

San Pedro Creek

collected works

from

astrofish.net/xenon

by

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Introduction:

I love Texas and all its eccentricities. As an astrologer, traveling from point to point to meet with clients, I get a chance to see a different side of the lands and peoples.

I love it.

This is a semi-autobiographical collection of observations, musings and meandering thoughts, loosely collected, during two years spent living in the San Pedro Creek's floodplain.

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January 1, 2007

Pass in review

Piss in your shoe?

The term is a marching/close order drill term. Not that I can remember how to walk in step with anyone, and the only cadence I can call is too lewd to recall. Like those little items that get rooted in our subconscious, that term haunts me every year at this time. A time to pause and reflect.

I don't have any resolutions, not for the new year. I've wished upon so many stars and had dreams shattered so many times, I kind of gave up on the idea. The moon is almost full, or will be, to exacerbate the matter.

I was sucking on a Topo Chico, and I watched all the fireworks. From a safe distance.

I'm an astrologer, really the new year begins at the Spring Equinox - it's only logical.

I woke up from a dream state, the Texas sky clear and clean on Monday morning. I was thinking about just one resolution.

Maybe not so much of a resolution as an image to start the year. Right or wrong. I kept thinking about a certain cat and a certain sliding glass door. The cat would hit the glass, knowing full well that the glass was blocking egress to birds on the patio. The glass wall was there. That cat would still run and bump, if not to catch the birds, then, at the very least, to scare them off her patio.

[Capricorn](#): Happy birthday to that one Capricorn, and belated birthday wishes to the other, dude, sorry I forgot -- a present is in the mail, no, really. As I was getting out of the shower, I saw something that I'm used to seeing, but it makes an excellent way to explain how the planets' energies are affecting the Capricorn slice of the heavenly Pecan Pie.

On the cold winter mornings, the shower stall fogs up the bathroom's mirror, but there are limits and gradients. When it's cold outside, it tends to be cold in here, too. Which causes the mirror to display the condensation down to the point where the temperature gradient is most obvious. In other words, the top 20% or so of the mirror is steamed over, but the bottom portion is still clear. It's that line, that point between warm and cold, where the little miniature weather pattern that forms alongside my bathroom door, that's what visible, right at that line. It's about yea-high on me, as I gesture with my hands.

As a science observation, the foggy part of the mirror is the top portion of the image, and some physicist can explain the mechanics of how and why it's just the top portion of the mirror that's steamed up. As I was looking and wondering about temperature, thermal inclines, ambient atmosphere and so forth, I realized that the steamed up section was my face. In a few minutes, the reflection will be clear again. In Capricorn, just give it enough time for the fog to dissipate. Give it enough time for the tiny bathroom weather pattern to clear. Then you'll be able to see what you're looking for.

[\(January 4, 2007\)](#)

January 7, 2007

Epiphany

Same day, different story:

“See, an astrology chart, a natal chart, it’s like the cards you dealt yourself when you show up for this poker game of life. How you play that hand? It’s up to you.”



Horace Caldwell Pier.

Aquarius: Standing in line, waiting on a cup of coffee to be made expressly for me, I [watched](#) a young couple, he chatted on the [phone](#), she pulled out some lipstick. They ordered coffee drinks, and then she turned to me to announce that "Lip-something" lip-something was no good. It was from a big-name brand of stores that are noted for lingerie. Which was even more amusing, as the effects of that particular house-branded lip gloss, or lip stick, or whatever it was, that stuff made her lips stick together. Which was not to her suiting, not at all.

She was Aquarius, and it was a bright December morning, and she and her companion, mate, spouse, or date from the previous evening were cavorting in a familiar way. He didn't say much other than to order a drink, after he rang off his phone. But she chattered away about that brand of lip-something that was just no good because it made her lips stick together. There was part of bright tattoo poking upwards from her low-rise jeans, ample exposed flesh (this was in Austin, where some December mornings make such apparel okay), and I wasn't sure.

I did ascertain that she was, indeed [Aquarius](#). But think about a lingerie company that sells a lip stick that help keep the lips sealed, literally sealed. Sealed shut. Then, as the next few days unfold, think about the idea of something similar for yourself. If you can seal it up for just few minutes, you can hear the most interesting comments. But it's a matter of being quiet. I can't say that I would endorse the lip gloss route myself.

[\(1.11.2007\)](#)

January 16, 2007

Winter storm warnings

Coming back from an early breakfast, Monday morning, the clouds were just rolling down the western flank of the southern tail of the Franklin Mountains. Looked like a cloud was spilling over the edge of a large bowl.

Winter weather, it's actually a part of Texas history, but the winter weather happens once every two or three years, on average. My memories might not be that scientific, either, just the way I recall the patterns.

The Texas History part?

Santa Ana, the cold and cruel dictator from the south marched up through the south Texas plains, leaving Mexico, like in December of '35, and in February of '36. He and his army hit up to six inches of snow before they got to San Antonio de Bexar (a.k.a., "The" Alamo).

186 valiant Texans defended the Alamo, and the rest is history. Houston kicked Santa Ana's forces on the plains outside of Houston, and in doing so, saved the world for democracy and the American way. California, more than anyone else, owes us.

The first assault on the Alamo was slowed by a freak weather system, like the one we just had, with its freezing rain, snow, and ice.

It's historical. And I'm not. Me? Weather this cold? Near freezing temperatures? I'm not going anywhere. I just hope the electricity keeps the internet tubes warm enough to work.



Big Ben

January 24, 2007

Writing

Writing about writing, in my mind, is dangerous at best. I'm always worried that my Muse will get upset that I mention her too much and she'll fly away. So now, if it sounds like I'm hunting for words, well, I am, since there was a coherent thought originally attached to this idea.

The coherent thought escaped between bed and the coffee. It was good, all about writing and toil, trouble, the pain and angst, the hair-pulling, nail-biting, pacing back and forth, yeah.

Years ago, I swiped a signature file, and I've incorporated it as my own since, as a motto, the little comment holds great truth:

“A lot of work goes into making this look effortless.”

January 27, 2007

BCL Radio

Because of the amount of time I spend in Bexar County, I've gotten conversant with local radio. Two come to mind. Headed south, out of Austin, I'll listen to some kind of a mix. But when I pass San Marcos, I start fiddling with the dials.

New Braunfels has 92.1, which lists itself as Americana Music. About the time I hit the outer loops, in SA proper, I'll switch to 92.5, which calls itself "outlaw." That moniker so curious. I'll guess that there's a whole post that can be reserved for voice-tracked Clear Channel Communications, stations that lack soul. The broad, can be in any town, and for that matter, can be at any time, anonymous recorded voice, which is all canned.

A personal favorite, Hank III, a true rebel and a definite outlaw, his music pops up with regularity on that 92.5 station. That's odd because the station is a Clear Channel station, supposedly no soul. To me, it also sounds like there's just one vocal talent doing all the work. Ads, fillers, stringers, all the same voice. Not that it's bad, it's just the way it is. With tag lines like "Hell yeah my mama uses lard in her tortillas," it's clear to me that this place has a touch of the real outlaw. Big company corporate culture or not.

When it comes down to the play lists? That's what counts. Dead even heat, here. I was cruising along, and I heard Brian Burns, singing about Texas, the aforementioned Hank III, and then, some guy was warbling about "You look better on My space." Country (slash) roots rock kind of tune. But the singer had that country accent. Hilarious tune.

The biggest problem? I can't tell if the two station compete, or if they work in harmony. The play list for the truly alt-american station, in New Braunfels, is slightly skewed towards folk-rock, but it still has a strong local flavor. I suspect that the New Braunfels station would play the Grateful Dead whereas the Clear Channel stable mate probably wouldn't.

Yeah, get your twang on. I would suppose that regional music is important enough so it warrant two stations. And competition improves the breed.

Pick a favorite? Inside the loop? The corporate signal because it's stronger. But Southbound, (I) 35? The last of the indy stations. Sure.

92.5 The Outlaw

KNBT Radio New Braunfels



Amol's. S. Flores.

[Aquarius](#): Cops on TV and in the movies? It's rarely, if ever, [really like that](#). I've got a number of Law Enforcement Officials as clients. And that's got to be one of the biggest complaints, what TV and "reality" shows do to their business. It's a skewed perception, that's for sure. The medium, in some respects, actually shows what the officers go through, but in other aspects? Like with certain crime scene investigation shows? There's a missing point.

One officer was complaining, "I can't just take a microscopic fleck of paint from a damaged rearview mirror and identify the make, model, color, year, or, for that matter, come up with a driver's description, just to make an insurance claim for mirror that was hit while the car was probably illegally parked. These people have been watching too much TV."

It's birthday time in Aquarius, and there are expectations. Rightfully so. But are all of those expectation rational? I'm not about to suggest that you shouldn't thoroughly enjoy the birthday parties, that's almost a lock. But as the rest? Imagine you're a little like that officer, with a citizen expecting a complete forensic work-up for a [minor infraction](#).

[\(2.1.2007\)](#)

February 18, 2007

Developing stories

Or developing pictures, which begs the question, can digital images be developed?

Big Sky:

Forget that other place called “big sky,” I’ll always think about West Texas.

The night I stopped and hopped out of the motor home to snap a picture of the sign, it was cold. Possibly below freezing. The blur was probably caused by my hand shaking. But I’ve been meaning to get a picture of the new drive-in.

New. Drive. In.

Yes, a new drive-in theater. It’s a field, west of Midland, still in Midland County, I think, and there is a drive-in. New construction. New place. And that’s just so weird, too. It’s odd, to think of it in the first place, as this is a lifestyle that went away years ago. I’m thinking, like about thirty, forty years ago? Besides, who wants to watch a movie in a car?

But there it is, a new drive-in, out on the road.



Hotel Alpha.

February 20, 2007

Road tripping, odd and ends

Space Trucking (yeah, well, get over it)

The bass line, Highway Star.

"All Aboard! Ha-ha-ha..."

Ei, Ei, Ei!" (Crazy Train - again)

Indian Lodge:

It's been, maybe three, five years? Maybe more? I can't recall the last trip into this area. But from Midland, after working all day, I just pointed the motor home south towards Ft. Davis. Passed through Mason (formerly Ft. Mason), Ft. Stockton, and on into Ft. Davis. Hang left, up to Indian Lodge State Park, and the lodge itself. Why this hasn't been discovered by hordes of eco-tourists, it escapes me. Might be because the place is owned and operated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife, i.e., a park ranger was the check-in clerk.

"Free coffee, here in the office, from 5 to 7. After that, it's the restaurant."

Who, in their right mind, would be up at 5, on cold winter mornings in West Texas. Unless, of course, it involves a fishing pole or deer rifle. And I'm not big on the hunting; there's no place to fish. I didn't make it in for the free coffee, but I was up early due to eery silence. No cars. No cell service. No wireless. So cool.

Indian Lodge was built at the end of the Great Depression, in the late 1930's, by the Civilian Conservation Corp. In the old section, only reason to stay here, the furniture is rustic, oftentimes made by hand, marked with the various symbols of the hand-made variety.

I'm not entirely clear on the whole story, but I don't think that Indian Lodge has ever lapsed into disrepair. Therefore, it's never been run down, the furniture sold off at auction, and then replaced with new stuff.

I once ran a trivia question, about the highest hotel in Texas. The Limpia Hotel makes that claim, although, I'd guess, Indian Lodge is really further up in the atmosphere by at least a couple of hundred feet. The wining entry wasn't either one, but a carefully worded essay about certain bands at an Austin hotel.

The Limpia Hotel, named for Limpia Creek in Ft. Davis, wins the claim for marketing the expression. But Indian Lodge is still the coolest. The trick is, stay in the old section, Have to request it, too.

Marfa Lights:

I always vowed I would get photographic evidence. This is from the camera, the other night.

It was about thirty degrees, which isn't that cold to some. But with a 60 mile an hour north wind? Yeah, too cold for me to hang around.

Taurus: I know a coffee shop across the street from a coin-operated car-wash. Not unusual. I wandered in one Sunday morning for a little dollop of espresso. And, while it wasn't that perfect cup I'm constantly searching for, it was a good, with proper presentation, well-prepared. Then, as I forked over my cash, tendered my payment, the barista behind the counter grabbed a handful of bills out of the cash register, slid out from behind the counter, loped across the street, and she played with the change machine there.

She dashed back across the street, slipped back behind the counter, and finished making my change. Sunday morning can be like that, and this is a week filled with Sunday mornings. The sun was out, bright and cheery that morning, the coffee was good, not quite the greatest, but certainly good. The tiny delay was due, no doubt, to the closing crew, the folks from the night before. Or the management. Or owner. Not the Sunday morning worker. That Sunday morning worker, though, that's how it feels in Taurus, you're left without enough of something. Like quarters. Just dash across the street, and save your (valid) complaints for later.

(2.22.2007)



London Rose.

March 12, 2007

Odd bits from the road

The Brazos River:

The Brazos River is longest river that is in Texas. Got its name from early Spanish explorers who called it Brazos de Dios (Arms of God). Much mythology abounds, settlers saved from imminent death and dying of thirst. There's one tale where a priest and what's left of his converts are saved by a wall of water crashing down down on the attackers, probably marauding indians, hence a source for the name, Brazos de Dios.

Early residents:

Seems that the area and the town got its name from the Waco Indians, a Caddo Branch of the Wichita Tribes. I'd guess, a Western branch of the Caddo Tribes. Waco, Hueco, Wacco, all names given to the town and its residents.

Dr Pepper:

It's reputed top have been invented here. At one point, I was raised in the shadow of a Dr Pepper plant, so I have strong feelings about that kind of carbonated sugar water. I prefer it to other brands, although, these days, I tend to shy away from any kind of brown-fizzy water. Except, occasionally, a diet Dr Pepper. It's so refreshing, on hot afternoon. The secret ingredient was long rumored to be prune juice. I don't know.

The Brooklyn Bridge:

The Waco Bridge company charted in 1866 to build a bridge across the river. It was a major crossing point for trail drives from the south – ford at Waco. The Waco Bridge company was given charter that guaranteed no bridges within 5 miles. Or nearby. The first toll on that bridge was collected on January 1st, 1870. A chuck wagon's toll was a whopping fifty cents, mounted riders, a dime, and each head of cattle as a nickel. I'd let the cows get wet, but wet leather gets itchy after a while. Stretches then shrinks.

At the time of its completion, the Waco Bridge was the longest suspension bridge west of the Mississippi.

The bridge, in short order, changed hands, being sold to the county and then being sold (for a dollar) to the city. The Waco Suspension Bridge was the third longest suspension bridge in the world, same engineer as the Brooklyn Bridge, and the Waco bridge was the first structure to span the Brazos.

Best T-shirt?

Woman wearing a pink T-shirt, the shirt read: "Between Husbands."

March 24 2007

Eddie's Taco Hut

South side comida, SA.

Interstate 35, runs from near the Arctic Circle – that's north of Oklahoma – down through Dallas, Ft. Worth, Waco, Austin. San Antonio, then to Mexico. That's old Mexico, like New Mexico. Only older. Headed south on 35, there's a mystical place, Eddie's Taco Hut. The times I've passed it, the sign is barely visible from the freeway, headed south on 35 before I-10.

Eddie's Taco Hut is only open for the breakfast-lunch crowd. From either six or seven in the morning, to about 2:30 PM. I think the sign says slightly longer, but practical experience, if you're in there, after 1 PM, they are turning chairs over, sweeping the back area, and generally wrapping up business for the day.

There's a veritable host of young lasses swinging back and forth, hauling food.

Order tea, "Sweet or unsweet?"

Stick the specials, too, as those have never failed to please. Some days, I haven't got the rhythm figured out on this one, the special is two (cheese) enchiladas, covered in chili con carne then heaped with cheese, then a small steak, perhaps meat of indeterminate origin would be a better word, plus rice, beans, and – duh – homemade tortillas. That one special is one of the priciest items they've got, a whole \$5.15. Steak (loose term), enchiladas, gooey cheese wrapped in red corn tortillas, slathered in "con carne" (with meat) – and that "with meat" should be "with lots of meat." Again, unsure of the animal or parts, but still tasty and zesty in a tasty, zesty way.

