. But really no problema. The Mexican government definitely does not want a border closure. Luckily, the caravans of migrants were far away, over to Agua Prieta, Nogales, and Tijuana. Which is good – because I could certainly tell them that the border fencing at little Naco is majestic and



imposing. But it warms your heart -- the only people who get through without ever being stopped are groups of running, skipping, and laughing little schoolchildren, who come across every day from Mexico to classes in the US. But adults? Forget about it. No way you'll get through that huge fence. And we don't need to spend any more tax money to make it bigger, that's for sure!



Temperature went down like a rock

2018-11-27

About a week ago the temperature went down like a rock as we slid from fall into the start of winter. I'm not doing too well with the change this year. Scant comfort from reading George Parsons Tombstone diary, November 18, 1880 – "Coldest night yet. Ice 1/2 inch thick this AM. I had to get up about 2 AM and start fire and Dr. Goodfellow came in and warmed up. Must get mattresses. Too cold with nothing but one thickness of blanket beneath. Got mattress tonight. Good wool ones at six dollars each and I got pillow one dollar."

So 138 years later, I can't complain. Four little space heaters from Amazon warming my old 1910 house, and an electric blanket on the bed, which



my friends assure won't cook me like a slow pot roast. Not so bad, electricity, which came here a little late in 1907 but made up for the delay ever since. Edison lamps all aglow, doesn't matter that he lost out to mad Tesla and canny Westinghouse. The miracle of reading in the dark of night, and the dubious comforts of television. Why, I've heard that the new flat-screen ones just keep working even after you've put a few rounds into your least-favorite newscaster, imagine that! The thing is, for a transplanted Californian even with an Arizonan family history, you never think much further than a T-shirt. Like you, I have warm shirts and sweaters and heavy jackets. But I can still go running out the door in a T-shirt, complaining about the delay in global warming that was supposed to give us weather like Miami Beach in midwinter, without the humidity and



giant bugs. Thought about going to Florida on Amtrak's Sunset Limited out of Benson, but after Hurricane Katrina the service stopped at New Orleans. So it's Tombstone for the winter. Sure, Yuma's a bit warmer, and then there's Quartzsite for the RV – thrilling gun shows at their senior center, and lots of rocks. Lots of rocks, which I know absolutely nothing about, except that Lucille Ball loaded thousands of them into the Long, Long Trailer, which didn't work out too well, ask Desi about that.

But same as 1880, Thanksgiving Day itself wasn't so bad. Warmer than before, even with constant cloud cover. Friends, turkey, and pumpkin pie. Perennial questions – why don't we eat turkey all the time, all year long? And why hasn't anybody made hard liquor out of pumpkins? Serious American questions, on a day when we truly gave



thanks for being here in this very exceptional country, so lucky to somehow find ourselves living in this special Cochise County. And when, looking at the sub-freezing Macy's parade from New York City, I told myself to just shut up and stop complaining about the cold. Count your blessings, pilgrim! After all, the best is yet to come... a few days in the 'teens and 20s, and -- who knows? Maybe a White Christmas this year!



Armistice Day

2018-11-14

The Great War ended 100 years ago, with an armistice signed at Compiègne on a cold rainy day like those last week over in France. Hard rain falling on the endless rows of graves. 14,246 at the Meuse Argonne American Cemetery. 6,012 at Oise Aisne. So many more -- 4,153 at St. Mihiel, 1,565 at Suresnes. It was an end of times, that war. Millions dead in just four years, in the mud and the trenches and at sea. One, my grandfather's little brother at Château-Thierry, fighting for the bridges across the Marne in June 1918. Nobody could comprehend the impact of the new weapons -- airplanes and submarines and machine guns and quick-firing cannons. Millions dead. Like so many wars, impossible to



stop once started. In our time, do you launch ICBMs once an enemy countdown starts? Back then, did you mobilize your army once others started sending theirs to the borders? Which has historians always debating the inevitability of war, like back then asking whether the building of railways to the borders after 1910 actually started the Great War countdown to 1914. In retrospect, it's strange that none of the European kings and politicians and generals saw the Great War coming.

Last Sunday, Armistice Day. At St. Paul's we rang the bell 21 times at 11:00 AM and its peals resonated with those from other bells across town. The Mayor spoke before the service started, and then we read the names of the dead from Cochise County who fell in the Great War. World War One -- WWI we call it now -- today is nearly



forgotten as the precursor of the wars since, the bloodbath of the 20th century.

But that was then. In our time, can we end war? At least major wars? Maybe, finally, now with the nuclear weapon deterrent. Some wars, for us, are certainly unavoidable. Pearl Harbor, and the Afghan War following 9/11. No choice but to fight, and for some to die, and for all to be remembered on Veterans Day.

