

Help! Donuts!

Written by Jack Sparacino
Tuesday, 06 February 2018 14:25



"Dear Diary: Took my darling thirteen-year-old grandson Cooper for a haircut today and the stylist kept asking him if he wanted some "product" in his hair. What the [bleep] is "product"? If it's gel, call it gel. Product could be anything - liverwurst, chocolate pudding, uranium..."

Beauticians need to be more specific. When I go out for dinner, I don't order "mammal" or "aquatic vertebrate." I order a Porterhouse steak or Flipper au Gratin. When I go shopping at Bergdorf, I don't say "Gimme cloth." I say, "I'd like a couture Dior gown, black with gold trim, sewn together by an old-before-her-time Columbian peasant-woman named Carmela.""

Joan Rivers, **Diary of a Mad Diva** (Berkeley Books, 2014)

The recently departed Ms. Rivers got me going on this one, she of the endless seemingly disconnected observations. I say disconnected, but when you're over 80, the star of several cable TV shows, and highly opinionated, thoughts often weave together with their own special gestalt.

Myself, I'm not 80 or a television star or a comedian, nor a Bergdorf shopper, but like any columnist I do hold a few opinions. This column, dedicated to my friend Steve, is one of his favorite types . . . a "march" through my brain via a series of topics we can hopefully all relate to. And so, as the great Jackie Gleason used to say, "And away we go!"

Art takes many forms but one of my favorites is a minimalist piece by my lovely Jane, scrawled

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one cold morning. "Help! Donuts!" it said, marooned near our toaster as a reminder to me as to what she wanted for breakfast. Simple, to the point, and yet pitiful and yearning. How many times have I appeared that way to her, with or without donuts? I framed her plea and it remains something I would dearly miss if we ever suffered from a crippling mudslide.

Speaking of food, I miss the plump 15 cent Polish sausages we bought from the white truck guy who parked outside the library each day at lunchtime when I lived in Chicago. Throw in relish, sauerkraut, chopped onions, cheese or maybe some chili and you had a nice meal. Fifteen cents and you were good to go. A canned soda was another dime. Buddy can you spare a quarter?

One more food item. Lean Cuisine, for all its good intentions, is a dismal food product line. Small portions of plastic gunk that look and taste artificial - like the regular cafeteria lady went AWOL and left the kitchen in the hands of Brunhilda the Terrible from Slovenia. Who hates children, native Americans, and the entire notion of eating for enjoyment. "*Food ees joost fuel, leetle ones!*"

My Pillow does some hokey ads and their founder, Mike Lindell, seems like a nice fellow. Truthfully, though, their pillows - although interesting - are in fact a little lumpy and pretty expensive for doggone pillows. I did take satisfaction, however, in learning from one of their salesladies that Mr. Lindell runs a tight ship when it comes to sexual harassment. Anyone experiencing a problem can go to him directly. So, lumpy pillows or smooth paths to the boss's office, take your pick.

You need a good supple pillow when you read a lot like me. Michael Connelly has become one of my favorite fiction writers. His crime thrillers are taut, complex, and loaded with a grab bag of well chiseled characters good enough to be front and center in Casa Blanca, right along with Bogart.

Some of these Connelly characters are women and the subject of his main character, Harry Bosch's affections. And some of these women are stunningly attractive, like Eleanor Wish and Rachel Walling. Social science studies have long determined that physical attractiveness serves as a form of currency in men's and women's relationships. Lacking terrific intelligence or social skills or money, for example, physically stunning people can effectively "trade" on their looks.

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Hence the appearance of "eye candy" on the arms of homely but wealthy men. Crass but stereotypically true, it happens . . . for better or worse. Then we have *ridiculously* attractive men and women. How does a "regular" person approach them? My wife recently drew my attention to a copy of

Vanity Fair

magazine. Their February, 2018 issue's cover featured an eye popping photo of actress Emily Blunt, with additional photos in the accompanying article.

How, I wondered, does a fellow have a conversation with such a person; how do you get past or around that face? I once sat next to Paul Newman in Kenyon College's theater in Gambier, Ohio. His wife Joanne played a lead role in the play that night and looking through the other end of the psychological kaleidoscope, as it were, I wanted to say hello or something similarly brilliant to Newman but found myself quite tongue-tied.

And how, I continue to wonder, does one have a long term relationship with such people? The distraction factor must surely be stratospheric. "Well, Sarah, could you, uh, pass the um, I mean, is it almost time to well, you know, how is it that um, that thing you get with those whatchamacallit . . . And so on as the words just keep strangling themselves. I know, I know, how superficial.

And speaking of shallow moments (or lifetimes), I recently failed to resist the impulse to Google myself (come on, you've done this too, right?). No surprise, I encountered many references to much earlier publications of mine. But one especially caught my attention. It was a recent medical book ("*The Fear Cure*" by Lissa Rankin, M.D.) that referenced an article I wrote as a young fellow on psychological factors associated with high blood pressure. In the "have you no shame" department, I actually ordered a copy of this terribly cogent book and plunked it (temporarily, of course) on our living room coffee table. Know what? The longer it sits there, the more important it looks. Should I risk spoiling the experience by reading it? I thought you'd say that. And it's enough to make you . . .

. . . Sick. I see that certain products, like Taltz for "moderate to severe plaque psoriasis," urge you not to take it if you're allergic to it. This is excellent advice. I wrote it down. Reminds me to avoid certain

people

I'm allergic to.

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Which further reminds me . . . A couple days ago I was musing on my age, 68. Then I realized that I was "only" 67. In the space of just a few seconds I gained a full year! While thinking of what to do to celebrate, I had a nap. I woke up thinking I was 66. Time sure flies by quickly when you're having fun.

But when in doubt, check with a kid. When my friend Ira's son was four, the little tyke walked back from the kitchen with two pieces of cake, one for himself and one for his mom. As he approached them one of the pieces fell and landed on the floor. He continued on and when he got to them he said, "your piece fell, mommy."

He's right. Help! Donuts!