Awe-inspiring homemade tortillas. Big, thick flour tortillas, hot off the comal. Amazing tortillas, in and of themselves. Served in a basket, wrapped in a tissue, two at a time, slightly different. Not bad different, just different from the usual tortilla warmer.

I suppose, though, the real attraction to Eddie's isn't the sign, the decor, or the waitresses (with flowing black tresses). The parking lot, it's between a ditch and the freeway, behind a gas station, by a Mickey D's. The parking lot is mostly paved. There's a southern terminus to the parking lot, that isn't paved. The whole area fills up, starting around 11 in the morning, with work trucks. Power company, water utility, construction, highway road crew, trucks, usually, and trucks that do a hard day's labor. Foreign experience for me. It's a real, blue-collar place.

A guy shows up with sunglasses and a gold collar tabbed high, black hair swept back in a high pompadour. Elvis lives. During spring break, a couple of times, it seemed like grandparents – maybe my age – were there with grandkids.

Can't fool the people, though, Eddie's Taco Hut, south-side, SA. Food's good. Inexpensive, too. And crowded at noon-time.

Folk Art. S. Flores.



Eddies Taco House.

April 3, 2007

El Paso Truck Terminal

The El Paso Truck Terminal is closing. Next month, or thereabouts.

Which begs the question, because I shot a roll of film there, once I figured out it was closing. When did 40 years old mean the end-of-the-line?

I can't tell how long the place has been there. I've only been stopping there for the last decade or so. But some of the counter tops, in places, some of the Formica is worn from repeated use. Places in the booths, the table settings have been wiped clean with strong abrasives, over and over. That plastic laminate, it's pretty indestructible.

The article said it opened in 1966. It looks like, to me, just a tourist, that there will be a new style service station, same brand, on the next corner. I suppose, for the local economy, this is going to be labeled "progress," and to be sure, the restaurant suffered a death-blow to its business when the local smoking ordinance routed the long-distance drivers to the truck stop past the city limits.

However, I will still consider the robust meal, the Manchaca Plate at the El Paso Truck Terminal, I still think that it's the meal by which all other Tex-Mex breakfasts should be judged. Big in size, fresh in composition, and better than anything else – especially with its unique "El Paso" flavor.

Maybe nothing lasts forever, but one of those breakfasts would stick with for a whole day of work.

"Only a short time left. Live as if you were alone – out in the wilderness. No difference between here and there: the city you live in is in the world."

[Marcus Aurelius \(Book X, chapter 15\)](#)



Alameda Museo.

June 16 2007

Mercury, image and idea

I was digging through the ice box, hoping to find a little something to stick in my mouth, just sort of a late afternoon snack attack. I was hungry, cleared some good miles on the trail, had a cold cup of coffee, sipping on some afternoon ice tea, and while I was digging through Frigidaire – and what did I find?

The ice box can be a pretty scary place, to start with. There's more bait than anything else in the freezer. Some live worms in the fruit cooler. And then? There was this half bag of “frozen, pre-cooked, tail-off” shrimp. Sealed bag. I opened it. Nasty. Kind of gone bad. Okay, really bad. I was about to toss it out, the first sacrifice to Mercury for the season, when I stopped. It was originally a two- pound bag, and there was just about two fingers of shrimp left. Thawed, frozen, thawed, and frozen a second time, then thawed, cold, smelly, starting to ripen a little, and good for the feral cats at the dumpster, or....

Perfect for bait.

Take something smelly, useless, not healthy for human consumption, and make use of it. Recycle, reuse, re-purpose? Perfect Mercury mix.

Mercury didn't make the shrimp go bad, I think they went bad after I ate the first pound and half, and let the rest sit in the ice box for a couple of weeks, so no, the planets didn't make them go bad. That's a fallacy. Although, dig around, I'm sure at least one astrologer can support a theory that the shrimp went bad because Mercury is retrograde. I can't recall, maybe it was a few weeks ago, wait, before the last El Paso trip, yeah, I think that was the last the shrimp and salad combo dinners.

So when I discovered the formerly good shrimp now bad, as I was thinking about how happy some alley cats would be, I looked in my own freezer. There, next to the sorbet (it's a fruit group, right?) there was a bag of coastal bait shrimp, packaged up last time, for next time.

I got out another plastic bag, drained the smelly shrimp, added rock salt, and sometime, maybe in a few weeks or months, that will be ready again.

Planetary retrogrades, there are useful ways to put this energy to use.

June 16 2007

Dealing With Retrograde Planets

Looking at the [ephemeris](#), this week, Mercury is at a stand-still. Mercury will be in apparent retrograde motion until July 7, 2007, and then, towards the end of July, Venus turns in apparent retrograde motion. July 27 to September 9, more or less. October 11 until the 31st? Mercury again. Mars, then, November 15 through January 30, 2008.

A faithful reader e-mailed and asked for guidance through this dark and difficult time. I continue to [travel](#) and work. It's simple, really.

Borrowing from my own work, it's easy to see a simple and reusable schedule. A process that can be duplicated and expanded as needed, a scalable solution to planet problems. Retrograde planets, especially the inner two, Mercury and Venus, as well as, Mars, since this is a fairly common one, this material is easy to work with. My normal schedule is to write in the morning, with a simple goal of four pages of manuscript done before anything else. No breakfast, no clients, no nothing until I've done the four pages. Simple, easy goal. Works out to roughly a thousand usable, salable words, something I'm happy with, or, at least not dissatisfied. That's the start. There's a rhythm, a beat, sometimes music, sometimes great ideas, sometimes just material, but it flows. The point of creation is the happiest time, for me, or so it would seem. That's the fun part.

When Mercury is backwards, I'll stop working on new material. Plain and simple. I get a three week break from writing a new column, weekly astrology column. I've got a few of them done, almost six weeks' worth, so I'm safe to rest.

But the world doesn't grind to a halt, when the planets go backwards. So what I do is dig for ideas. I try to keep a pen or pencil on my pocket and scrap of paper. I'll scribble cryptic notes to myself, one-word reminders about a sign, or a instance, or an example. Something.

Better yet, point and click digital photography. Good example. I'll take hundreds, thousands of pictures, maybe tens of thousands of digital images in a year. Out of that? Hundreds, maybe just tens, maybe just a few images are worthwhile. Good time to sort through the [old material](#)? When the planets are backwards.

So back to the notion of writing, and stopping production work when Mercury is backwards. That doesn't mean that I'll stop everything, just generating new material. I get a chance to amuse myself with proof-reading, adding quaint links to punctuate points, and generally cleaning up mistakes I've made.

Then too, borrowing page from Sister (Gemini), I keep those scraps of paper, little notebooks and such, all on hand since I'll come up with a wealth of ideas during this time. Wonderful material that could be used as a perfect example to illustrate Mars or Venus, or any of the planets in action, and I'll make a note to myself. Good stuff to go back to when I feel a little stuck, in the future.

Nothing is more daunting than a blank page.



Bumper Sticker dictum.

Another way to consider to use retrograde periods? I'm an unabashed Apple guy. Just the way it goes, been using the computers for a long time, and I happen to be fond of the software/hardware/little guy image. [Apple stores](#), two in Dallas, two in Austin, one in San Antonio, several in the Houston area, all offer free "workshops" that run through the software, what it will do, how to use it, and so on and so forth. Maybe an hour, maybe less, the workshops are geared towards amateur and new users. But with the planets retrograde, and I covered this in the [weekly video](#), it is possible to learn something new from old material.

Making the assumption that I know everything about a particular product or even an astrology chart is a false. What better time to go back review the old notes? In a conversation with a client the other afternoon, she made a point about something I'd said about certain astrology aspect. I wouldn't say that now, but at the time, it seemed to make sense. Although, I do have new input since I'm constantly learned, unlearning and relearning the material. Humans are funny like that.

Review classes, just going back to textbooks, maybe a little revision is always in order. The planets just provide a better time to do that. Now. Or, as noted, coming up.

June 27, 2007

Miscellany

Full disclosure:

Subtitle – Who gets paid?

This branch of “astrofish.net” which is referred to as “astrofish.net/xenon”? It’s a web-log. Blog.

Blog is such an ugly word. For a while, I ran a header that said “experiential and experimental.” Still is. That’s all. Not getting paid by anyone to specially mention any products.

Not that I wouldn’t sell out, it’s just that I haven’t. I mean, I would be happy to sell my soul, for the right price. Well, a piece of it, anyway.

July 9 2007

Mercury RX

Strictly speaking, [Mercury](#) is no longer retrograde as of 8 PM Monday night.

I was chatting with an informed client – the best kind – and she looked it it up.

“10:16 PM Monday night.”

Eastern time, didn’t think of that, huh. Gemini, they’re like that – a great source of trivial information. Sometimes unsorted. Have to take the data the way it happens.

Looks like, according to my software, Mercury goes direct at 8:16 PM, Central Time. Not that I’m counting down the hours, minutes and seconds, not me. But there is that.

The problem is, looking at that same data, Mercury doesn’t budge off its two-degree mark for the remainder of the week. To naked eye observation, Mercury will look like a bright star, right before sunrise, for the next couple of mornings. That’s about it. No real big change. Or rather, nothing that isn’t covered in the [audio](#) (free) or [video](#) (paid subscribers only) message.

I was stuck on the highway, in a neighbor’s little Hybrid, as I was driving to far north Austin for a quick [TV spot](#). Low clouds scudded across the sky, a few big drops of rain, then a blowing sheet of rain, then a dry spot. I got to thinking about one afternoon, or an evening, on a motorcycle, many long years ago. Memory was a little fuzzy, but the more I thought about it, the more I recalled.

It was a Thursday, summer, in July, in Dallas. I was working in North Dallas, and living close to the south side. I must've left work at 6 or so, the sun was low, not really breaking through the heavy cloud cover, making it feel like night. Warm summer night, me, in a helmet, t-shirt, jeans, boots.

Headed south, I turned west on the loop around Dallas, looking at the rain clouds and sheets of rain headed towards me. I was hoping to skirt around the edge of the storm in a mad, rush hour dash homeward. The big loop arced westward, then southward, and the very leading edge of the storm's rain was just hitting the eastern edges of the loop. I recall, probably from an overpass, being able to see what was happening, at rush hour, with that storm.

Youthful optimistic ignorance is wonderful. I had that in boat loads. Still have the ignorance, but the optimism is tainted by humanity and reality. I thought I could outrun the storm front. I was thinking about that very afternoon, wondering what to do with the image. What I recall, there was a wreck on the freeway, all traffic was diverted to a single lane, the storm caught me, I got soaked.

At 50, or 70, miles an hour, rain doesn't feel like gentle raindrops ponderously and lugubriously landing on one's head. Each tiny droplet of water stings. Each is a micro shot of pain, like an artist's sand etching away at glass. It wasn't pretty, I was soaked, and I'm wondering what the point was. That big, black cloud rolling up on the Dallas skyline, the highway, stretched in front, the very idea of outrunning the rain?

July 14, 2007

Musical notes

This was going to start as a musical interlude, but like most events, I took a wrong turn. I was walking along the river, listening to music. Sweating like a stuck pig since it's hot and humid. As only a summer day in Central Texas can be.

The [Romantics](#) were singing "what I like about you," which, if I recall, and I might have this wrong, they successfully sold as a theme song to some brand of beer. Or cars. Or something of that ilk. [Poison](#) cycled up next, a nicer version of the same song, not to be confused with [the song remains the same](#)....

So a single hit from 25, almost 30 years ago is now an advertising lick. Bands and musicians need to keep making money, somehow, I'm sure, mining and milking the past for recycled material. Does that mean it's green? Different meaning for green, I think.

It's all about selling out. Wonder what the price tag is to convert an old hit to an advertising jingle. I'll figure that there's a sliding scale – recognized hit to how tacky the product is, or something like that.

The next song that came up was [Freeway Jam](#), a spiraling work that I thought would be an excellent comparison since it was never featured as an ad. No way it could be a commercialized. Point and counterpoint.

Doesn't work that way. The reason I have that song on the music list is because the [radio in El Paso](#), the political talk show I was last on? The producer used that as part of the host's bumper.

That use effectively puts an end to my allusion, my comparison that the song couldn't be used as a commercial item.



Console TV.

July 23 2007

Mi Cocina

With Pa Wetzel. In Dallas.

We – it was me and a group of friends – took my dad out since he was generously letting us camp out for the weekend “chez Casa Wetzel.”

Pa Wetzel is one of the last of the polio survivors from the old “Warm Springs” era. We parked the truck, about half a block from the restaurant Pa Wetzel suggested, then he unlimbered two canes and proceeded in his ungainly yet determined pace to slowly move forward towards his destination, the rest of us following him like ducklings following a mama duck.

As we were walking in, I pulled up alongside my fishing buddy, he suggested we drop Pa Wetzel at the doorstep then park the truck. My father would have none of that, “I’ll just walk.” Although, it’s obvious, at his age, it’s a bit of trouble. He’s definitely “mobility impaired,” even if he won’t admit it.

So when I was alongside my fishing buddy, I pointed out the family behavior trait, and I said, “Next time I want to fish a little longer, you know where I got the stubborn streak from.”



Rosa's Cantina. El Paso, TX.

July 24 2007

Two Meat Tuesday

At the southeast corner of Lower Congress and Oltorf, in tony South Austin, there's a grocery store.

To a casual visitor, it might look like an "H.E.B.," and to me, it looks like "Ay-shesh – EEEE – Bee."

Shopped there, frequently, got to the point that I couldn't walk in without seeing someone I knew, or, at least, that I did a [reading](#) for. For years, I've resisted the siren's call of the little "taco stand" trailer in the middle of the parking lot. I call it a taco stand but that's an emotional expression, it looks like a taco stand, but what they really sell? Shaved Ice and Roasted Corn.

It's too convoluted to explain what I was doing, in the parking lot, why I was there, or why I was talking to three women. Libra, Sagittarius, Pisces, arrayed in a semi-circle around me.

"Ya'll never had roasted corn? You just don't know what you're missing."

I was trying to explain, while the woman in the trailer was scraping corn off a cob and into into a small cup. Two (much younger) guys were ahead of me, both latino, and both of them were muttering in spanish. One of them winked through the window to the woman as she prepped their corn. Outside, on the shelf, condiments included big, half-empty canisters for chili powder, lemon pepper and cayenne. There were squeeze bottles with mayo and margarine.

The two guys in line, one of them tried desperately to flirt with the woman working, then both those guys dressed their cups of corn with mayo, lemon pepper, chili powder, and cayenne, and topped it off with squirt of margarine.

My putative audience looked on while I mentioned the creamy goodness of roasted corn. I ordered mine, a single ear of corn. Corn on the cob, Elote Entero, like I knew that. I ordered in flawless English.

When she handed me the corn over the counter, it was a long, steamy ear of corn with a decent piece of stalk for a handle, and the ear sat on a foil square that was atop two brown paper towels. I proceeded to address the corner and my audience and explain that the way the corn should be eaten includes a squirt of mayo (or mayo-like substance), then sprinkled with lemon peppers, chili powder and cayenne. Which is what I did. I skipped the butter topping because I wasn't interested, and I had me my dinner.

Somewhere, though, my street urchin cred was questioned.

“No, Kramer, I don't usually dine in the parking lot of the grocery store.”

You don't know what you're missing.



Main Street.

July 25, 2007

Border crossing

Border towns, all about the same, but first, look at two movies: [El Mariachi](#) (classic) and its sequel, [Desperado](#).

Most of [El Mariachi](#) was filmed in [Ciudad Acuna](#), from what I've been told. Oral history and fact don't always align, so I won't say that it's fact. But it looks like it's true. Some of the scenes are identical.

My friends wanted not-quite over-the-counter substances that cost a lot more, here, on the other side of the Rio Bravo. As an example Retina A, costs \$120 per tube, here, stateside, looks like it's about \$20 a tube, just across the border. That was the basic reason for the trip. I would've picked up some cigars, too, but those are illegal, and I'm not interested in explaining anything uncomfortable to a custom's agent.