These days, we can enjoy an interlude of peace for a few years, before we have to decide whether to fight a fast-growing China, or to reconcile ourselves to being a second-place power.

Thucydides' Trap, they call it at the Army War College. Nothing new, the dilemma goes back to a war between dominant Sparta and challenger Athens in ancient Greece.

The good news? Our military leaders are not of a



certain caste or class. Most were promoted on merit, not patronage. They are not stupid... just the reverse. And they know the lessons of history. Which gives hope that we will be at peace for many Veterans Days in the future, with the bells ringing out across the land in memory of all those who have served so bravely in the past.



Mid-term elections

2018-11-6

It is 10:30 PM on election night. Enough returns are in to show that the Democrats have the House, and the Republicans the Senate. After all the shouting and yelling, the same old story. We elect a President invested with all our hopes and dreams, find out after two years that he's not quite what he seemed to be, and then cast enough votes for the other guys to make sure that nothing happens for the next two years. Some call this "the wisdom of the crowd." Guess so. Since, if nothing else, federal government spending drops like a rock during the last two years of a President's term.

Last Tuesday was a nice day in Tombstone. Soft warm air, and folks dropping into the Legion



throughout the day to cast their votes for whomever. No stabbings, no gunshots, no protests, no riots. Truly enough, just another day in paradise. We are so lucky to live here – Tombstone, Cochise County, Arizona, in the amazing incredible United States of America. Absolutely an exceptional country, when you consider the alternatives like Venezuela, or Russia, or China with all its recent progress made meaningless given their increased constraints on liberty. Mexico, a beautiful country drenched in the blood of 30,000 dead from the narco wars. Or just about any place in Africa, good luck with that. Canada's not so bad, but it's getting colder now which is why I suppose they have legalized marijuana, to help get through the winter. No, we are lucky to live here. For most of us, to have somehow stumbled onto this place, loved it,



and made it home. An exceptional oasis in the midst of our exceptional country. Peaceful, save for a few local mini-dramas of no real significance. A fine 7-inch steel pipe built in 1882, 25 miles of pipe still bringing pure clean water from the Huachucas. And on this election day, deep blue skies so clear you can see 40 miles out, from those same Huachucas to the distant Chiracahuas. Dozing on the porch in the precious warm sunshine, with the media's election-time ranting and raving far, far away. Tomorrow it will all be over. Some folks will have won, others lost. Fox and CNN will have to find something new to fret about – maybe another story about Dexter the Therapy Peacock being kicked off United Airlines. Light enough weight, but a Kardashian-sized tail, what can you do.

Sunlight on the front porch. Reading Willa



Cather's *My Àntonia*, and here's a quote for you --
"I was something that lay under the sun and felt it, like the pumpkins, and I did not want to be anything more. I was entirely happy. Perhaps we feel like that when we die and become a part of something entire, whether it is sun and air, or goodness and knowledge. At any rate, that is happiness; to be dissolved into something complete and great. When it comes to one, it comes as naturally as sleep."



Someday, a Convention Center?

2018-10-30

You may have noticed on C-Span, when they are showing a conference room discussion in Washington DC, that there are always these old guys sitting around in the back of the room listening, if they're not dozing off as the politicians debate endlessly on the podium. Here's the good news – you don't have to go to Washington to be one of those old folks in the audience. No, you can go to our own Schieffelin Hall and sit in the back, as I did last week during the Tombstone Territory Rendezvous meeting. Historians. Their theme this year was Stagecoach Robberies. This was fascinating. Turns out that there were many during 1881-1882. But few before, and few after.



These TTR historians really know a lot about Western history, and particularly about Tombstone itself. They know all about the people who lived here back then. But even with excellent source material like George Parsons' diary, there are still some wonderfully unsolved mysteries that will keep them debating for many years to come. One lecture tried to solve the puzzle of a particular stagecoach hold-up – was it a robbery, or an assassination attempt? And as I sat in the back listening to all the different points of view about this, I looked around and had a Revelation. From front to back, the auditorium was full of people. Not uncomfortably full – Schieffelin Hall can seat 130 – but just right, about 75 expert historians really enjoying their yearly conference in our town. And I thought, we are really missing something. We should have small conferences



like this booked into Schieffelin Hall every free weekend – excepting those weekends where there are already events related to our big fiestas. More small conferences, more like-minded folks like these historians, who come here for three or four days, staying in our motels, eating at our restaurants, and shopping in our stores. Not so bad!

Of course, any proper revelation needs a Magic Wand waved to make it occur. A magic wand that would create a part-time position for someone to go after all these small convention groups that larger cities are just not interested in. ConVis -- the Convention and Visitors Center of San Diego -- could care less about small groups like Tombstone Territory Rendezvous. But these groups are perfect for us. Just perfect – we have plenty of motel rooms and restaurant seating to



accommodate groups of 50 to 100 people. And, from the Bird Cage all the way to Boothill, we have plenty of attractions for conventioners to enjoy inbetween their lectures.

