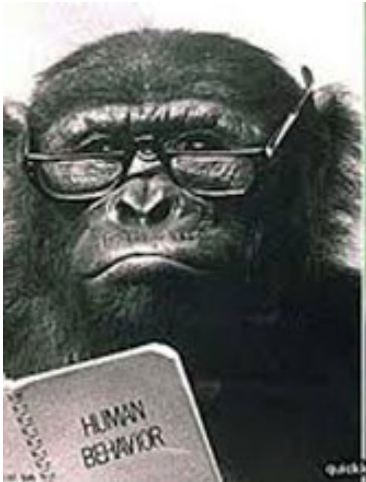


Monkey-vision

Written by Jack Sparacino

Monday, 04 April 2016 15:21 - Last Updated Wednesday, 06 April 2016 05:11



Rocker Buddy Miles wrote a kicking R&B classic, released in turbulent 1970, called “Them Changes.” Listening recently to Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood’s 2008 live recording of this song, I reflected that while some change is flat out necessary to keep life interesting, it’s easy to experience too much change and risk being overwhelmed. Thrown overboard. Reason enough to keep them life jackets handy.

Talk about eye openers. Three recent experiences buffeted me while listening to these great artists. One was a lesson I should not have needed. To quote the not long deceased dean of crime fiction, Robert B. Parker,

□□□□□□□□□□ *“In Spenser’s Tips for Successful Gumshoe-ing, Tip #6 reads: If nothing is happening and you haven’t any idea what you’re doing, go someplace and sit and look at something and await developments . . . □ Most good detectives bring some coffee and a few donuts with them.”* (“Sudden Mischief”: New York, G.P. Putnam, 1999)

Go someplace and just sit, eh? A passive approach to solving a problem but it worked for me last month. A close friend from school, Carl, had seemingly vanished from my life. *Poof*. Both of us normally respond promptly to calls and e-mails. Seldom, in fact, does more than a week pass without my hearing from him. We share general information, reading and film recommendations, restaurant experiences, family doings. Carl’s friendship has always been a warm, anchoring presence in my life. When after months he didn’t even acknowledge receipt of a lush gift, my mind accelerated into overdrive. What on earth could have happened?

After quietly grinding to dust every mental gear available for weeks (what, now he hates

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French cheese and Cuban cigars?), I finally concluded by process of elimination that something I wrote in a recent column had really rubbed him the wrong way. This despite my feeling that no rational, secure person could have been so offended. Walking Dixie, working in the yard, running around town, I kept thinking about it. Darned if I didn't start to actually fuss and fume. Double darned if Mr. Fair Lee Thixkin didn't have hurt feelings.

Home I trundled one day from errands. Jane said Carl called while I was out and they had a nice chat. He asked why you haven't been returning his notes, she said. *Seriously?* I asked, dumbfounded.

What notes?

Yeah, seriously,

she said. He loved the gift and I should call him. Which I did. Feeling downright foolish, I didn't mention how abandoned I had felt. It all seemed so silly and it was just great to hear his voice again. Thank you, Spenser . . . and pass the donuts to go with all the egg on my face. Yep, I'll be a monkey's uncle.

The second experience brought another happy ending. Calamity struck when I failed DMV's vision test. Egad! Those three blocks of letters they present through that viewing gadget? Well, the left and middle sets looked clear to me but the right hand set was... well, invisible. I saw *nothing*, not so much as a vague blip. Now what? Heart racing, I hastily called a new ophthalmologist.

Tests revealed that I was legally blind in my right eye. I had cataracts in both eyes and, as a bonus, a macular pucker in my right eye. Good thing we live in the 21st century. Three (including laser) surgeries later I can now boast normal vision. No more prescription lenses for the first time in 35 years! Move over sliced bread, shove aside bottled beer, this is way better.

In fact, after initially dreading the idea of anyone even *touching* my eyes, I was again a monkey's you know what and can

SEE

. Probably as good as or better than your average monkey. And just in time to . . . behold an existential bane, "the Republican Front Runner." Where to begin? Just listening to the incessant stream of trash talk blaring from his mouth had been bad enough. Having clear, nearly Hitleresque images to go with these distressing sounds is even worse, if that's possible, than worrying about my sight.

Let's stipulate right off the bat that I'm a poor candidate, demographically, for "Trump supporter." With graduate degrees, no job worry or income threat, no concern about the browning of America, little anger at our government or the media, relatively low authoritarianism, and little tolerance of slamming entire groups of people (or the Pope), I am predictably anti-Trump.

A perpetual heavy reader, I've been building a file of Trump-focused publications and mainstream outlets confirm his worst liabilities. *Time* magazine's 3/14/16 cover branded him as a bully, showman, party crasher, and demagogue. To these descriptions Republican stalwarts (never mind Democrats) have tacked on misogynist, racist, phony, huckster, thug, egomaniac, and thin skinned, clinical narcissist. Game, set, match. And this man aspires to the mega high wire position of the most powerful person on earth with access to our nuclear arsenal?

Fascinatingly, Trump's core supporters remain a breed apart: fact impervious, oblivious to his faults. They tolerate protestors being threatened with physical violence heaped on ugly racial and ethnic taunts and slurs. They stick with their roving gasbag through thin and thinner when it comes to basic facts. Truth to tell, Trump is subject to perhaps the most negative ratings ever recorded as his fans fall back reflexively on his ostensible positives. He is seen as strong, a tough outsider, eager to upend incompetent Washington, and above being bought since he has his own money. Never mind that at least some of that came from plastering his name on a fraudulent real estate "university" which is the subject of three class action lawsuits. (Bless 'em, some 80% of Trump supporters apparently know nothing of this.)

As for his base's adoring him "telling it like it is," he is actually a fracturing falsehood factory. A Politico analysis revealed that he utters, on average, one lie for each five minutes that he speaks. How many of the rest of us could ever get away with that? For a standard 2k hour work year, that amounts to 12 x 2,000 or *twenty four thousand lies per annum*. Guinness people, are you on this?

Back to my improved vision. With the advantage of nearly 20/20 eyesight now it is painfully clear to me that Donald Trump, who does everything short of foaming at the mouth at his rallies, is on his way to being our country's eye candy maven, jerk in chief, and an ensconced political monster. To quote the *New York Times'* venerable conservative columnist David Brooks, Trump . . .

" . . . is epically unprepared to be president. He has no realistic policies, no advisers, no

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capacity to learn . . . He doesn't know what he doesn't know and he's uninterested in finding out . . . Trump is perhaps the most dishonest person to run for high office in our lifetimes.

□□□□□□□□□□And yet... I remain an utterly clear-eyed optimist about America, and open minded. Should Trump ever actually build a giant wall along our southern border, paid for by Mexico, or make good on his other preposterous pledges, I will truly be able to see it with my own two eyes. With good old (how could I have ever doubted him?) Carl right back at my side.

And once again, for better or more likely worse, go to sleep at night a true (pray, gobsmacked?) monkey's uncle.