Shorty was just getting to work as we rolled into town. He was short, from Coahuila, and for 15 bucks an hour, he would stick by us. We weren't the exciting group he was hoping for, that's for sure. I speak, at best, broken Spanish, with a nod towards border patois. He spoke plain English. We hit the highlights, a pharmacy, then the bars. One of the best experiences was a little six-inch Mexican Coke. The small bottles, old-school. With the Mexican recipe Coca-cola. Real sugar and cane sugar instead of reprocessed petroleum products.

At one place, I paid about five bucks for a liter-sized bottle of vanilla extract. Mexican Vanilla. There is none finer. It was all, really, just an exploratory trip, no real goals for me, other than to watch them buy certain pharmaceutical items. More like a day trip bereft of brain power. However, there is that one scene from the movie, the part where the bartender is shot? That was filmed at the bar, and I had to include a stop there. Me, clutching a bottle of vanilla, like it's in a barrio coozie.

The funny part to me, as we wandered in and around the famous bar, looking at the pictures, while I struck a pose, Shorty and the bartender were speaking in Spanish, talking about how I didn't understand. Sometimes, it never hurts to act like a dumb tourist. The afternoon meal was, like, a cafe in Del Rio that advertised Deli-Cappuccino-Internet. That worked. I did sneak a picture of the old Kress building, another ghost sign, and the US side of that port town is a lot sadder than its Mexican counterpart. Gentle decay and disuse compared with abundant growth and constant renovation?

Comparing prices, though? I think my dentist might've just lost a patient. Crown in Mexico? \$300. Think about that, next time the co-pay is higher than the whole cost. Just watch out for guys with guitar cases.

July 26, 2007

Language

Saw this on an unrelated t-shirt, in an unrelated place, Dallas airport, if you have to know, and maybe you don't, but then, why read miscellany anyway?

*"Bonus lingua est mortuus lingua."
(The only good language is a dead language.)*



Mission.

August 14, 2007

Hit and myth

Occasionally, I confuse myth and fact. So the following short narrative is factual as I understand but there's been limited fact-checking. Use with care, usual [disclaimers](#) apply.

From reading early Kinky Friedman books, there's the Lone Star Cafe – or Lone Star Bar – in NYC. The sign over the door – or something – was a giant [Bob Wade](#) iguana. The city of New York insisted that it was a sign, and it needed to be regulated and licensed as sign, and the Lone Star Cafe – or Bar – said the sign was artwork, and good art requires no license. Apparently, neither does bad art, but that's not part of the question.

A few years later, Tango opened in Dallas with much fanfare and six or seven dancing frogs on the roof. Animated, in a limited manner. A sign, a sign of the times. The City of Dallas insisted that it was a sign, a trademark. Tango insisted it was art. At the same time the lawsuit made front page news, the advertising for the club stopped. Why pay for advertising when the city's frivolous lawsuit was generating much better attention?

Tango flourished then floundered. (Yeah, we'll skip the other details.)

The frogs, at first, were part of the Dallas Chuy's downtown location. Eventually, they wound up, at least a few of them, at a truck stop, trumpeting Willie's Bio-Diesel. Carl's Corner, on the interstate, up, just south of Dallas.

While I was in [Jupiter](#), the other afternoon, I had a great idea. The owner is a kindly soul with an obsessive epicurean twist that produces the best damn coffee, and Sagittarius, as well. I suggested a similar idea, a something, perhaps a coffee cup, just paper mache item.

“San Antonio. As in, ‘this is,’ and if there was a paper mache thing hanging up? How long before some guys with sticks were blindfolded and started swinging at it?”

Scorpio: "Listen," a buddy (not named bubba, ironically enough) said, "she won't pick up." He hit a speed dial number, and the phone on the other end, probably a cell phone, rolled over to voice mail after a half-dozen rings. "She's ditching me, I know." The waitress appeared with two plates on one arm and pitcher of ice tea in her other hand. She set the tea down, then plopped the plates in front of us, I was having a two-meat special, my buddy was doing the "all you can eat" deal.

Must've been a Tuesday. The waitress said something tacky to me, I responded in kind, my glass was refilled, and I picked up a delicious pork rib. My buddy picked up a beef rib, set it back on his plate, picked up the phone and hit the speed dial again. "She's avoiding me, I know. I suppose you'll blame this on one of your planet things, fisher-boy-o. Huh."

Yes, well, there you have it. Days later, I got a few hundred words from the same guy, apparently, the cell service was off, or the battery was dead, or she left her phone someplace, but life was happy again, for the moment, as she was talking to him again. Promising they'd get together soon. Sometime. Indeterminate time-frame, nebulous at best. Not that it matters, but hope does spring eternally in some people.

So when the phone goes unanswered, or there's a problem getting through to a certain person? Perhaps follow my suggestion and get back to what's in front of you, like maybe the BBQ. Couple of days later, peace will be restored, that I'll promise. Will it end with a "happy ever after"? Or will it be happy never after? That's a call I can't make, but it does look bad to call and not leave a message, like 16 times in an hour.

[8.16.2007](#)



Pepper Porn.

September 2, 2007

Oracular Astrology

What it amounts, I can make suggestions, but anyone who tells you that there is going to be a tall, dark handsome stranger come into your life in the next few days (weeks, months, years) is a doing a disservice, unless, of course, that person has a real pipeline to the Almighty.

Find a real one like that, and you're good to go. In the mean time, there's someone like me. Oracular Astrology, what I practice. It's about trends, flavors, indications and trigger points. Trends, where actions tend in a direction; flavors, where a certain kind of timbre and tone pervades a situation; indications, not absolute predictions, more like arrows; and trigger points, where a planet's influence can trigger action.

September 4, 2007

Two-Meat Tuesday

REK: Robert Earl Keen (live at Floores Country Store)

It started with a fishing buddy, “Dude, like, you’ve got to hear this one. No, you’ll like it, the guy has a song about a five pound bass.”

Obviously, a reference to REK’s [Number Two Dinner](#) CD. Album. Never saw it as a real album, so it’s just a CD.

And a classic. And certainly on my top ten list of all-time CD’s. I’ve bought it three-four times now, seen REK, three-four times now, and can’t recommend either enough.

“Leon Valley 6
San Antonio 15”

It’s the highway sign, on Highway 16, from Helotes, TX.

Singular memory

Terry Allen singing Amarillo Highway

Anticipation

Good age mix

*Good racial mix from white blonde girls in tight jeans –
onto everything – well, there was a shortage of blacks
but not other racial diversity.*

The Scorpio cop was there.

“We’re at Floores, a high class place.”

No email list – but I still go.

Wink T-Shirt (Wink TX – home of the Wink Sink)

Laetri edimus qui nos subigant.

– Kramer Wetzel

Sent from an iPhone.

Climb mountains, see the sun rise over the pyramids, see the sun set at Stonehenge, see the Grateful Dead, see Jimmy Buffett, see Robert Earl Keen – Live, at Floores Country Store, in Helotes.



Lincoln Low Rider.

September 22, 2007

Do Not Remove

On Southwest Airlines? The new seating arrangement, maybe not so new by now, has one missing seat, with the three over-wing emergency-exit on the other side of the aisle. I preferred the old style, with the emergency exit row having a hot tub, six facing seats, three forward, three backwards. Ever a democratic airline, though, the new seating allows more passenger space and if I understand their business, probably saves money. No one wanted to sit facing backwards, and on one eventful flight, a rearward facing kid lost his breakfast on my boots, during a typical West Texas landing (sometimes a little rough around the edges).

On our way back from Vegas, I was sitting in the single extended leg room seat, looking out the window. It was one of the older jets, as I could see the round engine cowling instead of the updated oblong scoop. SWA still only flies 737s, although the model-year and numerical designation changes, it's usual the same aircraft. And until this [fall's schedule](#), it didn't seem like I was flying as much. Much business analysis is devoted to SWA's success. In part, it's from just one model of airplane, and in part, it's from not sharing code with other airlines, and in part, it's a rebel attitude. Stick to one kind of plane, stick to one sort of business and do that well.

Over the years, I've stared out of a lot of airplane windows, most frequently from that over-wing, serve-yourself seating. I had a file, first in a notebook, then on an Apple Newton, [moved](#) to Palm, and finally, I quit carrying around a file with that title, "Wet Fuel Cell." I don't need any more [disclaimers](#).

[Pink Cake](#) is the leading name for a new file of daily weirdness. Still, while I was looking out the window, when I saw the wing's message, in stencil, "WET FUEL CELL/DO NOT REMOVE," I started to ponder what that message always evoked, perhaps a little sentiment on my part.

There was a tenuous thread, at best, that I was going to draw between how SWA does one kind of business, and they do it well. Plain and simple. Ignore the obvious joke.

Laetri edimus qui nos subigant.

– kramer wetzel

Sent from an iPhone.

October 4, 2007

Gone coastal

“There’s a hot wind on my shoulder

And the touch of a world that is older”

Mexican Radio (Wall of Voodoo)

One experience and I always think of that song, headed to the coast for an afternoon of fishing...

Laetri edimus qui nos subigant.

– *kramer wetzel*

Sent from an iPhone.

October 6, 2007

Coastal connections

Scott ([The Fat Guy](#)) and me, we buzzed to the coast to fish. Tired of talking about “let’s get together,” we just hooked up and left before sun-up. By 9:35 AM, we were halfway across the bay, and for that matter, bereft of cell phones and the concomitant electronic leashes. If only for a day.

First Big Red was Scott, then me, then some more, in fact, we quite worrying about cameras until the huge trout, 24 inches or more. Big feller. Limited out on Reds, and kept fishing for a while longer, catch and release until there was no more fight left in us.

Puerto Vallarta Hamburgers:

When I think of the Gulf Coast and the drinking towns (with fishing problems), I tend to shy away from a place that doesn’t sell shell food. Or half-shell, or scale sale, or wiggly bits in oil. Something about fresh seafood means fresh seafood. Could be my own prejudice, too. However, the aforementioned guide, Ron, highly recommended the burgers at a place next door to Tackle Town, a joint called Tacqueria Puerto Vallarta. Friday’s special? Chicken Fried Steak, vegetable, mashed potato – \$4.75. Underneath that sign, another special, Three Milk Cake, properly, should be Tres Leches which sounds ever so much better.

But the guide suggested the burger, the waitress concurred, and those burgers have to rank up there with best. A half pound of fresh ground beef, a homemade bun, all the fixings? And it was good. Don’t recall much more. Might’ve been a tad peckish once we were off the water.

Normally, I would’ve tried the “three milk cake,” but that burger was almost too much. Almost.

October 9, 2007

Meditation

It's tricky business, this meditation thing. The question came in, "How do you meditate?"

Many of my friends who work with Runes, like my Sagittarius friend [Elka](#), mostly, I've found that they all despise a certain [little book](#) because it's woefully inadequate, and according to [serious](#) scholars, just plain wrong.

Now, I don't recall if I cut the quote or not, whether it is in my [Pink Cake](#) collection or the [discard file](#), but I did, I think, quote that author on the process of meditation.

If I recall, and this is all straight from my porous memory, what he wrote and how he defined meditation – in one form – was the process of reading a book and underlining passages, making notes in the margins. I can't say I remember much else from the text, I doubt I even own a copy that [book](#).

Meditation, in one form, is all about making the inner mind quiet and still. Then, from that calm, imagine a pool, a pond, a still body of water, from that calm pool of inner peace, drawing on that well, little bubbles come up and break on the surface. Those little bubbles, what sort of stuff pops up? That's like a fart in a bathtub. Or, there might be more important nuggets.

I've found in the long years I've been at this, that my meditation takes the form of walking. Being of Best Western decent – Robert Earl Keen line gratefully stolen and duly noted – me sitting in a Zen-like Lotus position for two hours at a time, probably not going to happen. But I do achieve a trance like state as I lay a book down on my chest and fall into a light sleep while in a supine position on the couch. That's a form of meditation. No, really, it is.

There's another way I meditate, too, the walking part. Of that "Best Western" mindset, what happens, when I'm past the three mile mark on a short hike, when the rhythm of the soles of sandals slap against the gravel of the travel, that's a meditative state.

There's another form, too, chemically induced, and I never realized it until later. I would stop at one particular coffee shop, on Congress Avenue, and I would order up a simple shot of espresso. Hot and frothy, letting the warm elixir gently roll across my tongue, savoring the way the roasted coffee oil was gradually covering my tongue, infusing flavor (and caffeine). Been some years ago, but in the wan winter light, dusk, dark, marching and rolling towards the river's edge, letting the evening's libation settle, that too, can be meditation.

October 10, 2007

Cash is king

Unrelated:

Astrology is about symbols and language. It's the music of the spheres, so to speak.

Unrelated Two:

I answered the phone, "What is oriented in a skyward position?"

"So basically, if I read this right, I'm just screwed for the rest of my life, is that right?" (A buddy of mine)

I glanced at the afternoon sky, a few clouds, a single tourist, a Leo late for our appointment, another day in South Texas paradise.

"No man, it'll change soon, probably go from bad to worse, really."

It's all about choices that we make. I was amused. I don't guess he was.

Unrelated Three:

The "do-over" as a secret to a good relationship.

I've examined and codified my findings about relationships in a book, [Fishing for love](#), I think that was how I [titled it](#) incidentally, available as a free download in electronic format [here](#).

As Mercury turns into apparent retrograde motion, heading east, when all the other stars and planets plod westwardly, it's time to revisit the "get out of jail free" card.

It's simple. This first showed up a dozen years ago in another failed relationship. I was merely the observer, but to me, it was funny, and telling.

He told me: "I really love her and I could see spending my life with her."

She told me: "Cheap bastard, told me we could save money if we moved in together."

Just friends, not clients, and besides, statue of limitations is up. That statue is about this tall. Never mind that now. That situation, that scene, that skirmish could've been avoided with a simply placed "do-over." Like a comb-over, only better results. But there are two parts to a second chance like this. Part One: recognize that an opportunity has been offered. You might've stepped in it, but here's a chance to wipe it off with no adverse side-effects. Part Two: make the correction, or corrections, quickly, efficiently, and perform in a workman-like manner. Suck it up, wipe it up, don't smirk.

In that precious do-over, don't blow it. Don't try the way out, "I didn't know I was doing anything wrong." The other person wouldn't be so mad, surely, you've got a clue.

Use it wisely. Figure out the mistake and atone.

Of course, as an [appropriate](#) counterpoint, skip the good advice and play dumb?



Riverwalk. Cell Phone image.

October 14, 2007

Gavacho

Gavacho- n. – Spanish slang.

I'm used to being referred to as a guero ("Where – OH," white boy), so it was a new term. I liked it, sounded good. The definition, though, varies, and it was pronounced, "gaa – VASH – oh."

"It's like cowboy, or redneck, you know?"

October 24, 2007

Remix: wet fuel cell

The title refers to a label on the wings of the older planes in the Southwest fleet. That label was an inspiration for what is now astrofish.net's [End User License Agreement](#). It's really a [Two Meat Tuesday](#) kind of entry, that's my thinking, only it's more about Point Barren oysters as compared to Pink Cove oysters.

"The Pine Cove oysters are sweeter tasting, the Point Barren have a more metallic tang," explained the capable Gemini server.

Unlike the Gulf Coast oysters, which are larger, juicier, and taste just like petroleum. With a subtle hint of Mercury and Arsenic as a whimsical finish. It's where we get our heavy metals and trace minerals. Builds strong bodies 12 ways.

After the exquisite repast, complete with formal trappings, Sunday evening, overlooking Puget Sound, watching the ferries ply back and forth, it was a challenge to find more fresh seafood that good.

Took the ferry to Kingston, and from there, it was a short, breathtakingly scenic drive past Port Townsend and up towards Discovery Bay. My uncle and a couple of cousins live up that way. Met them for lunch. Thought about what [The Fat Guy](#) said about people who live on the coast, wherein those denizens are coerced to learn to interface with humanity. Or grow gills. That's cold water, the northwest corner of America. At least, the furthest northwest corner of the unfrozen states.