Can we wave that magic wand? Hope so. Booking Schieffelin Hall solid is worth doing. But it will cost money, no escaping that. You can't expect an amateur volunteer to put in a 20-hour workweek and get results, creating lasting relationships. Won't happen. But maybe in the future we will be able to build an ongoing small-scale ConVis effort. After all, there's no better place than Tombstone for small conventions!



Sears is gone

2018-10-23

Like you, I've mourned the loss of so many factory jobs in every city and town across our country. But it wasn't until Sears filed for bankruptcy and announced the closing of their Sierra Vista store, that I began to realize how department stores have vanished too, just like the old steel mills. Back then, back when, every city took pride in these beautiful stores, where you could see the latest merchandise and make-up – just about everything – brilliantly lit, attractively presented on marble floors with helpful knowledgeable sales staff always at hand. Elevators and escalators. I grew up in San Francisco. As a boy, I went downtown with my mom – who always wore a dress and gloves – to



shop at Gump's and I. Magnin's and the Emporium. These shopping trips were special, mostly to look at things as we didn't have much money. But the trips were very special, on the #41 electric bus, then the #30 Stockton down to Union Square and the fine stores. Later, when I moved to New York City, there were so many more – like Bloomingdale's, Lord and Taylor, Bergdorf Goodman, and Macy's over on 34th St. Hammacher Schlemmer, nothing but toys. Filene's in Boston, Marshall Fields in Chicago. And all the exciting Christmas windows during the holiday season, and Santas everywhere. You can get a faint glimmer of that department store past at Dillard's in the SV mall. No restaurant, no coffee shop, but still – it's a nice place. Up for the chop? I guess so. Few customers, at least compared to the Target store



nearby, and Target itself vulnerable to the swarm of cheap Dollar stores opening everywhere. Are we poorer now, compared to the 1960s when our currency was backed by silver? Probably, though credit cards sure helped buffer the year-to-year inflation. And then there's the internet, the massively discounted 'China price', the flood of dirt-cheap merchandise from that country and others. Ships lined up off San Pedro, the 20-track Alameda Corridor railway lines speeding tons and tons of Chinese plastic from Los Angeles into the heartland of America. To Walmart, and to the huge Amazon warehouses, delivering to our little Tombstone in less than 48 hours from God knows where.

So shall we sing a song of sorrow when Dillards goes down? Probably not, probably won't even notice. End of an era. Meanwhile, you've got two



weeks to get over to Sears, their rolling bankruptcy sale, dumping everything except the good stuff that they'll ship to the few stores left standing, far, far away. Since 1893, Sears, Roebuck and Company. The Sears Catalog mail-order innovation -- you could actually order a prefab home -- and then, just as Lenin was predicting a capitalist collapse, the first 'No Money Down' store credit. Craftsman tools, guaranteed for life. Later on, even Allstate automobiles -- re-badged Kaiser Henry J cars, and re-badged Vespa Allstate scooters... had a bright red one in NYC many years ago. Sears, since 1893. A good run for the money, good memories, and goodbye.



The Tin Can Club

2018-10-16

I am writing this from an RV near the lake in Patagonia State Park. Three days, two nights, with absolutely nothing to do. No e-mails, no social engagements, no work projects, nothing at all. No Facebook. Life in an RV is a amazingly easy. You plug in the electrical cord, and you have hot water, heat, air conditioning, a toilet, a shower, a microwave, and a propane stove. It is like a little house, with everything close at hand and easy to find. But the main difference between the RV and my little Tombstone house is the absence of ongoing social contacts. Here, we can walk a few spaces over to look at a new teardrop trailer, talk with its proud owners, see how it works, and so on. Friendly, but after tomorrow



we will never see them again, and that's just fine. I can understand how hundreds of thousands of Americans live in these tin cans full time. We met a lady here who had lived in her trailer for three years, and more recently for six months. Full-time RV life is a quasi-state, suspended between being truly social, like life in town, and sort of social – enjoying the extremely temporary friends you meet here and there on the road. Most importantly, there is absolutely nothing that you have to do. Preparing breakfast, lunch, and dinner is trivially easy. Filling the water tank now and then, and dumping the wastewater only takes a few minutes. You know, if St. John of Patmos had lived in an RV instead of his cave, I doubt that Christians would be able to enjoy Revelation, which historians think was written under the effects of spoiled rye wheat, producing a natural



form of LSD-25, as he saw lions with the heads of lambs, or maybe vice versa. No, St. John would have enjoyed his bowl of Cheerios, along with a cup of hot coffee, and gone back to sleep in his nice warm bed.