Over the years, as I've bounced around, I've tried planes, trains and automobiles. This trip was a car – a hybrid with an Oregon tag – but I watched an Amtrak liner roar past. Might be the same engine and cars I've ridden before, when its service is called the Texas Eagle, and I would take it from Dallas or Ft. Worth to Austin. Or San Antonio to Austin, back and forth.

Marginally cheaper than air, and depending, can be cheaper than gas, these days.

On one trip from Dallas, a long and heart-breaking tale in and of itself, but then Dallas is a cold-hearted (and mean-spirited) woman, I was watching the scenery slide by, and as the train slowed down, didn't stop, but slowed down, there it was, an image straight from Steve Fromholz's [Texas Trilogy](#), which I had, at the time, been reacquainted with through Lyle Lovett's [Step Inside This House](#) cover album.

"The sounds of trains only remains in the memories of the one like me who have turned their backs on the splintered tracks..."

[Texas Trilogy – Trainride \(Steve Fromholz\)](#)

The scene is a station in Bosque County, right before or right after the Brazos, which, according to [Robert Earl Keen](#), still runs muddy.

The trains, the entrance to the ferry briefly blocked as an Amtrak liner went speeding past, brought the thought about the train songs. And the Brazos. And the Steve Fromholz songs, I've tried to recover for years.

Saturday night, in Seattle, in a place called Silver Platters, I found that remixed CD. \$20 is steep, but to have those songs on CD? Worth every penny.

*"Just sit right back and you'll hear a tale
A tale of fateful trip
That started from this tropic port
Aboard this tiny ship.
The mate was a mighty sailing man
The skipper brave and sure
Five passengers set sail that day
For a three hour tour..."*

A three hour tour...

Across the sound, maybe someplace on this side – or that side – of the Hood Canal, there's small town called Poulsbro. Supposed to have a fabulous restaurant called Mor-Mor, or MorMor, or something like that. Pitched as the best on the Olympic Peninsula, I gave it a try, hoping to match those superior oysters Sunday night. (With the [Aquarius](#) couple.)

The deal was, it was a nice place, with a “price fixe” menu at a paltry \$25 with wine included (tax and gratuity not included).

Ordered “lightly fried oysters” and [Dungeness Crab](#) Cakes (lightly fried).

The oysters, might very have been Gulf Coast Oysters, since the “lightly fried” tasted a lot more like “Southern Fried,” which, while I love, wasn't what I had in mind. The other option was the crab cakes, and there's a place at the airport, local chain, and that place, it's crab cocktail is better than those crab cakes.

But that's the problem with following all local advice, as a rule, the seafood is good. But not always. Might've been an off night. Or it might be better hype than product.

Or maybe it was Monday Night football?

November 6, 2007

Two-meat Tuesday

Why Texas Women are better:

I was advising a neighbor, a recent transplant from Southern California, about dating. I was trying to explain, in a succinct manner, what to expect from Texas natives, as opposed to, say, a California guy.

"Look, occasionally, a Texas guy, he'll do something stupid."

"How stupid?"

"Like, 'here, honey, I bought you a new trolling motor,' stupid."

Didn't make it in translation. I don't speak Southern California. Dude. But I do prefer Texas women. They're just better than the rest. There's a certain quality that comes from part pioneer stock, part of that "I'll just do it myself" attitude, and part Southern charm. "Cute shoes, honey."

A typical Texas girl, when faced with a flat tire, will stand beside her vehicle and look distraught for a moment or two. Nobody cares? Charm doesn't work? She'll just fix it herself, then, and she'll get out the jack, break the lug nuts loose then crank up the car and pop on the spare. But she'll wait first, just to see if there are any nice guys to do the hard work.

Now, the Texas guys, we're given to sometimes acting in a manner not consistent with our age. I'd like to think it's part of our charm. Call it what you want. Have to get used to it, though, occasionally, we'll do something from "mildly entertaining" to "incredibly dumb," and the degrees of measure are what's important.

"Hey! Watch me do this!"

(Duck.)

Dream Interpretation:

For some reason, I slept really well in downtown Portland. Not exactly a luxury hotel, more like a cheap motel, but it was good, nice sheets, clean room, and slept well. Well enough to have a bizarre dream.

I was in Austin, like, in the old neighborhood, and I was riding a really old scooter. It was cross between a Vespa-esque machine and a crednza. Sort of like a wooden-framed scooter with drawers, and little pencil rack. Aged, soft wood like a pine, or better yet, an ash, with the thin veneer of time-worn about it.

In the dream I visited an old and very familiar neighborhood. There, I poked around, read a book, and one stop, in the scooter ride, I left the keys in the ignition. No problem, no one wanted to steal a scooter.

The old hood? It was growing with five new houses sprouting where there had been an empty field.

Aquarius: The real [secret](#) to making money in the internet? Start a [dating](#) site. Pick a niche group and cater exclusively to that group. While there really won't be a group that you're catering to, it will appear that way, and you'll have lots of business. The way it works, start the site out for free, then, once they're hooked good, and the business is exploding, takes about six or eight weeks, then start adding the premium services -- that's where you make the big bucks.

And dating sites? They eventually get consumed by larger dating sites. Besides, look around, the holidays, the planets, what everyone is looking for? A date for New Year's Eve, right? Here's your chance to cash in on a single craze. Get with it. And when you do sell out, and cash in on the big bucks, in about a year? Remember it was my idea and small fee, just a single percentage, of your big deal, that would be nice.

The [problems](#) facing us today can be solved with a little more love and little less antagonism. And even better, you could cash in on this very feeling. Saddle up and then sell out, it works for you and it works for me, as long as I get a percentage.

[\(12.6.2007\)](#)

December 12, 2007

Oracular Astrology

File Under: Myth, Metaphor, Mystery

What I've grown into is "oracular astrology." So define that?

Oracular Astrology, and by extensions, the weekly horoscopes I write, in as much as I'm the author, what it's about? It's like the oracle at Delphi, the servants of the gods, the priestesses, they would inhales the fumes, go into a trance and spit out the truth – that came in verse, riddle, allegory, story. Sometimes, not unlike me, without a plot. Deconstructionist Horoscopes. Works for me. Or, just call me, [Fishing Guide to the Stars](#).

The term was used by someone else, and I never really actively thought about it.

N.B.:

And that's how you bake a cake.

December 22, 2007

Swiped it

Or the idea, but here's to the big events in the last year.

5. Moved the office, well, I am an office of one, so I'm not really sure that it's such a big deal, but the new PO Box is in San Antonio, the cradle of freedom in the western world. Austin is, at times, a bit uppity these days. Besides that, the old trailer park has been sold. Fill in the blanks.

4. Bought an iPhone. Stood in line for all of about ten or fifteen minutes, bought the phone, and I've used it ever since. Seamless integration with everything I do. Works the way I work, does about 80% of what I want it to do. iPhone doesn't steam milk right for a cappuccino, but that's [a small](#) gripe.

3. Birthday fishing was phenomenal. Came home with a cooler full. An [amazing](#) time.

2. REK at Floores. Enough [has been](#) said.

1. Oracular [astrology](#). What I've been trying to write for years.

January 2, 2008

Pecan Pie

3 Eggs
1 cup sugar
1 cup pecans
1 cup karo
1 stick of butter (melted)
1 teaspoon Vanilla (Mexican)

Beat the eggs with a fork. Mix ingredients. Pour into a 9-inch pie crust. Bake at 300 for one hour.

Sisters:

“Just because you don’t remember, doesn’t mean it didn’t happen.”

“Oh, just because you remember, doesn’t mean it did happen.”

January 5, 2008

Tom King's Coffee House

Birth of an idea.

I was flipping through a London “walking tours” guidebook. Three influences: sort researching, sort of dreaming, sort of planning. Sort of not paying attention. Sort of weak in math metaphors. I happened across an entry about Covent Gardens. It mentioned a notorious historical reference to Tom King's Coffee House. It was, according to the book, a place where folks went after the bars closed at night – circa 17th century. Open from closing time to sun-up.

It was a place of ill-repute, as in, a reputation where gentlemen could meet prostitutes, packaged as a coffee-house, which, in the 17th century, were great social centers. The coffeehouses were social centers, I don't know about the prostitutes. Might need to read more of the history of Covent Gardens.

I like engaging web page ideas, like a page called “Tom King's Coffeehouse,” or maybe, just “Tom King's Coffee,” as a brand name with a twist. Suits my humor. I looked it up. Some of the names were available.

Death:

The idea, I poked at it for a few minutes, thought about it, registering the name, getting the page set-up, doing all that needed to be done. But then, what would I fill the page with, what images and words would populate the page? Lot of work for something that would eventually get discarded. But a great idea, for a little while.

Morbid curiosity:

The other afternoon, I had a favorite T-shirt. “Raven's Brew Coffee: served in bed, strong enough to raise the dead.”

The coffee, I've bought a pound or two of it before, it's okay. Not really worth the premium price, not when compared to

regular coffee that costs half as much, but it's all about marketing and presentation. The Raven's Brew Coffee artwork gets comments. The T-shirt usually evokes chuckles and raised eyebrows, nominally, in a slightly provocative way without being overbearing. That's a good piece of art. Too bad the coffee doesn't live up to the artwork. It's not bad, it's just not a premium blend, not to me. But the coffee company sells more than just coffee, they also sell the great t-shirts. Probably mugs and so forth, and the corporate story is an enchanting tale, in and of, its self.

Tom King's Coffee. Great idea. Read it here first.



Folk Art.

Virgen de Guadalupe

South Flores.

January 15, 2008

Two-Meat Tuesday

Much Ado About Notung:

In Wagner's Ring Cycle, the third opera is about a lad named Siegfried. In Act I, he forges a magical sword called Notung. Act II – slays the dragon; act III gets the girl. I have a t-shirt that depicts a sword, probably not historically correct, as the hilt on the t-shirt looks like a Scottish thing, and what that's doing in Norse mythology isn't exactly clear. The caption is play on themes, a classical pun, as it were, "Much ado about Notung."

I was wearing that T when I left El Paso.

Sunday night was a treat. State Line BBQ.

January 16, 2008

Requiem

In William Faulkner's book, "[As I Lay Dying](#)," as I recall, the narrator is the matriarch of the family, the grandmother, upstairs on her deathbed, and she can hear her son and grandson making her coffin. Starts that way.

In January, of 1990, me and the girlfriend at the time (Virgo), went to the Mesa (Phoenix area), AZ kitty lock-up to look for a cat that had gone missing. Such as cats will. We walked out of there, for a small fee, and as a poor, broke college student, a fee I could ill-afford, with two six-week old kittens, one gray and one orange tabby. I don't know what happened to the orange one. Sisters separated at the pound, as the girlfriend and the cat are no longer around. But the gray tabby, at the conclusion of my degree, followed me to Texas. To Austin. To East Austin. North Austin then finally, alongside the river in South Austin.

I cared for that cat, as only loving and devoted cat carer can, for seventeen years. Through thick and thin, although, anyone who's seen her more recent pictures realize it more for thick than thin, as she never missed a meal. Not to hear her talk about it, though. A couple of cat tales come to mind. One time, it was summer and I was living in East Austin, and I was too cheap (broke) to keep the AC on. I had a lady friend over, and the cat, she hadn't been out from underneath the couch in about three weeks. Other than, of course, to eat and use her litter box, But she did indicate her displeasure at my choice for thermostat settings by pointedly ignoring me and staying under the couch, which was the coolest place in the cheap apartment. Me and that girl, woman, whatever, we started necking on the couch, and by the time we made it to the diminutive bedroom, there was the cat, stretched out, across all four pillows, at the head of the bed. She stretched once, like it was her place.

There was another girlfriend, a Virgo, and whenever the cat heard that woman's truck on the gravel for the trailer park's drive, quick as lightening, that cat was under the bed and in full ignore for the duration of that woman's visit. Can't say animals aren't a good judge of character.

There was one instance, with a Gemini, we were just sitting on the couch, and the cat hopped up, and plopped down between us. Put an end to that. First girlfriend's rights, or something.

There was another, a Virgo, who was allergic to cats, so she said. That cat did manage to sleep curled around her rival's head. Another Virgo who never returned.

Bubba and I picked up Sandy's burgers one evening. His largest dog is bigger than me, I think, outweighed me at one time, anyway. The dog, not just Bubba. Either outweighed me. However, on that one night, the cat always had a certain fondness for Sandy's burgers, and she was up on the couch, he glared at the cat, reminded the cat that he had a dog that outweighed either me or the cat, and still the cat mewled just right, and got herself a piece of the burger.

There's been a variety of pet sitters, too. Towards the end, me and the cat had a special understanding. I would be gone for up to three days, and frequently, she never really missed me. Sometimes, I'd get home, and I'd swear, she never moved from the bed or the couch, for the whole time. Cold winter nights, though, she still curls up against my back. Gets upset if I move too early. Gives me "the look" and complains.

I've used a queen-sized bed for a dozen years or more. I have four pillows on it, two for me, two for the cat. Summer months, in other words, 9 months out of the year, doesn't much matter. But for the coldest, winter months, that cat would sleep on the two pillows, right beside my head. I've long since learned it's pointless to argue with women, even when I'm right, I'm still wrong.

One mythology suggests that there's a heaven, and when we get there, all our pets come back to greet us. I'm not interested in seeing too many other pets, but that one cat? I'll be glad to see her. Of course, she'll just be on couch, flicking her tail at me, wondering if I brought burger, bacon or brisket.

January 17, 2008

[It burns](#)

“It burns! It burns!”

Last fall, I had dinner with an extended family group. An aunt, her nieces and a grand-nephew, and, what it amounted to? Oh, I just don’t know the connection. Some of the same last names, some different, I don’t know how we’re all connected. I don’t care. The aunt is aging, and the younger of the couples had nephew, or grand nephew, or cousin-in-law, or I don’t even know what the connection is, but anyway, they had this two-year old boy-child with them. Cute kid. Gemini, little male Gemini. If you have to know. Not that matters, but I note these things.

While we all had nice a dinner, it was, like, after church on a Sunday afternoon, the grandmother was seated next to me, and the little boy-child Gemini was next to her. He got to eat dinosaur-shaped chicken nuggets. Man, why do the kids always get the coolest food?

The grandmother put a couple of french fry on the little boy’s plate. He picked one up. Me and the grandmother watched as the little boy’s eyes began to well up with painful tears.

She looked over, “What wrong?” She had matronly concern, but there’s a matter-of-fact kind of air a grandmother (or grandmother type) can affect, and frankly get away with, that the rest of us just can’t pull off.

Tears in his eyes, holding that french fry, “It’s hot.”

There was pain creeping around the edges of his voice.

In her best grandmother voice?

“Well, put it down.”

I think I've used this example, it happened some time in the last 6-8 months, either I've written about it here, used it the in weekly video, or popped it into a horoscope. I can't recall. But it illustrated a point, so well.

Tears in the little feller's eyes, "It's hot."

Just put it down.

When it happened, I looked at the mom, the grandmother, and I giggled, "He's such a guy."

February 8, 2008

More noise

Last I saw Lyle Lovett in concert, he was in a frankly conversational mood. Talked a lot from the stage, and he did so in manner that was like a guest in the living room. What I would expect from an artist of his caliber, a rare and excellent performer. I was thinking about Lyle Lovett because his album is one of the ones I bought last year. Walked in, there was the latest, right in front of a cash register, I paid top dollar. Didn't think twice.

I once read that he toured with his Large Band, [It's Not Big, It's Large](#), for six days to make money on the seventh day. Not good odds, but one I'm familiar with. That last concert, I counted three tour buses behind the venue, and at least a dozen performers on stage. And if each musician needs a guitar tech to keep them all happy, then two roadies to move and set up? Must take hundreds. A full gross, at least. I can understand why, in his arrangement, it takes six days to make money on the seventh.

Lyle Lovett, Jimmy Buffett, and the Grateful Dead? It's a tenuous thread, at best, other than it's all good music, in my mind. In Houston, one year, Jimmy Buffett did a Lyle Lovett song, said it was special for that Texas crowd. Then, too, Jimmy Buffett covered a Dead song, in a really good way, [Scarlet Begonias](#).

Lyle Lovett, Jimmy Buffett, the Grateful Dead? No big, over the top hits. Ever. However, the money's made on the road. One piece missing from the previous post, in the music business, the end of the show? When it's time to settle up? That's where the money is made.



Judson's.

February 11, 2008

Clarity

I woke up thinking about how to approach a short piece of writing – trying to figure out what I would put into a brief “thank you for subscribing” introduction, tiny piece of generic text.

Start with a little definition, what the subscriptions goes for? [Oracular Astrology](#), what this might be about.

Straight up numbers are important, as I was listening to a local weather forecast. Plausible, scientific, neat, and wrong. Not that it’s bad, just the weather guy can’t seem to hit the actual weather that well. Lots of high pressure zones and low pressure areas, and bands of moisture, but still, not on the money. My own, internal method of guessing is more accurate.

In that vein, though, I should assess my own predictions in light of what really happens. Hence the oracular nature of my work, what is sold here. I figure, in an average month, I will be right, at the most, three times. For the \$2.95/30 days, that’s basically four horoscopes. So three of those four will apply. The fourth? I’ll be so far off base, so detached from reality as the reader understands it, so wrong that it’s laughable. Still, hitting three out of four? Way better than the local weather, and not bad for odds in Vegas.

But this isn’t about being right all the time. What I figure is that at least once a month, I’ll piss off the reader. Not that I intend to, just the way it works. Cultural bias and background will have an influence on that. Plain ignorance on my part, of which, there is no shortage – that’s a factor to consider.

There’s also a point in [Shakespeare’s Scottish Play](#) that came to mind. MacBeth kept asking the three witches about his future. In turn, he interpreted what he heard as his own glory. Not how it turns out, the witches were right, he got screwed, in part, by

hearing what he wanted, not what was said. Hence the problem with oracles.

I'm doing this one from memory, as I don't have a copy of the text handy, but I believe it was Stephen Crane in his [novella](#) "The Open Boat," who had a character cry out, "If that old ninny-woman Fate can do no better than this, she ought to be deprived of the management of men's fortunes." Might be wrong – porous memory of mine.

Doesn't really matter, though, if it's the local weather, Shakespeare's witches, or the first of the American realist author's at the turn of the century, won't be right all the time. That's why, with the paid horoscopes, there's a lot more to read – and see. Don't like the Sun Sign this week? One of the weeks when I'm wrong? Try the Moon Sign, or Rising Sign. Be pleasantly surprised. And figure, at that price? I can't be right all the time.

Like I've previously noted, this is akin to the Oracle at Delphi. Some days, you won't know what fumes I've inhaled.

February 14, 2008

True Love: Bookstores

The other afternoon, I was idly perusing new books at the bookstore. Chain store, a distant number two in national sales. I like the underdog. Always have.

I was looking at the latest “critically acclaimed” [Aneid](#). But my original search? I was looking for a Roman writer.

Manilius: [Astronomica \(Loeb Classical Library No. 469\) \(Hardcover\)](#). Desire.

However, not being a common text, no store had it on hand so I could check it out before I bought it. Made me think, though I have a copy of [Ulysses](#) (James Joyce), and I never made it past the first hundred pages or so. Tough text. Critically acclaimed. I did read all of the [Odyssey](#) but I bogged down maybe a third of the way through that [Illiad](#).

Classical Studies was shelved right next to Medieval Lit. I thought about a new Chaucer book, maybe the [Viking Portable Chaucer](#), which threw me back to the Classical, and thinking about the Loeb Classical [Boethius](#). I thought I had a copy of Boethius, but the little green one would be ever so cool. Probably a different translation. But at the university, I never finished reading the original text, and while I’ve referenced its material, I don’t know that I would ever finish reading it. Waste of my limited shelf space.

For Marcus Aurelius, I tend to use a more [recent translation](#), although, I do have the [Loeb Classical version](#), and I do use it from time to time. The point and counterpoint in translations makes as much sense as the quotes themselves. Although, with interlinear notes, sometimes I an revert to the original. It’s less about what each word means and more about getting a sense of the text.

Reminds me of looking at I-Ching books. I flipped through at least a half dozen of them. I would reference the same stanza, chapter and verse, and I compared the translations. As much as I respect a body of knowledge, I had to wonder at how the various translations could come up with such varying definitions.

While going to a bookstore is an adventure that I enjoy, especially when Mercury is retrograde, there's the leavening and weighing. Measuring and assessing if a text is really going to be consumed, or if I should let it be so others may partake.

March 7, 2008

Bexar County Line sign

I lived in Austin, lived there for many years, and I commuted to San Antonio under the assumption that the two towns were similar. Separated by less than 80 miles, I never quite grasped the concept that Austin was in Central Texas whereas San Antonio was the gateway to South Texas. Geographically similar, but practically? Different planes of existence.

That sign, heading south on the interstate (I-35), was a marker for me, during that time, Frequently I could catch a ride to town, and that sign was an indication that I was finally in South Texas. The name itself, too, it resonated with some type of ethereal, surreal energy. The sign that I chose [for the masthead](#), though, that's different. It's on the main coastal highway, heading back into San Antonio from Corpus Christi. While the northern version, coming in from Austin is in a populated area, the southern sign is less so. I'd see it on most return trips from the coast. Again, coming or going, there always was a palpable hint of happiness.

The [image](#) haunted me, and the more I got to know San Antonio, the more I realized what an under-appreciated location it is. Austin is the hip, slick and cool younger (sibling) to San Antonio's older, more (apparently) conservative (sibling). Same parents, but Austin's known as the cool one and San Antonio gets passed by.

Over the years, I collected a number of images that proved how visually stunning San Antonio and its culture can be. San Antonio is every bit as weird as Austin, only in SA? No one cares. It's not that big of a deal.

March 21, 2008

Z-list

The Z-List blogs. I was reading a quick excerpt from a tech-blog about SXSW. The gist of the article was that [Twitter](#) was the “killer app.” I’m less than enthused. I figure a daily web journal (blog) is about the best I can do. As I got to thinking about it though. And I’ve toyed with ideas in the past, I needed a handle to describe what this is.

I’m not an A-list blogger. I’m not even a B-list blogger. I would happily report, though, that I’m near the top of the Z-list.

We have a reach that encompasses tens of readers. Or three or four, anyway. The Z-list, what’s it about? Fairly regular, not a lot of traffic, but then, some traffic is better than nothing. Hi Mom.

She read this religiously for a while, then I think pictures of fish bored her.

The Z-list has its advantages. No moral obligation to spell check or correct punctuation. No need to fact check.

Fact or fiction? Not that it matters much, now does it?

March 29, 2008

Free astrology advice

Tax season. We don't all have Virgo accountants, I do, and we don't have all our paperwork done, I do, and we don't all worry about the best time to send in our taxes, and I do worry about that.

I've spent many long years working on various theories to see what produces the best results.

"File when Mercury is retrograde, better chance that the IRS will make a mistake." Plausible.

Mercury isn't retrograde until Gemini.

"File when Moon is Void Of Course, less chance of an audit." Plausible.

Moon is VOC April 2, 4:14 AM; April 4, 4:44 PM; April 6, 10 AM; April 10, 11:10 AM; April 12, 1:32 PM; April 14 11:57 PM.

"File when the Moon is in a (Fixed, Mutable, Cardinal) Sign, waxing, waning...." Plausible.

"File when the Moon is New or Full, or First Quarter or Last Quarter." Plausible.

New (Aries), April 5, 10:56 PM; First Quarter (Cancer), April 12, 1:32 PM.

However, this is where practical experience plays a role in making a decision. After years and years of timing my tax filing just so, and after carefully tracking the results? Here's what works best: file your taxes on April 15th, right before 5 PM. Join the crowds at the swamped post office.

Instead of taking action that will enhance or otherwise set off the tax guys? Think about it. Is astrologically timing the point when you figure, and mail the tax forms going to be that important? My tax preparer always laughs about some of my material. Then, too, he was excited that I was a published author until he discovered just how little I earn from that.

I am an astrologer. I do time a number of events by the planets. I do enhance my odds in a number of ways. But sometimes, plain common sense will help too. Must be true. I got it from a Virgo accountantF.



El Paso Truck Terminal.



Kress.

March 30, 2008

Odd Bits

Quote:

But not in the Pink Cake A commonplace book.

“Objective judgement, now, at this moment.

Unselfish action, now, at this very moment.

Willing acceptance – now at this very moment – of all external actions.

That”s all you need.

Marcus Aurelius – Meditations – Book Nine, Chapter six

Quote II:

“He rode the hard country – the New Mexico line...”

Billy The Kid (Joe Ely)

I’m sure I messed that up but with the hotel’s limited wireless, no way to check.

“No man, I’ve got to tell you,” a client explained, when I mentioned my next destination was Midland/Odessa, “I was out there with work? Couple of guys from back East? It was night, and the oil wells with the flares burning? First glimpse, for a non-Texan?” ‘I’m in hell, right?’ Funniest thing I’ve heard!”

I really should have a clip of Bach’s (something or other) in D Minor, I think, just as as an audio clip for each link like that.

West Texas Wisdom:

A hard rain and a new calf are always welcome.

April 2, 2008

Mea culpa:

I was working on an upcoming horoscope, and before I even really got started, just barely got the Aries (first sign in the zodiac) chart cast, and I got thinking, as I was looking at the paperwork. Astrological paperwork.

My problem is that there are certain preconceived notion, rules, conventions and tenets that are accepted for astrology. I studied long and hard, grasped the concepts, and then I've developed a whole school of thought, on my own. Different meanings based on observed characteristics. Different spins based what I've seen - or given my disposition - what I'd like to see.

At least I'm honest. Now, I will get back to work. Bending those rules to suit my own needs. Rewriting definitions. And doing my best to piss a few people off.

April 4, 2008

West Texas Revel

I remember, I remember, [Midland](#) and Odessa bring back sharp and pointed memories.

The girlfriend I was traveling with, who arrived at the airport, foot in a cast – we flew in from different points of origin. The other girlfriend who arranged a private tour of the CAF museum, and that tour included about fifty pieces of untouched “nose art” that was clearly a repository of great American folk art, all but forgotten.

The time I was double-booked with girls, one on Saturday, a different one on Sunday, names and signs withheld by request, or the nurse. The lonely time when, on Sunday morning, I walked to the distant convenience store, all alone, got a cup of coffee and pack of cigarettes, I think. Noticed how hard the land was, packed sand, thorny mesquite brush. All varying shades of brown.

I was a player, in my time. Long past. Can’t live the life of the wandering minstrel.

I recall the old hotel we worked, the second floor. It’s so flat, out the window, next week was visible.

Older memories, when and where I graduated high school, Roswell, NM. Not that far away, real similar topography.

The Midland/Odessa airport, MAF, it was, for me, a gateway to Big Bend and the personal favorite places, Alpine, Marfa, Ft. Davis.

The University of Texas has the McDonald Observatory there, too. Star Parties are worth a visit, and I've been VIP into the area. Mustn't let them know I'm an astrologer, though, very different from scientists these days.

The most poignant revel, though, is that a wee lad, accompanying my father on a business trip out here. Something about a refinery, and I was but five to seven years old. I wore a tiny business suit, and it was a cold day. All I recall. I was left with a plant foreman for a while and he showed me how to win a chess game in four moves. I don't play chess these days.

Local

It's local flavor, the work of colloquial artists, and, in as much as there's anything else, a degree of compassion must be employed. All about place. One particularly moving song, it's a trilogy, in all actuality, it is [Steven Fromholtz](#) and his "Texas Trilogy," and I've alluded to it a number of times while it's more along a personal level, like, stuck on slow-rolling Amtrak, southbound from Dallas to Austin, passing through Bosque County while the aforementioned Texas Trilogy – "Train Ride" and "Bosque County Romance" segments play, sad songs and train rides? Material that is suited for a particular area, that's part of what makes it all up. [Lyle Lovett](#) covered the songs which brought thirty years of memories swimming back. Finding a CD of original album remastered? In Seattle, while traveling. To me, for me, airports are the train stations and trains of a hundred years ago. The allure and romance of travel, far-flung destination, the daily grind of shuttling from location to location. Hump and bump.

Traveling, in and of itself, is an art that I'm good at.

Further back, what was it? At some point, I'm sure, it was points along the route of a stage coach. I don't think I would be making this trip if I had to bounce on a stage coach's seat for two or three days. But back then, too, El Paso was a wilder, more outlaw place. The mythos of the old west. Horseback? Really doubtful. Leave that to the Apache and their purloined ponies.

"Never let the facts interfere with the story"
(Ma Wetzel FAMILY dictum)

From an early age, there was kind of a sadness associated with airports. The sight that tears me up will be a little boy (or girl) in sleeping clothes that have little, sewn-in footies. Speaks of a certain age, and while I can't remember it, I know that the scene evokes my layer of sadness associated with travel. That,

and I remember how I used to fit in a VolksWagon Bug, folded into the back seat, while my dad rode shotgun home. He was catching a ride. There's also a point where travel tells us about ourselves. Still, there is usually a hint of sadness, like a fragrance in the air.

I recall the first metal detectors. I had a belt knife that would pass with through, part of my belt buckle, brass handle or something, fooled them. These days, I can't carry anything. At all. Computer, phone, [book](#).

The B-52s, then Steeler's Wheel, disco hits from the 1980s, and worse, 1970s' AOR? Movie scene? "Stuck in the middle with you"? It's not a trivia question, it's classic film moments – one of the greatest, most memorable psycho scenes. I had two comments, fresh in my mind, one from a Scorpio, "I can never see that film again, it was so gross," and my Capricorn, "That was the funniest scene!"

"... Earth's offspring back to earth
But all that's born of heaven
To heaven returns again."

Either that or the cluster of atoms pulls apart and one way or another the insensible elements disperse.
Marcus Aurelius – Meditations – Book Seven #50

Travel, just random thoughts that happened when the flight was late. Heavy Weather in the Hill Country, but "We need the rain."

April 11, 2008

Virgin sacrifice

“No man, we don’t do virgin sacrifice anymore. They’re an endangered species.”

April 13, 2008

Savez

Another memory surfaced, and it was spurred by a recent on-flight conversation. Many years back, I remember a “Jack-Mormon” doing some work in a house I owned – at the time. He was an affable guy, smoked a cigarette with my roommate and accepted a can of beer. Talked about his wife, his two years in the field as a missionary, and how he liked many aspects of his church. Just not all, but he was cool with that. He did a much better job of spreading a good word about his faith than the guys wearing ties while on bicycles, the ubiquitous Mormon Missionaries.

On a recent flight, I struck up a conversation with a guy riding next to me. Aquarius, not that it matters. He explained, in a very short time, his beliefs about his work. If it was a longer flight, I would’ve gotten around to the part about how he got his calling. Never did figure that out.

However, the rest of the conversation was excellent. Here I was, next to a Christian Missionary, or, as I got to understand it, a Jack-Baptist. He was smooth, evangelical without being overbearing. There’s a line in my [fine print](#), “You are choosing to receive this information,” and then something else, but I was intensely interested. He meandered off course a little with business talk, but his business is tied to the church – perhaps without being intertwined.

It’s about people with zeal. A bright spark that burns with a white-hot intense flame that never cools off. There’s a purity of spirit there, too. I’m a little worried when someone banters around the term “gospel” and the name of the lord, or the son of god, all that stuff, but this man was smooth, tactful and sincere. The best hook for someone like me? He could read original sources. Greek and, I think Aramaic. Okay, I can listen to that.

One point he made was how the the gospel spoke about “conversion” and out of translation, the meaning has been changed. It was less about turning seekers into full-fledged, card-carrying members of the organization, and it was more about turning towards truth.

Which is why, one more time, I like the King James versions. By pale northern european males for pale northern european males. The patriarchy may be doomed, but I’ll hold on to what vestigial elements of out-of-date delusional control I’ve got.

I always appreciate a quiet, steadfast belief that doesn’t blare its message in my face. I like that. I’ve been [exposed](#) to this a number of times. I admire the dedication.

If I followed what he was saying the guy on the plane? He had his church change its name. It went from Calvary Baptist Church, to just Calvary. I didn’t follow all the details accurately, so my veracity and reporting ability is clouded, but as I understood it, the name was changed to reflect that the church was about individuals carrying the message of redemption to other people.