Compared to a house, the cost of living in an RV is considerably less. Especially an old RV, like my 1991 Lazy Daze, with its very low annual registration cost. New tires every five years at about \$1000, and perhaps a thorough motor rebuild every 10 years at about \$5000. Small fixes of this and that at less than \$1000 per year. Best of all, you don't need to buy a new RV to get into the ballgame. There are so many available at shockingly low prices, less than \$20,000, all with less than 50,000 miles.

Anyway, tomorrow it's back to Tombstone, making sure my friends at the city library have



enough 1881 Tombstone Mining District maps for you at Helldorado, and checking in with the Senior Center to see what I can do to help sell hot dogs at their tent across from the O.K. Corral during the celebration this weekend. Ongoing social ties that bind, but should they be broken in favor of a life without any at all?



Life in the dark of night

2018-10-10

On Sunday the temperature dropped like a rock and I woke up in the middle of the night desperately searching for last winter's blanket. And on Monday I gave up and turned on a space heater for the first time in many months. Had a hard time this year with the advent of fall weather. Probably like you, shocked by the sudden end to September's delightful balmy days. Not that waking up in the middle of the night is such a bad thing. Unlike back in the 1880s, I have immediate electric lighting, which came to Tombstone late, in 1907. But they had gas lamps back to 1882, and of course candles, same as the miners deep below the surface in the Goodenough and Toughnut and Lucky Cuss and



all the other mines in Tombstone Gulch and in the hills to the south. Carbide lamps didn't come here until about 1900... they swung those 8-pound sledgehammers in near pitch-black darkness.

In our time, several historians have researched what life was like at night, back then. There was more fear of the dark, as after nightfall criminals became bold and your chances out on the street were slim, in a bad area. Like surveyor M.R. Peel, shot dead one night down in Charleston, killer never found. Or the shootings outside the bars at 5th and Allen, tongues of flame reaching out hungrily in the dark for fresh victims. Night. Most good citizens had dinner and were in bed by 9 PM in the hotels and boarding houses. They woke somewhere around midnight, went downstairs to the parlor and talked for about an hour, and then



returned to their rooms to sleep again until daybreak. This two-stage sleeping process seems to have been normal for people before electric lighting. It was more common than not, more common than today's desired practice of sleeping for eight hours straight.

So if, reading this, you are of a certain age – let's say a septuagenarian (that's me, I think) and you wake up in the middle of the night, don't worry about it. Now retired, you are probably reverting to a human-normal sleep pattern. Even though you are not in a boardinghouse, and it's not 1881, with the terrible dark of night outside and the occasional gunshot echoing through the empty streets.

P.S. Again as a septuagenarian, I've been vaguely aware of a performer named, or called, Lady Gaga. Well -- we saw her 'A Star Is Born' movie in



SV this week. Absolutely tremendous performance -- this one should get Oscars for best actor (Bradley Cooper) best actress (Lady Gaga), best supporting actor (Sam Elliott), best director, best cinematographer, best screenwriter, best song and best score. Amazing how Lady Gaga can both sing and act... unlike Barbra Streisand, who could do the one but not the other. Hope this leads to more multi-talented performers from Hollywood, like Frank Sinatra and Doris Day and all the others back when. Anyway, great movie!



Golden sun, clean air, pure water

2018-10-4

These fall days are a pure delight here in Tombstone. In late afternoon, the sun casts a golden glow over our streets and buildings. Is there any better place to be right now, in this country or anywhere else in the world? While Phoenix and Tucson are still baking in the heat, our fall temperatures are perfection, or very close to it. We can have fun debating whether an 85° day with a light breeze is better than an 80° day with no breeze, but in any case we are enjoying weather right now that lets you wake up with a smile.

Evenings are excellent also. Again, unlike our sister cities in the low desert to the north, we have perfect weather for sleeping. Of course I am



preaching to the choir here. But isn't it surprising that so few people – particularly retired people – move here to Tombstone? To our town with its clear clean water from springs in the Huachuca Mountains – the best-tasting water this side of San Francisco's from Hetch Hetchy reservoir, or New York City's water from the Croton reservoir. And the air here is so clean and free of pollutants. No airplanes! Because we are happily in a military no-fly zone, free from noisy airliners, with just an occasional helicopter or drone overhead from Fort Huachuca.

Even at the height of the current real estate boom, our home prices seem shockingly low to visitors from the big cities, particularly those on the coasts. Are we a good deal for the long term? I think so. Even with normal ups and downs, Cochise County is beginning to position itself as



an upmarket location for new wineries. Up to Willcox, over in the Sulphur Springs Valley, and now perhaps close to Tombstone. It turns out that the soil here is quite good for growing grape vines, which also have the benefit of using a lot less water than it takes to grow pecans or alfalfa. Much higher profit margins, too. This could result in surprising social changes. Our hawkers and merchants will have to learn how to pronounce "Chardonnay" and "Cabernet Sauvignon" and learn to shout "Syrah" at passersby. But we can do this. After all, in the early 1880s, diners at the linen-draped tables in Tombstone's fine restaurants were able to order the best wines in the world with their meals. Back then, white Chablis and red Burgundy from France, along with Chianti and Zinfandel from the vinyards north of San Francisco.



Fall in Tombstone. Precious moments, like sitting on a bench in the early sun on Allen Street at about 9 AM, enjoying the procession of bright red stagecoaches coming into town for another day delighting our tourists with an unforgettable experience. And in the afternoon, watching the clouds form into towering shapes, high over the hills to the south. Our town. Quite a place! Tell your friends and relatives to come visit, during these fall days. For a short while, to be part of the true West in the Town Too Tough To Die. Who knows, maybe they'll move here!



Can Tombstone afford sex robots?

2018-10-3

About a month ago, the 20-year old US Patent #6,368,268 held by TZU Technologies expired, causing great delight in the nascent sex robot industry. The patent, you see, had blocked further development of methods to control of one of these robots by an external operator.

In the past, porn has driven technical advances in art, photography, film, television, and the Internet. What starts as something tacky rapidly morphs into the mainstream... Debbie Does Dallas subsumes into being a mildly erotic film for the Hallmark Movie Channel. And the porn delivery medium -- print, VHS, online video... becomes boring. The thrill is gone, at least until the next new media platform comes along, like



VR -- virtual reality.

But the real concern here is the distinct possibility that an externally controlled life-like android might become your best friend, and not just in bed. The combination of artificial intelligence and an external human operator promises to deliver a compelling substitute for problematical real-life spouses and partners. And if you're single, why go through the dating game and risk rejection?

Of course this doesn't have much to do with Tombstone. With a median family income less than \$40,000, you aren't going to see too many expensive AI Cowgirl BFFs around town. But I believe that the lure of having an always loyal, never complaining best friend will overwhelm financial objections... you'll certainly be able to buy one on credit, or do a rent-to-own.



Irresistable. Software makes it so easy to alter personality -- voice, gestures, body language. Perceived IQ. Shared tastes in music, movies and art. Politics. Interests -- I like history; would I rent a bot to talk about Thucydides' Trap and the Peloponnesian War? Or about cars, to enjoy debating Ford vs Chevy V8 engines? Maybe! Great fun.

While AI bot physical characteristics will be harder to rapidly alter, it shouldn't be difficult for most customers to order a pleasing hair-face-bodytype package -- and there will be far more choices than the ludicrous comic-book styles available today. And you'll always be able to take your AI bot back to the service center for a whole new look. Optional upgraded performance packages, too!

There will be problems. Problems beyond



maintenance and spare parts, or the bot's software falling into endless-loop subroutines during certain activities. No, more serious issues. How would my girlfriend deal with another woman in the house? Would she see the AI bot as a competitor, or as a sort-of buddy? Would she demand access to the setup controls to deactivate the bot's sensual compatibility mode? Basically, how would they get along?

More -- will I lose status with the other guys in town if I could only afford a single friend-bot? Can I take my bot to work, for company in factory or office? Can I rent my bot to others? Even worse, will those darned California liberals insist that my friend-bot has rights -- and that I can't pull the plug even if she's mean to me? Stay tuned! These and other questions will be answered soon in the years ahead.



Social Credit – you can't live without it

2018-9-24

Last week, we noticed how the Chinese Communist Party was merging free-market capitalism with a reinvention of their old Confucian merit-based government bureaucracy. But how does this relate to Tombstone? Bear with me. Since 2014, the Chinese have also deployed something called Social Credit. By 2020, every Chinese citizen – and every Chinese company – will have a Social Credit rating number. But unlike our FICO score, which only attempts to assess our financial worthiness, the Chinese Social Credit score uses artificial intelligence to analyze floods of "big data" that record everything in your life. Are you a good citizen? You'll score higher on Social Credit the less you play online



video games. Jaywalking? Lowers your score. Do after-work things that help your community? Higher SC score. Other benefits – as a good citizen, you'll get lower interest rates and actually never be asked to qualify for a bank loan. You'll get longer vacations from work, and better housing. And, Chinese web dating sites are already using the SC scores for match-worthiness. But then, there's the serious downside stuff: do you have a criminal record, were you a tax evader, and – very important in China – are you a debtor? A bankrupt? Have you defaulted on your debts? Very bad – Hen huài!

As your Social Credit score goes down, penalties increase. You'll get a slower Internet connection, no hope of a promotion to a better job, higher interest rates on loans – unless you're a debtor, and you'll never again ever get a loan. You won't



be allowed to take a room in a hotel, or travel on a restricted-access freeway, or on one of the new high-speed trains, or fly on an airline. As of 2018, nine million Chinese are under SC travel bans. And no mistake – the Social Credit system is increasingly popular over there. Chinese citizens want order and stability and societal harmony – and have no time for wastrels, deadbeats, criminals, and tax cheats.