That was so totally cool, in my mind.



Perot, '92.

April 14, 2008

Harem for sale

Ready to go, a complete male fantasy, just add, well, that's how I wound up with these three Barbie Dolls™ in the first place. Or collection of three, as one is a Teresa, but to me, she looks just like Barbie. See picture for details. The story is, I had this one girlfriend, and she gave me these three dolls as a joke, "Here, your own harem, a blonde, a brunette and redhead." Pretty in Plaid Barbie, Hawaii Barbie and Hawaii Teresa (friend of Barbie). Why is the brunette always stuck with the plaid? Is there a message in the dolls? These dolls have never been out of their boxes; however, it's only fair to point out that the boxes themselves do have minor scuffing. Like getting evicted from a trailer park in south Austin, but never mind that now. For real: these dolls sat in the "relationship" corner of my place for years. Fang Sway in a South Austin trailer park. Actually worked, after a fashion. Never mind the details about that. I don't know how collectible, how to verify authenticity, provenance, or anything about these other than they appear to be the real deal, still in the boxes that they were supposedly sold in. There are no warranties expressed or implied. While every effort will be made to insure that dolls arrive just like they left here, buyer is encouraged to procure additional insurance. Shipping and handling, unless otherwise stated, is a flat fee of \$4.60 USPS, with delivery confirmation and handling an additional \$1 for total of \$5.60 – unless other arrangements are made, buyer to incur the cost of shipping and handling. The background voodoo on these specific three? Left them in the aforementioned relationship corner and they worked like magic. That Fang Suey might be real. Your mileage may vary, see dealer for details, all other notices are in the [fine print](#).

April 15, 2008

vincit qui primum gerit

The weekly audio file is available – [updated for free](#).

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Rodeo or Mexico

That's a song, correct?

Maybe not I'm unsure. But the perfect spin for a quick Monday afternoon run to Mexico. Old Mexico. Not New Mexico. Passed through Poteet (Home of the Strawberry Festival), then passed through Bigfoot (TX). Can't make this stuff up. We walked over the bridge at Laredo, walked about two blocks into Mexico, went to one pharmacy, and then wandered [around the marketplace](#). Spent more money on gas, just getting to the border town than we spent in Mexico, on drugs. Stopped and had a Mexican Coke. There was quarter deposit on the dollar bottle.

Found one cool gift, inexpensive, for the Gemini Sister. Other than that? Not any cheaper, other than certain pharmacy items.

The border bridge is nice, the passport control is problem free, it costs a dollar to walk the bridge from Laredo but only a few Pesos to walk back (thirty cents).

On the road home, the "bluebird" skies were flawless, the road straight and true, truck drivers courteous, and then, my friend driving?

"Crap, how long has that cop been back there?"

DPS pulled us over, 83 in 75 on 35. He walks up to my side of the truck, “Hey, you look familiar, do I know you?”

I pushed my sunglasses up.

“Yeah, I know you from some where,” he said.

I answered they he looked familiar, too, but I didn’t ask what his birthday was. I made note of the name on the tag. Couldn’t place him. I allowed as much.

“You ever been in trouble around here?”

That evoked laughter. Gales of laughter from the driver. Not around here, some place south of civilization, north of the border, in the Nueces Strip.

Driver got a warning, and I got teased, mercilessly about being in trouble. Ector County? Sure. Dallas and Tarrant Counties? Sure. Travis? No, never got caught. Get a little older, and one learns it’s easier to avoid arrest.

The driver? The epitome of the Red-Headed Capricorn?

“We had a cop come out and talk to us about insurance things, and what he said, when he approaches a car, his intent was always to give a warning, the action and reaction of the driver and occupants made the difference.”

For the record, I might have seen that officer as a client, but I never saw him in a professional capacity. Well, until yesterday.

April 28, 2008

Foiled by rain

The land of the wind and rain and snow, isn't that the lyric?
I'm unsure.

On the tail end of a busy month, I planned to take my dad fishing. He's increasingly less mobile, and there's always that sense that the time is nigh. So I ordered up a boat and guide, ordered up tackle and bait, got restaurant and flights sorted out, everything but the weather. I do tend to forget one thing, and this time it was an order for fishing weather.

We spent time indoors looking at sheets of rain falling, pounding the windows. We watched as one or two brave souls tried to fish only to have a crack of lightening drive their wet selves back inside. Then it cleared. Hit the coffee shop in Corpus Christi, did a few errands, ended up on the dock, pitching bait into the wind. Got an exciting Gafftop (catfish), which was the biggest catch for me, for the weekend.

May 4, 2008

Badges

I'm sure this is one I've got in my quote collection, [Pink Cake](#), but here it is again.

“Badges? I don't got no badges, I don't need no badges, I don't got to show you no stinkin' badges!” [YT link](#)

The first post in the [Bexar County Line](#) collection – the first of the street badges.

I was digging through, trying to ascertain when I launched that site. 5/17/07. The domain name is older, and while Jupiter was on me, I tried a number of different domain names to see what worked. What was poetic and resonant.

San Antonio de Padua, saint's day that the area was discovered, arguably the name sake, although, San Antonio de Valero, and San Antonio de Bexar are also names I've read. “Bexar” is locally pronounced “bare.” Or “bear,” either way. The X is left over French and treated as silent.

The original idea was a portal for links, but in matter of moments, it quickly became a “picture a day” site. The picture idea was spawned by a sequence of those badges that I never developed fully, and then, there was embedded advertising that was supposed to pay the bill for the site. The embedded advertising was too aggressive, so I'm back to more normal web-standard adverts, which doesn't pay much, but then, the site is purely pleasure as I get to figure out how to take pictures with cheap cameras.

Going through San Antonio/Bexar County, heading towards the coast, down Interstate 37, one of the last signs is an exit marked, “Texas Center for Disease Control,” or “Texas Center of Infectious Diseases.” Or something like [that](#).



Mission Drive-In.

“CLOSED”

May 17, 2008

Badges, part II

The [emblematic](#) sidewalk [medallions](#) are [quite](#) quotidian. I've mentioned it in [passing](#) and mentioned in the past, but they were the gem of an idea that never fully materialized.

With the digital image direct to print [format](#), I once did a make poster-size print of tiny pictures. Must've been close to dozen images across and maybe 20 lines down, so it was probably 240 images?

I quickly toyed with what I had, and here's the [resulting file](#). Still, it's not what I was looking for, but it's close. There's something that speaks to me, sort of in an [enigmatic](#) way, and I can't quite [capture](#) it. Perhaps it's San Antonio on a cold winter morning, the happy faces of the medallions smiling up. The [gray background](#) reminds that's when I took a whole series of the series, down-turned face, bundled against the cold. But then, it's hard to imagine that on a May afternoon.

History is often times a series of cyclical events, repeated over and over until someone recognizes the patterns. One of my very few regrets was that I didn't have a better camera on the afternoon I stumbled upon this [scene](#). A brilliant spring day, the Mission Drive-In. Located between the old missions, and backing up to the San Antonio River System, as emblematic of the area as possible. There is a whole grouping of people who lost their collective virginity in the back seat of cars at the Mission Drive-In.

That's part of it. The regret is that I didn't actually have a good camera at the time, and I never did get the image I wanted. However, for the sake of that landmark, and its associated image, I was happy enough with the results. It wasn't that well-framed shot, it was just tweaked when I could crop it to please my tastes. Good enough for sa web image, too bad it wasn't quite as sharp as I would've liked.

If I understand correctly, the old mission drive-in is going to be campus/industrial complex development thing. The image of empty booths, the sign says, "closed," it captures a desoalte feeling in the middle of a populated oasis. But then, San Antonio – what falls within the [Bexar County Line](#) – is all weird.

From Austin, weird is a high compliment.

May 21, 2008

Books and marketing

I was in a bookstore the other afternoon. I was sort of killing part of an evening, and I couldn't think of a nicer place to be. Well, perhaps two nicer places to be: lakeside with a pole in my hand, a fishing pole, that is, and a small, independent bookstore instead of a big chain, but we take what we can get.

I diligently searched through the bargain books, as I've been cruising there before. Look for the stuff that's marked down, then marked down again. Two items I could easily add to my copious library with no after-thought.

Elements of Style Strunk & White

T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land and Other Poems

I have a yellowed and beaten copy of the The Elements of Style, and I would tend to consider it a much too delicate copy to continually use. Intrinsic and sentimental investment? Yes.

The same holds true for that copy of "The Waste Land," as I can recall the professor and me, I was taking notes in that copy because it was useful and easy to access.

I can recall the exact moment of purchase, especially for those copies as I've carried them around from state to state and location to location. For the last dozen years, I'm guessing, they've sat on top of my desk, along with the other heaviest used reference manuals. A couple of astrology texts, and, of course, what's become ubiquitous for me, Marcus Aurelius.

While I have two or three translations of [Meditations](#), I've stuck with that original slim copy of *The Waste Land* and Other Poems as well as the best reference, *The Elements of Style*.

I'll be using "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" as source material here pretty quick There are a couple of London lines I've always loved. Or, even, Mercury material"

"Do I dare
Disturb the universe?
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse."

An American who loved London. Can't be all [bad](#).

[Aquarius](#): It was a closing comment from a friend, perhaps it was just signature file, but the comment was, "Don't be a stranger!" I thought about it as I was fishing, and I kept thinking it should be read, "Don't be stranger!" Stranger than what? Hard for me to be much stranger than I am.

My little redneck friends think I'm just one step away from a socialist-communist tree-hugging liberal. My tree-hugging liberal friends think I'm just one step away from the redneck-right, neo-fascist gun-toting righteous right with closet Republican tendencies. Neither situation is true, but like my [Aquarius](#) friend, and my misreading her note, I keep trying to be stranger. It's not much of an effort, really. I just act like myself, and that's the secret.

Mars moves opposite you, and that's a challenge. How to deal with this, that's up to you, but I would tend to accentuate the "strange" part of the [Aquarius](#) mind (pattern, brain waves, thinking, feeling). Placing an emphasis on this sometimes [abstract](#) and weird part of the [Aquarius](#) thinking will help ease the way through this moon cycle. Mars, too. Mars is opposite, be stranger than usual. It's [okay](#).

May 30, 2008

Full regalia

I was meandering the river's edge, not so much marking time, but sweating in the heat of the afternoon. I glanced up. There was a woman, a girl, female, whatever, of an undetermined age, although, I'd guess twenty-plus. She had on pointy boots. Cowboy boots. No spurs rattling like sabers, but that brand of jeans that are loose and tight. Loose at the bottom, "boot-cut," but exceedingly form-fitting further up.

Appropriate appreciation for way she filled out the jeans, blue jeans, tight across the flank. There was a hand-tooled belt, through the belt-loops and that was secured by a large buckle, some gold worked into the design, the leather was laced and wrapped, and then she had on a yoke-cut shirt. Pearl, or faux-pearl snaps.

The whole outfit, a real cowboy outfit, was crowned with a large felt (beaver) hat, light tan shade, or brown, but with a good four-inch brim. There was a feather, to me, it looked like a turkey feather, but my straw brim has a grackle feather stuck in it. Me and Mr. Raven, we're similar. Or so I'd like to believe.

I trailed along behind her, off to one side, sweating and silently taking a few surreptitious snapshots. None of the pictures were good, but they did remind me. Reminded me to describe what I saw, and then, as I was shambling along, wearing a loud print shirt, cargo shorts and a sandals? Reminded me how glad I was to live in place where where a cowboy hat, for that matter, full regalia? It's more than okay, it fits in right.

June 21, 2008

Wicked

Short review of the [musical](#):

It's not easy being green.

[Musical](#), based on the book, &c.

Big Tourist:

Takes a special kind of tourist to ferret out the finest examples of – well – weird stuff. Texas Pride, something I know a thing or two about, bless my liberal, historically Democratic little heart, which goes with the rest of the Texas history, at least, in the last century.

In London, Number Three St James Street. Or Place, I don't know, something or other, #3 St. James, there's a small archway, a portal leads to the inner courtyard, a leftover feature from a previous era. But at the edge of the doorway? There's [a small plaque](#) to commemorate when the Minsters from the Republic of Texas were present at the court of St. James.

June 28, 2008

London – Paris – Pop Music

Love Paris, love the French, love the French ways. Paris?
Everyone speaks English. It's a second, universal language.
Mostly.

By the Tour-Eiffel, though, I ran into my first Gypsy scam. A woman, could be anywhere from late teens to early fifties, but I'd guess in her twenties, runs up to us, holding a gold ring, a heavy, wide gold ring. She's jabbering in Italian or Romanian, or very broken English, "Here, I am your Joan of Arc, I give you the ring, give me Euro (dollar) for food. Pepsi, Pizza, two Euro."

I declined. She rattled off languages, I finally said "See" (yes, si) to Spanish, and she rapid-fire explained she found the ring, and would give it to me for a dollar. Or two. I kept smiling, declining, and I kept handing the ring back to her.

A day or two later, I watched as a middle-aged woman ran up to a tourist, and that woman was grasping a similar gold ring, saying she'd just found it, and would be their Joan of Arc. For a dollar or two.

That doesn't mean there aren't always a few turnip truck stories.

In line, at the local Metro station, folks ahead of us? Spoke only English.

You know, try yelling in English, that usually makes it easier to understand.

The two girls behind me, also native English speakers, but I didn't catch enough of the accent to tell from whence. Got tickets to ride to the Notre Dame station. So did they.

“We’re lost, you seem to know your way around, can we just follow you?”

Might be a bad idea following a directionally-challenged individual from Texas. In France. However, I did rescue them from a near fatal mistake of heading off in the wrong direction, Notre Dame is the chapel on the island.

“Take me to the river.”

But I’m not sure I want to be washed in that water. We parted ways at the exit to the station and they headed due north, even more directional challenged than me. Aries, Cancer, from Australia and New Zealand. Whatever.

I did get lost on the subway, but I made it, eventually.

French Timing:

I was trying to explain a certain term, common in my part of the country, “Mannana.” Mexican slang for tomorrow. Or the day after that. Sometime, probably in the near future. But in France? The term “mannana” it, to them, “It seems a little hasty, too hurried.”

Ice Tea:

I fell for that scam, just once. It’s advertised as “Ice Tea.” Both Paris and London. Brand we all know, Lipton. Looks like a 500 ml bottle of ice tea. Don’t be fooled. I was, just once, It’s not like, real, ice tea. It’s not even a poor imitation thereof. It’s some kind of brownish fluid – and as much the English know about tea? Don’t be fooled, not anything like our cool refreshing beverage. Stick to what they do well, high tea, espresso, French Roast coffee. Don’t expect miracles.

In the Paris Souvenir shop:

Shopkeeper looks at me, in French, he asks,
“Alamande?” (German)

I looked at him, kind of a funny, I'd guess. He asked again,
"Deutch?" (German)

I nodded no, "Texas."

"Oh, American..." he nodded.

I nodded "No," again, "Du Texas." (from Texas).

July 4, 2008

Happy 4th!

The Yeoman Warder giving the Tower Tour asked, “Any Americans here?” Show of hands, maybe half the crowd.

“Just think,” he nodded at us, “all this history could be yours, if you’d just paid your taxes.”

Waterloo & City:

Odd trivia I tend to favors, sometimes really [quite useless](#) and only, at best [mildly entertaining](#). But like playing “[Mornington Crescent](#),” there’s another strange [little fact](#) I came up with. I didn’t come up with it, maybe I more uncovered it.

The shortest Underground (London Underground, the original subway, oh whatever, the Tube) is the Waterloo & City Line. Goes from Waterloo Station to Bank. That’s it. Went to Waterloo, hopped on the line, rode to the next stop. Got off the train, looked around, got back on the same car, and rode back. Just to say “I done it.” And get a [picture](#).

I figured it really deserved to be featured in a [horoscope](#) some time, but I doubt I could work that in. I just figured the ultimate job? The driver on the “Waterloo & City” Underground Line.

Mind the Gap:

[Willie Nelson](#): *Rain or Shine.*

July 5, 2008

Paddle faster

I hear banjo music

It was on the back of a T-shirt, some guy, a few seats in front of us. Spoke to the moment. Spoke to the whole event. Tickled my fancy, so to speak.

What would Willie do?

If I'm going to fit into a deal like this? I need a girlfriend 20 pounds heavier with a couple of bad tattoos.

Scarier: grandmothers dancing – grandmothers in short-shorts, shaking it like a professional.

Corpus Christi Harley Davidson had the best unofficial presence, saw more t-shirts from there than any other place. Consider, though, inside [Bexar County](#), Corpus Christi is a tropical vacation destination.

Paddle faster

I hear banjo music

Daisy dukes and cowboy boots, I mean, well, I like living in place where this perfectly acceptable attire.

Skunk weed, that unmistakable aroma of Arkansas Polio Weed. Folks sitting next to us, made noises about wanting to smoke. Left for a little while. Came back more mellow. However, wasn't just them, I'm sure it was everywhere. There was that unmistakable aroma of skunk wafting in on the evening's breeze.

“Are you from Midland?” Again, I was wearing an Odessa Jackalope’s hat (farm league bush ice hockey in the Permian Basin). I just nodded, “no,” and let it slide Too hard to explain that I work out there from time to time, and I’m not in the oil business. Oily? Maybe. Oil business? Sorry, no.

In the concession line, in front of us, group ordered “Nachos and beer.” Cost? \$44. I had water and nachos. And a \$4 pretzel. Salt, keep hydrated. Not like it was really an issue.

From our seats, a freak weather pattern blew rain across the area. I could look out, where the setting sun should be and there were heavy clouds, low and ponderous, swinging slowly like the grandmother in short-shorts and her, oh never mind. That’s just the wrong age to wear a halter top. Behind the stage, rain lit up the evening’s sky.

Paddle faster

I hear banjo music

David Allen Coe is DAC, and not much has changed. Los Lonely Boys rocked hard, as expected. What was most impressive was Ray Price staging and back up, all in jeans white shirts. That was 12 or more on stage, about half that was the string section. Ray Price still has his voice, or so it sounded.

Merle Haggard’s band opened and closed with “Okie from Muskogee” overture, although, he never did the song. I’m unsure of anyone getting the irony there, especially after looking over the Willie murch. (“Murch” = merchandise.) Lot of implied hemp and farm jokes therein.

Ray and Merle. Both singers did San Antonio Rose. Both had a certain level of class, Merle’s band tended to sound jazz infused whereas Ray Price was totally Western (swing).

Willie Nelson, in fact, the whole show, it's not like I haven't seen any of these acts before, on stage in Austin or Ft. Worth. However, it was my first official "Willie Nelson's Fourth of July Picnic," and where they got the picnic from? I don't know. Notes are kind of spartan because we were relieved of all pens at the front gate. No pens. Don't know why.

Willie? He's still playing music with his friends.

Paddle faster

I hear banjo music

Single [image](#). That's a – I'm guessing – 30 feet or more wide Texas Flag as a backdrop.

Laeti edimus qui nos subigant.

– kramer wetzel

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sent from the iPhone.

July 24, 2008

Hurricane weather

(Why old guys rule)

I think it was last year, in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, I watched the animated [weather map](#) as a hurricane slammed into the coast line and continued to trigger heavy rain far into [Neuvo Leon](#), the next state over. We didn't get so lucky, not much rain here. Not that time. Maybe that was the hurricane Gov. "Good Hair" mobilized the national guard, only to not have any emergencies to deal with.

San Antonio is considered a border town, although, to be honest, the border is more than a 100 miles away. In the same vein, San Antonio is considered a coastal town, with the stray seagull wheeling and crying overhead; although, it is over a 100 miles to the coast.

A favorite t-shirt design I've seen, for more than one reason, is 1960's era VW van, an unmistakable image, and the notation, "Old guys rule."

In part, that's an homage to an air-cooled flat-four rear-drive mobile surf-shack. But it's got a double meaning, as many items in my life do, and it's also a nod to old surfer dudes. Who are, in the words of a young surfer dude, "cool, no, like way cool."

Yeah, old guys, we do have our uses. We can be cool.

What does surf have to do with hurricanes?

While I was in Dallas, last weekend, the old surfer dudes were loading up their boards and heading to South Padre Island (Brownsville, TX).

Which explains a lot about native Texans, relative insanity, and behaviors that seems somewhat incongruous to basic survival skills. A few years ago, I was in a town where a windstorm had ripped through days earlier. 70 MPH winds!

Around here? South Texas? That's not a storm, that's surf.

July 27, 2008

Wedding Ring

My father is in ICU. While it was a little touchy, I have great faith in Western Medicine. Then, too, he's an ornery old coot. Stubborn, too. When he was four years old, polio, he was told he would need to use a wheel chair for the rest of his life. Only in the last few months has he even bothered to try one of those things.

But he doesn't do well under sedation, and there was an issue. My mother was at a summer place in the mountains, my father was to join her next week, and as of Thursday and even Friday morning, he was still planning on seeing her next week.

Then the surgeons had a confab, Pop was dosed up good, and wheeled away. I caught two hours' sleep, got a call from the surgeon, "main procedure was fine, but there was a small problem..."

And Dad's in ICU, recovering. I've run the iPhone battery down three times now, making calls, and placating all the women. Mom, Sister, &c.

The predominant question, "Should I hope on a plane – RIGHT NOW?!"

No, frantic females just exacerbate the problem. He's under sedation, under the best medical care there is, and doesn't want for a thing. Time to circle the wagons? Boil water? Bake a casserole? His faith suggests cake and cookies.

I didn't want to bother the doctors, but the nurses? Anyway, when I first saw him after the surgery, asleep, they are so cute when they are asleep, I had a few token items I wanted to leave with him. Wedding ring (52 years to the same women, WTF), iPhone (more a tech offering gesture), and his glasses. The nurses shooed me away.

I'll save until he wakes up. Or the women all arrive.

August 5, 2008

Two Meat Tuesday

Limits:

My father didn't know any limits. He was a Warm Springs survivor. He had polio at age 4, and at that point, he was told he was going to be in wheelchair the rest of his life. Barely a week or two ago, on a Sunday night, I was watching as he careened down the hallway in a motorized wheelchair, taking out hanging artwork as he went.

"Guess I need a little practice," he said.

I wasn't aware that his polio was even a problem until the year I graduated high school. Shrouded in family myth, mystery and lore, there was a hiking trip we made that summer. Not a typical activity for man who was told he belonged in a wheelchair. On that hiking trip – in reality I can't recall this – it has been alleged – I carried his pack, making a second trip up the mountain to help ferry his gear.

There's a large gap in time, huge distance between that trip after high school to when I eventually graduated university. I saw my father for the first time in few years, met him at the airport, that evening. We had to walk to the car, from one terminal building to the next, and that was the first time I recall ever seeing him give pause because he needed to rest his leg.

That was also the first time I realized his mortality. The first time I ever got any kind of hint of limiting factors.

It got, for the last dozen years or more, that every time I saw my father, I was worried it would be the last time. However, after worrying like that for almost fifteen years, the ache and pain is dulled by familiarity.

We planned a fishing trip last spring. While we got rained out for fishing, and narrow time constraints, the full effort was there to be together. He was up and dressed, ready to go, getting to the dining room under his own steam, each morning at 6 AM. He was always an early riser.

In a panic, my mother called me on Thursday, “Your Dad’s checked into the hospital,” with long and drawn out details. Which included me flying in to observe his health. Which, on the previous weekend, had seemed fine. Or as good as could be expected. Remember the motorized wheelchair careening down a hallway, the chair’s arm taking artwork with him.

His last cogent day? I spent with him – it started as a stomach problem – his doctors told him no food or water, but he could have ice to chew on. So I was feeding him ice, and he was his merry, mischievous self. Or irascible old fart. All about the same these days.

The point I was worried about, the last time alive? The way I’ll remember him, in the hospital room, still asking me for ice, only, there was an attendant there, and I didn’t want to give my father ice while we were watched.

I’m staying in his office, the home office, the spare bedroom for a few days. One of his in-boxes, covered with projects and scientific journals? There’s a small, glass hummingbird, still in a plastic wrapper. Think I’ll hang it up.

This one? This one’s [for Dad](#). He never gave up and never listened when he was told he had limits.

Cancer: The question is, how to punctuate this sentence: "A woman without her man is nothing." Personally, I'm in the feminist camp on this one, "A woman, without her, man is nothing." But that's just me.

There's the other option, slide that comma around, and the sentence could mean something else. I'm not going there, not me. I'm certainly no feminist, just an equal rights sort of person. Guy, really. And while I'm admittedly sexist, that doesn't mean I can't appreciate the proper way to punctuate the phrase, like I've demonstrated.

This isn't really about gender roles, or relationships, or the sad state of the inequality based on sexual preferences, though, this is about a simple phrase. It's like a little test. How it should be filled varies from person to person.

Like me, and let's pretend I was a Cancer person, it's all about how this should be filled out. Appropriate [responses](#) can tell a lot about a person. That's what this is about.

[\(8.7.2008\)](#)

September 21, 2008

Home

What defines home? Is it a place? A specific place? There's a persuasive "Spanish" influence that's been omnipresent in my life. Part of that, is, no doubt, due to simple geography. At one point, where I was born and lived, was colonized as New Spain. While both France and Spain laid claim to this land, it eventually wound up in as a country then a state.

So there's that ever-present "hispanic" influence. I have two similar tales, maybe only one bears repeating, about immigrant children who made good. "Alex" was born in the US, so he's a citizen. I think his parental lineage was little murky as to origins, might have been damp, if not wet. Don't know, didn't inquire. Alex's son graduated college, prestigious private school. Masters in Business, I believe. And with one semester to go, then Alex's boy suddenly longed for his Spanish roots. Mexican roots, really, and that was worth something.

At his son's request, Alex never taught the kid Spanish and it wasn't spoken at home from age two onward. Alex is fluent in both. Not that it matters, I recall, Alex on the truck, peppering his conversation with choice epithets in Spanish, or better yet, that special border patois.

His kid did graduate. And now his kid has to learn Spanish to compete in the marketplace. It's almost a requirement.

It's a long way around, but the Spanish – or Mexican – influence is ever present. It's part of what defines "home."

September 23, 2008

vincit qui primum gerit

Mercury Retrograde and Cowboys:

Drunk cowboys. Of the same family line as drunk rednecks. Not exactly the same, but similar.

Anyway, on San Antonio's fabled and storied Riverwalk, there I was, with my girlfriend. Evening weekend crowd, a little thinner than usual, but still, a few tourists lurking. We were probably headed to a coffee shop I know.

Ahead of us, weaving slightly, drink in hand, and I'm not sure, but I'll bet it was an alcoholic beverage, skinny cowboy kid. Must be between the age of 18 and 24, rough guess, too skinny for his jeans, which should've been tighter, but boots, a (faux) pearl snap shirt, and topped with a new straw hat. While straw isn't usually considered proper after Labor Day, that streamy evening on the Riverwalk? Looked just fine to me. I couldn't tell, but it looked like a turkey feather tucked into the hat's band.

He was moving just a tad slower than we were, but I reined in behind him. I know the type: drunk cowboy. Just like Mercury Retrograde.

He was jovial and happy, or so it seemed, but I was a little leery, and I didn't want to affront the lad in any way. Not that I couldn't take him, sober? I could disable him with one move. But drunk? I could wail away at his jaw, his face, soft body parts, usual pain receptors, to no avail. I know my cowboys. Whether he's ridden a bull for real, or not. Whether he's played in two-a-days. Or not. Not a chance I was going to take. He'd had, just an estimate, a blood-alcohol content a little over the legal limit to walk. Probably twice over the limit to drive. His judgement was impaired. Which worried me.

Not so much, I mean, I'm not all that typical of Texan, with a nod to that redneck comic, "I fish, I don't hunt..."* No, it's just when I'm dressed in sandals and shorts, I look more like a beach person. In South Texas, I get the California tag too frequently. So consider my attire, the sandals and shorts, Hawaiian shirt – compared to the more traditional cowboy attire the kid and his buddy had on. Then, too, consider the blood-alcohol content.

The weave is easy to recognize. The cowboy, real or drug-store, again, easy to spot. All I did was back off a few paces, give a wide berth to the drunk cowboy.

It's clear that a verbal transaction can go either way with a drunk cowboy. And it's clear he'd just as soon pummel me as drape an arm over my shoulder and talk like we're long-lost friends.

Mercury is like that. When Mercury heads in apparent retrograde pattern, like what's coming up? The easiest way to deal with it is to avoid confronting the drunk cowboy. A confrontation wouldn't bode well for me, either I get my ass kicked, or worse, I wind up with a new-found friend, slurring with alcohol-soaked breath, in my face. I'm not even sure which one is worse.

The way to avoid this kind of problem? Simple. Slow down. When a person (place or thing) starts to weave and act in a manner consistent with irrational behavior? Slow down. Let that person (place or thing) have its way. Stay out of its path.

Sometimes the most obvious solutions are easiest when Mercury is retrograde. And sometimes, when Mercury is retrograde? Good advice gets ignored.

The rest of the Mercury notes are here and the information on the upcoming Mercury Retrograde? That's in the regular horoscopes.

October 4, 2008

Maverick

What's the term mean? I gleaned my definition from several [sources](#). Maybe five years back I ran it as trivia question, too. True native Texans know the answer – and in South Texas? Know that answer by heart.

The original “Maverick” was a cattle rancher who refused to brand his cattle so when part or even just a piece of a herd was wandering around, no name tag on its arse?

“Must be a Maverick.”

October 10, 2008

Not a photo-op

This is not a photo opportunity:

How the inscription read.

Made me pause, as I was editing the San Antonio pictures, in as much as I edit anything. That website was born out of a – to me – bizarre collection of images. More a jumbled mess and less along any thematic line, other than all occurring within the confines of Bexar County.

Strange, to me, the original idea was prompted by an advertising company that sought to embed adverts in web images. What's the ironic part? I don't use that advertising anymore. Great idea, didn't work. Didn't make enough off the advertising alone. Which was the problem with that way of trying to make any of this pay.

The hardest part, the most difficult piece to the puzzle, the part that I struggle with the most?

It's supposed to be a (web) photo gallery. Nothing more. No text. No writing long-winded explanations about what the image really is, what it means, what it meant to me, what was ironic, what the weather conditions were, what kind of equipment was used, nothing.

Equipment? That was part of the challenge. My first digital camera was a plug-in phone module. I moved up to a cheap (\$100) camera and I've gone through approximately a half-dozen of those cheap cameras. I'm hard on equipment. But that's also the joy of having a camera ready when those unlikely opportunities arise.

The real challenge, other than, maybe, a few keywords? Don't write anything about the image. Let the picture tell its story.

That gets close to impossible for me, hence a (self-imposed) limitation. Just a little restraint serves to strengthen the art itself.

Never underestimate how much fun it is to mess with one's own head, too.

October 13, 2008

New Mexico on Monday

"Eew Midnight Flyer, engineer, won't you let your whistle blow..."

Ohh Midnight Flyer, paid my dues and I feel like travelin' on...

"Maybe I'll go to Santa Fe, maybe San Antone...."

Any town is where I'm bound anyway to get me gone...

Don't think about me, never let me cross your mind

'Cept when you hear that midnight lonesome whistle whine."

The (early) Eagles – Midnight Flyer, text and lyrics copyright by someone.

"Love letter to my new home."

I parroted the line from one of the shared "daily photo website" portals that my pet project is attached to. Then, in another place, I found some kind of a Zen reference, about finding beauty wherever you find yourself.

Junket to Albuquerque.

Maybe a picture can tell a story. Maybe not. Just fun taking pictures while Albuquerque was rolled all-out for the Ballon Festival. Reminded me of times to avoid Austin, like SXSW and ACL.

One shuttle driver allowed as how natives would leave during the first weeks of October.

I have a single, salient recollection about Albuquerque, from a long-time distant. I lived there for a year. Dropped out of school and worked for a while. I recall a balloon festival time, on the eastern flank of the Sandia Mountains, watching as a two balloons hastily inflated the big airbags, and launched in the stiff afternoon breeze, barely clearing, probably illegally, the crest of the mountain, which is probably another five thousand feet up from the foot there, and that flank is close to that in its elevation.