But again, how does this relate to Tombstone?

Well, the Chinese government believes that they have cooked up something really good.

Something that they can sell, this Social Credit system with all its artificial intelligence computer algorithms, to other governments around the world. And it may well be irresistible to bureaucracies like ours, and to the other Western democracies like Great Britain, which is already



flirting with a much less advanced social rating system. "But Jon, you're nuts," you'll say. "We'll never have that here, out here in the high desert in our little-known Cochise County corner of America." And you may be right. Truth be told, who wants to fly anywhere, or drive further than Sierra Vista? Or go into hock with another loan from Wells Fargo? So... when Social Credit comes, which will be very rapid given the ease of applying the algorithms to our nation's networked computers... when it comes, it may not affect us much at all. After all, here in Tombstone, we are all good citizens anyway, aren't we?



The miracle of capitalism

2018-9-17

Years ago, on an ad agency tour of a client's huge factory that made postal coder-sorter machines, my boss looked at me with a warning that I had better make a really good ad campaign, or else. "Or else what?" I asked. If we screwed up, he replied, the client would lose sales and a lot of the people on that long, long assembly line would lose their jobs.

Later, I thought about this, and realized that my work was one small part of a long process that involved many, many people. From the president of our client's huge company down to the mail boy in our ad agency office. Designers, engineers, secretaries, buyers, fabricators and assemblers. So many different jobs, with each person doing



their very best, whether out of pride, greed, or fear of the consequences of failure. Didn't matter. Everyone in the chain was working hard to do the best they could.

And this was the miracle of capitalism. A highly evolved and very complex system that was basically self-regulating. Think about it – a worldwide economic system without a dictator, or a king, or other maximim leader. A perfectly wonderful system resulting in great prosperity for so many people that runs pretty much all by itself! And, it runs best when left alone by the various governments that we live with. Over the last hundred years, self-appointed leaders – from Hitler to Stalin down to the present mess in Venezuela – have tried to improve capitalism through repeated inept and inexperienced attempts to make it better. Wild Nazi spending



sprees that meant they had to invade their neighbors to steal stuff and balance the books. Seven decades of totally incompetent but politically correct managers bankrupting Russia. Always trying to force-fit a better world, with so many dead along the way. Better, of course, meaning drastic income redistribution to help the poor, and to buffer the occasional crashes that seem to be inherent in the capitalist economic model... maybe one bad year out of ten, usually, about the same track record as a good vineyard. But what if that government control – that oversight – was actually competent? Welcome to present day China – with its Communist Party reestablishing the Confucian Qing dynasty's very effective, talent-based civil service. The Party's Organization Department seeks out and promotes industry and regional managers based



on performance, not political connections. The department also ruthlessly removes managers who fail to achieve specific targets and goals. Sounds like Jack Welch's General Electric? Sort of. How will this work in the future? Who knows. Right now, the Chinese people are enjoying vastly improved material benefits. They aren't particularly interested in Western democracy, which they see as chaotic and too focused on short-term results to create long-term prosperity. Anyway, we'll see how it plays out... and whether the new Chinese model will be the first effective economic evolution since the industrial revolution. Good luck with that one! Zhù ni hao yùn!



Marketing Tombstone

2018-9-12

The difference between the strength of our Tombstone brand and our inability to promote it is shocking. Recent trips promoting Tombstone to the Arizona Office of Tourism in Phoenix, and to the Visit Tucson offices in Tucson, brought home to me the weakness of our tourist marketing efforts. Not for want of trying, but for lack of money. In each city, I presented our PowerPoint dog-and-pony show in well-equipped spacious conference rooms, high above the crowded downtown city streets in sumptuous office suites staffed by dozens of people. People on full salaries working to promote Arizona and our region. Competent people, also at Old Tucson Studios and the Southern Arizona Attractions



Alliance, who all know each other and network seamlessly.

Closer to home, all our neighboring cities have paid staff promoting tourism. Sierra Vista, Bisbee, Willcox, Benson. Good folks with real jobs. Each month, we all go to CCTC Cochise County Tourism Commission meetings. Where Tombstone, the only destination with an actual brand, is very much a second sister to these other places with real budgets and actual paid personnel.

Here, we are all unpaid volunteers. Out-of-town promotion -- Susan Wallace, Steve Troncale, Sunny Quatchon, myself. Then, Gordon Anderson, Bruce Nielsen, Kevin Rudd and so many others who create the different weekend events. Volunteers with lives to lead. Businesses to run, relationships to maintain, retirement



hobbies and activities to pursue. Their events funded, barely, by small donations from dozens of merchants... but without the luxury of city money as a backup to hire the professional gunfighters and entertainers that attract large crowds. To be sure, we have done a lot with very little, thanks to the Tombstone brand. This summer's 25th Movie Anniversary and Doc Holli-Days events are evidence of that, funded on a wing and a prayer at great stress to their organizers. Imagine what we could have done with full-time professional promotion and a real budget!

As they say in Hollywood, "What's Next?" It's no secret that our core audience of Western movie fans is aging. What are we going to do to maximize tourist income in the near future? As I see it, the City should create and fund a Tombstone Marketing Department with one full-



time director and one part-time assistant. Paid positions, somewhat like Benson. With a budget sufficient for continual marketing to the Phoenix area, our number-one target. The director to have substantial experience and established media contacts, and the ability to build ongoing shared programs with attractions like Old Tucson Studios. Since website statistics are often misleading, we could use visitor counts at the Old Courthouse State Park as a metric to see results. My volunteer international tourism effort, which is basically a zero-dollar PR campaign, would then become a sub-part of this new department. Like the other towns in the area, we would have a professional marketing effort. And unlike them, we truly have a well-known brand to sell. Worth doing?



A beautiful place to live. Here's why

2018-9-4

There is so much in the world around us that we take for granted every day. First, let me recommend that you get the September issue of the Tombstone Times, with two beautiful articles by Janice Davis and Joyce Aros. Janice writes about how important it is that we drive around Cochise County this fall – a natural wonderland from the clear blue skies with their towering white clouds down to the green, green land on every side of our uncrowded roads. And Joyce writes about her memories of life's recent past. How people washed clothes, back before electricity and the machines came to country homes. Ironing shirts, with irons that had to be heated just so in the fire... the fire that had to be



kick-started each morning from the banked ashes of the night before. Outhouses, so terribly cold during an icy winter.

Both these articles made me think how lucky we are today to live in Tombstone, Cochise County, Arizona, the United States of America. Is there anything more glorious than a drive home on Charleston Road at dusk – with lightning flashing in the towering clouds lit so brilliantly white by the setting sun as the land below turns dark? And then the unseen. Or at least never thought of.

That every day of my life – and I'm 74 – there has been an uninterrupted supply of food in every grocery store everywhere I have lived in this country. Fresh clean water, from every tap.

Sewers that are the envy of the world. Heat from constant supplies of wood, coal, propane, natural gas, and electricity. All my life. Plus plenty of



work, and a robust financial system to provide low-cost credit to buy the cars and homes and furnishings that we all enjoy.

All my life, and yours. The results of what the late Senator John McCain praised as the 'liberal world order', in one of his last speeches at the end of 2017. Since WWII, an unprecedented era of stability, security, and prosperity. The rule of law and open commerce without the loss of national sovereignty. This world order was not an accident. Crafted by Roosevelt and Truman, executed by Marshall and Eisenhower, America guaranteed world peace and from that, our long-lasting prosperity and that of our key trading partners.

As a conservative, I sure would hate to see this wonderfully prosperous worldwide system tossed out in favor of something so far poorly defined. I



want to be able to always go to Circle K in the morning to get a fresh doughnut, and to be able to drive to Benson, Bisbee, or Sierra Vista at any time on our well-paved roads. And to keep enjoying a glass of cool clean water from the Huachucas, and never have to worry about my toilet backing up because our economy is shot and the city can't afford to fix the sewers.

Takeaway? We can't take these simple things for granted – the free efficient capitalist democracy we enjoy must be conserved and guarded both for ourselves and for generations to come.



Esports is huge. Ask Rockstar

2018-8-29

Last week, 18-year-old Trevor "McSkillet" Heitman drove his \$300,000 McLaren 650S supercar up the wrong ramp on I-805 in San Diego, killing himself and two other people. And in Jacksonville, 24-year-old David "Bread" Katz shot and killed three other Esports video gamers at a Madden NFL 19 event. Suddenly, Esports made mainstream news.

Esports? What? Well, if you're over 40, you'll have no idea what this is about. But Esports – organized video gaming – is huge, out there in the USA. More people are now watching other people play video games on Twitch.tv than fans watching NFL football on normal TV. Huge. Dota, the World Series for this sort of thing, awards



more than \$20 million each year to the winners, who all have nicknames like "McSkillet" and "Bread". Worldwide, more than 400 million people are an audience for Esports, with a market of over \$1 billion, of which a million or so went to McSkillet, who made and sold "digital skins"... software patches that help players get to higher levels. These days, Esport games are played by 9 out of 10 young people, of both sexes. All those kids in school who never get to play traditional sports now have a way to compete, often on a national stage.

What does this have to do with Tombstone? Let's start with Rockstar, the company that produces Grand Theft Auto 5, a sufficiently nauseating video game that cost \$265 million to produce, far more than any movie (Avatar came in at \$237 million). GTA sold 90 million copies, and brought



in \$6 billion (Avatar grossed \$2.7 billion)... which doesn't count GTA 5 spinoffs like After Hours online nightclubs, where you can be a virtual DJ. Anyway, Rockstar is coming out any day real soon with Red Dead Redemption 2 – a videogame set in the Old West. Red Dead Redemption 1 sold 15 million copies at \$50 each. Our goal? To get Rockstar to do a product launch for RD2 right here in Tombstone. Not much of a chance, but wouldn't it be wonderful to connect with the younger generation via video games? Stay tuned... and take a look at www.rockstargames.com to see what this is all about.



Tombstone, my secret oasis

2019-8-17

There are moments, recurring moments, when I actually and very consciously realize that I love living here. Moments like sitting on my porch in the dark of night, enjoying the thunderous flashes of lightning and the onrush of monsoon rain.

This year, my tin roof isn't leaking, although I still have five saucepans ready against the uber-rain that will come soon, the unstoppable rain that comes in sideways at 50 mph. When that rain came last year, I almost gave up and installed a lap pool in my living room.

Evenings on the porch. Brilliant orange, red, and purple sunsets over St. Paul's steeple to the west. Night falling softly, the delight of sitting outside with warm breezes moving the mosquitos



somewhere else. And then, stars. An infinite canopy of brilliant stars stretching all the way from Tombstone to heaven itself, out there in the firmament, all the constellations and galaxies in their nightly splendor. And cool at night -- a week ago, when Phoenix was 96 at 10 PM, we were 69. Amazing place.

This is a special time, this monsoon season. While California bakes and ignites under a ferocious sun, we are spared terrible heat, with the beautiful white clouds building up every afternoon, casting their moving shadows on the emerald-green land all around. Our high desert, that somehow miraculously starts turning brilliant green just before the rains actually come. Pounding, driving rains that sluice through the washes and gullies and gulches. Rain for the San Pedro River, torrents of rain, and you can stand



on the little bridge down Charleston Road and imagine those bygone days when paddle-wheel steamers made their way downriver to Benson, Paul Robeson singing 'Old Man River', or maybe that was a different movie. Not that apocryphal stories about the San Pedro River are a bad thing—why, I've heard that the RMS Titanic's second voyage was to be up the San Pedro to the Gila River, and then over to Tucson.

Tombstone. And now, after 18 months, my Tombstone. A special place, a unique secret oasis. A place to call home.



E Pluribus Unum

2019-8-10

This summer, our best people took their best shots at bringing in tons of tourists with major movie stars – and both efforts, though very good, fell short of expectations. We are up against declining Western movie recognition and also up against other towns that have competing events. If you look on the back of a dime you will see a bundle of reeds. ‘E Pluribus Unum – out of many, one.’ Any single reed is easily broken, but the bundle cannot be. We have our Chamber of Commerce, Tombstone Forward, Lions Club, Small Business Alliance... all wishing to improve business, but separately. It may be time now to all come together to create future attractions that really ring the bell. As high-tech investor Don



Campbell told me recently, "Jon, what you have here is the Tombstone brand. It's valuable. But only if all your people pull together, otherwise you're just pissing it away. It's all you've got, so do something with it."

In Hollywood, the key word is "Next". It's what will happen tomorrow – what will you do Next – that matters. Perhaps the first step is for all our little organizations to band together in one big one. Like it or not, how about the Chamber of Commerce? It's there, with an office and a good website. Best to build on what already exists? Shake up the board, and bring in someone with real media contacts and experience to do promotion part-time. A volunteer? Forget it. You get what you pay for.

There's more. People don't come here to learn about our very interesting silver mining history.



No. They want gunfights. We have four highly professional gunfight reenactment groups, and they could take turns having their actors out on the street at Fifth and Allen at 5 PM on every Saturday and Sunday, to keep tourists in town as long as possible. Real action, real gunfights, not comedies. Get Tombstone back in the news again! Together we stand. What's Next? Focus on getting this year's Helldorado back on track. As the line in the movie *On The Beach* goes, "There's still time, brother."



-- Notes --

These columns ran in [The Tombstone News](#) starting in August 2019. My local paper, with owners Cheri and Dusty Escapule plus ace reporter Samantha Nicholas putting up with me from week to week.

It's an excellent small-town paper. Independent, not part of some big-city conglomerate. Every Friday, a good read... and with more truly dramatic stories than you'd expect from a place with only 2,000 people. But then, Tombstone's "The Town Too Tough To Die" – and you should call 520 457-3086 and subscribe. The price is sure right for Samantha's ongoing news stories – and of course my column!



TOMBSTONE DIARY

BY JONATHON M. DONAHUE

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