Austin, TX for July 4th. Paris (France) July 14th (Bastille Day). New Year's Eve, for the Millennial, Dallas, TX. Balloon Fest – Albuquerque, NM. All places to go and see once. I can honestly say, "I've been there."

I can also honestly say, "It wasn't really an intention." Not that it would stop me. Travel happens to be in my blood, and I'd like to think, I do it rather well.

October 30, 2008

No Tie

Picked [it up](#) from The Fat Guy's feeds. Didn't much care for the politics, which got me thinking.

I'm all about voting. I'm registered as a Republican. My politics are left of central and I tend towards the "Yellow Dog Democrat" ideals. My current voter's registration card is stamped "Democrat." I'm all about our right, and our duty, to vote. Study the issues; vote. I'm sick at heart, though, at the way the media circus has ruined the solemnity of the vote. My proposal? Vote. Vote early. Vote often. And then? At the exit poll? Lie. Lie about who you voted for. Just make the media the wrong.

Shopping, the other evening, casually walking through a mall with a girlfriend, I noticed a brightly colored display that really grabbed my attention. Ties. New colors, some soft pastels, some brighter and sharper, the colors were rather artfully arranged, by design, I'm sure. Graduating colors and patterns, be my guess. I didn't linger, other than to briefly fondle a silk cravat. I haven't worn a tie in a long time. I think it was a grandfather's funeral. Prior to that? I had a deal with myself that I wasn't going to wear a traditional tie, brightly colored cloth wrapped tight around my neck, ever again. Never. Wear. A Tie. Ever.

I can probably still tie a Half-Windsor or even a Full-Windsor because I was forced to do so, too many times. Part of a uniform, of sorts, and it's a uniform I opt not to wear, ever again. Towards that end, I do have an eclectic collection "bolo" ties, the universal Southwestern American neckwear. I'm good with that. For a spell, I had the white dress shirts with the collar button/tab thing, for cinching that collar up tight, and popping the tie out. I would wear that a smaller, more refined bolo tie. Looked great, if oddly parochial, especially on me. I recall,

once or twice, going to the airport half-naked with studs, cuff links and big bolo tie: I would dress in my formal “Uvalde Tux” after making it through security.

Don’t know where I picked up the term, “Uvalde Tux.” I can’t seem to locate a source, other than it’s an expression I’ve dredged up from my own memory. A Uvalde Tux, named for a small town in south Texas – Uvalde, is a tux shirt, mine with Longhorn studs, and cuff links, mine with zodiac symbols, and jeans, boots, and the outfit is topped with a tux jacket. Although, these days, I have a couple of “western” (yoke) sport jacket that I would probably use instead. Formal casual attire, I think, would sum it up. And that’s about as formal as I can get these days.

The debate as the source of the tie to begin with? Probably a fashion thing, at one time born out of need. The only cold places I’ve been lately? A few winter days in Texas, a few winter evenings here, and then, maybe a half dozen years ago? London (UK) during the shortest days of the year. That’s cold. And a long scarf, loosely wrapped around my neck, helps to seal the coat, collar, from the cold weather? Makes sense. However, repeatedly and even daily, cinching about sixteen extra layers cloth around my neck? Especially, if it’s going to be typically warm? Makes no damn sense at all.

Me, and apparently, one ally, we think them ties are stupid. That’s us, an army of two. The collar is at least four layers of cloth and the tie is a minimum of three layers, so that’s seven extra layers of cloth, tightly wrapped around the neck. Give them enough cloth and they will all hang themselves.

November 23, 2008

AMF

Airplane Motors Forever:

Subtitle: Nothing to do with anything

I don't own the name, now. I don't own the machines. About all I have left is a handful of faded photographs. These are photographs, too. The last one was recovered during the consolidation of Dad's meager estate.



I did – back in the bad old days – imagine a letterhead similar to that.

It's a big picture, maybe twenty inches wide and sixteen inches top to bottom, that last one, water damaged, weathered, soiled in one corner. I took it to the "cheapo-deluxe" frame shop. Standard sized frame, a custom matt inside that, and the damages are covered. Hidden.

The old guy at the framing corner, he looked at the picture, at me, back at the picture, "I recognize that photo."

I seriously doubt it. It was me, a younger me, in full leathers, my right knee out and angled towards the inside of the curve, the "horseshoe" as that turn was labelled, no doubt for its 180-degree shape, and the picture has languished in various states, various locations, and lately, in storage until I rescued it.

At that race track, at that time, that was the slowest corner on the course. Faulty memory, I'm guessing I was going about 40 MPH at the time, it was a fast race track. Shutter speed, frame, fast film, I don't recall what was involved.

But that single image, now framed and proudly on the wall, that single image and an imaginary letterhead, that's about all that is left.

November 26, 2008

Revolution

It's an old Bob Dylan song, way I remember it, and at this point, I'm not bothering to go and look this one up. I've quoted it, exactly, either here or here, before. The lick goes something like this, "There was music in the cafes at night/Revolution was in the air."

The trigger point I was working through, it starts with Pluto going into Capricorn. It's exacerbated by Saturn Square Pluto, as Saturn shifts signs, well into the next year.

Cardinal Signs are Aries, Cancer, Libra and Capricorn. Fire – Water – Air – Earth, in order.

There are two points to consider, last time, approximately, there was a Saturn in Libra Square Pluto in Capricorn, I showed it to be in the 1760's. I'm thinking French Revolution, American Revolution, some of the movers and shakers of that time were doing some incredible revolutionary writing. All about process.

Was Pluto in Capricorn, and its subsequent square, was that a trigger point? Way I would see it now, the discontent was already there, and that triggered a release. Pluto in Capricorn, out with the old, in with the new. Established (Capricorn) institutions need to be (modified) by Pluto.

It gets to a tautology as to, which comes first, or what body is acting upon what.

Point is, like the song I quoted, there's something in the air.

As a Sagittarius who's lived through the whole Pluto-thing, I've been there. Pluto has a way of removing obstacles – whether we want our obstacles removed – or not. Which is part of the problem and we're back to that reductive, circular reference.

The point is about change. I'd suggest that old, more established, even entrenched ideals are going to start to suffer. Pressure is on for change. Eventually, the outmoded, outdated material that no longer is viable? Excised.

I was struggling with a good way to approach this energy, this revolutionary drive that's going to hit, I wrestled with words to work it out. I was wandering, far off my beaten path, and I hit upon an idea, as I glanced around at my surroundings.

Take one step outside the comfort zone.

As Pluto careens into Capricorn, the answer, the unasked question, the way to get through this, the message? One step outside the comfort zone.

My solution was more like about a two-mile detour outside my comfort zone. When I eventually doubled back, it was four miles out of my comfort zone. To be more truthful, I'd seen some of this terrain from the passenger side of a car. Still, on foot, in the urban jungle? Very much outside of my comfort zone.

That single step outside the comfort zone, though, that's the secret for dealing with the revolutionary impact of Pluto in Capricorn – embrace it.

Capricorn: Last week, I mentioned a little about quitting three things, end of this week, beginning of next week? It's a good to make it stick, just one, though. Drastic lifestyle changes, like, "I'm giving up all coffee for forever," sweeping, monumental changes are difficult. I was once, the doctor asked what my daily diet consisted of. "Got a 12-cup coffee maker, run through at least one pot in the morning. Mexican food for lunch and then, a 120 oz. Diet Coke for dinner, why?"

Doctor suggested sweeping lifestyle changes. Which I did. Sort of. I did stop coffee for a few days, but I was miserable. Likewise, when you get a suggestion for a sweeping change? Go easy. Maybe slow down instead of cold-turkey stopping. Maybe reduce some factors instead of eliminating them all, maybe, just look for a little moderation.

The biggest trouble is that Venus is joining you, along with Jupiter, and that just pushes the pleasure principal to the front. The foremost. The biggest. I'm not saying that you shouldn't enjoy yourself, as this can be a remarkably fun time. I'm just saying, like me, maybe just cutting back a little would help.

Give up coffee cold? What, are you crazy?

[\(11.20.2008\)](#)

“There is no darkness but ignorance.”

Shakespeare's *12th Night, or, What You Will* [IV.ii.21]

Nothing says "[Turkey-Time](#) in Texas" better than a single image from the [grocery store](#): corn husks, masa flour and lard.

Sagittarius: [Pink Cake](#) is a local [delicacy](#). It's basically white sheet [cake](#) with a pink frosting on top. Not terribly difficult to understand. There was one place, after sampling a lot of not outstanding [sheet](#) cake, this one bakery had delightful "pink cake," but it was due to twin influences. The sheet cake was really a higher quality angel food, more moist than usual "pink cake," and the frosting was really strawberry flavored. Not really strawberry, other than an artificial flavor, but it was stronger than the usual pink icing, which was nothing more than spun sugar.

Mars is in the middle of Sagittarius, and this is a good year, anyway, for those of us with birthdays this week. [Pink Cake](#) is my favorite kind of cake. But [Pink Cake](#) is rich in sugar. Sugar begets an energy "high." This is a problem. The energy, what with Mars, Mercury, Moon and all that? It's like eating a whole sheet of pink cake. That energy is really fun, in a frenetic way, until the sugar crash. Happens, like, this weekend. Careful about how you [spend](#) your holiday, restraint might [be in order](#) to properly harness that Mars energy.

([11.267.2008](#))

December 7, 2008

Rent Cars, Airports, Horoscopes

But this isn't about travel, it's about yet another mangled metaphor. Something I do with relative ease. I'm not traveling as much as I have in the past. Just gentle reminder that I follow the money trail to support myself and it's leading nowhere at the moment. I'm not too worried. Really, I'm not worried at all. But that's not [the question](#). I was talking with my Sister the other afternoon.

In the simplest terms, web page design should be like an airport. No two airports are alike; however, certain elements transcend gender, language and cultural bias. Bathrooms, entrances, exits, all of that is clearly visible. Yeah, the Austin airport had Amy's and Salt Lick. For a while, the El Paso airport had (some famous local restaurant), too. The big Dallas-Ft. Worth airport is without soul. But the point isn't about local variations, it's about navigation. The signs aren't always the same, yet the signage does indicate certain services, all the same, all found with similar markings.

In the same way, rent cars, or, for that matter, any girlfriend's car, all those things should be the same. The ignition, it's usually a key, and it's usually to the right of the steering column. Lights, to the left, wipers, right on the column, turn signals, left column stalk. Gas pedal and brake. All about the same – although – no two are alike.

One fishing buddy had a lifted truck. He was telling me about rolling to a show in Austin, and the looks the tall truck got. Didn't hurt that the girls – voluntarily – rode in the bed of the truck. I suspect that had something to do with a beer cooler, but I don't know.

While the truck did stand out, literally, taller than most of the vehicles in the parking lot, the gas pedal, clutch, brake and shift? All in dependable spots. In other words, anyone could drive the truck.

So a good horoscope, it should be like an airport, or any car, easy enough so anyone could fit right in and get his or her bearings fast enough to motor off, or find the departure lounge.

I started thinking along these lines and what I came up with next was that my [scopes](#) were like cars, although some days, I'd like to think, the scope resemble sporty coupes with swooping lines and graceful curves, or some days, a totally pimped lowrider, or, on occasion, the scopes might be like that big truck my buddy's got. Monster trunk, just squashing everything round it.

I'm guessing, though, that a lot of the time, my scopes most resemble an "art car." You look at it, marvel at its artwork, and secretly, inwardly, wonder, "Why?"

Aries: I was watching the History Channel. Or the National Geographic Channel, but I think it was the history one. The broadcast group had a history special on, about Texas, a subject near and dear to my heart. "First a Texan then an American, a nation and a state, and a state of mind." Sounds good. But the facts, as they presented them that evening, there was some gaping holes in the material. Perhaps I've lived in the capitol, or the cradle of liberty, or maybe I've traipsed up and down the historical routes and visited the scared shrines at Goliad, Gonzales, and of course, San Antonio de Bexar.

I wasn't too offended, as I understand, to make it interesting TV, one most pick and choose what will make it. And what won't make it. I was, on a personal level, offended that the details of the Alamo and the Battle of San Jacinto were kept to sound-bites and popular culture. Again, that's me picking apart a history channel special, a made-for-TV history pitch. Of course, they leave out important bits, makes for better TV. Just hit the high pieces, the big, more important points. Miss the details and the motivations. At least they got the cultural part mostly right, with more than a mention of the Tejano components to the Texas Irregular Army. Face-to-face with with a TV program like this, you're going to be like me, irritable. Write a letter? Why? What good will it do? Protest, boycott? Again, who will notice? There's a time, and place, to make a stand. This isn't your Alamo.

[\(12.4.2008\)](#)

December 13, 2008

Weird

I was looking through the “daily image portal,” and I came across this [site](#), which included as part of the “about” text:

“This site is about the image and sights of New Orleans, the most unique city in the U.S.”

Made me chuckle, in a good way.

See, Austin prides itself on its weirdness quotient. The mantra is, “[Keep Austin Weird](#),” and [I should know](#), right?

Then there’s the southern cousin to Austin, San Antonio. Just as weird. Maybe weirder than Austin, but in San Antonio? No one cares. Probably [a lot weirder](#) than Austin, just no one minds. The mantra down in SA?

Keep [San Antonio](#) Lame

Seems to be doing a good job of it.

In conclusion:

It’s not matter of whether one city is weirder, or more unique, or stranger, or not stranger than another. It’s the people and how those natives perceive themselves.

Then, too, there’s just an inherent happiness. It’s a matter of being comfortable, and comfortable with one’s self, and by extension, then, allowing the little eccentricities to show through the damaged veneer.

It’s all about “home” and how one defines where that is, and how one likes where that is. Me?

Capricorn: I was reading [a report](#) that promised it was drawn from "reliable sources," and it was "[proven](#) factual," even though, I'm pretty sure, it wasn't. The author's style was more along the lines someone writing about [Bigfoot](#) or the (personal favorite) [Chupacabra](#). Less about reality, more about the area that might -- or might not be -- mythology. However, a good mythos is sometime more important than straight up fact.

That [story](#), it was widely read even though it was pretty clearly heavy on the myth and light on actual fact. The sensationalistic telling of the tale, that was a bonus feature, as far as I was concerned. But that's where the trick lies for [Capricorn](#), see, you can tell a tale, in such a way, as it appears to be a tall tale, yet, unlike the story I was reading, you stick to just the facts. It's less about what the story is about, and it's more about how you can say it comes "straight from reliable sources." That's usually a good sign.

Reliable sources is right up there with, "I knew a guy and he knew this guy...."

"True story."

[\(12.25.2008\)](#)

December 26, 2008

One Thing

Piper Sandals.

I can't find the entry, not now. It's either in the deep [archives](#), or I've got to dig [deeper](#), and I'm not really ready to do that. Not today. I tried digging and couldn't find it. I thought the reason we used computers was to make looking up stuff easier. Not more difficult.

The metaphor, the allegory, is a pair of sandals I've had for a long time, [Piper Sandals](#). Hand-made in San Antonio, TX.

In the interest of full disclosure, Piper Sandals, Dave and crew, none of them has offered me free sandals, free resole, no discount, nothing. This isn't a paid product endorsement. Not that I'm above graft and corruption, hardly, just this isn't an example of that kind of pandering. It's about doing one thing well. And sticking to that one thing. That thing can be a widget, to borrow from age-old B-school chatter, or it can be sandals.

When I first encountered Dave, and when I bought my first pair, it was all about one style, one design. Came in either brown or black, although, I'd be hard pressed to tell the difference between the two styles, not after a year of wear. The straps were either brown or black, and that was about it. Not much in the choices. Binary, not that anyone could tell. I think I might have brown, or black, I can't tell anymore. My tendency at the time would've been black.

With the inter-web, and whatnot, a few years later, Piper Sandals branched out to include a second style. Only took, what, 35 years? The second style was just like the first, only as a slip-on. And these days? There's a rainbow of colors. But for that first 30, maybe 35 years? As far as I know? One style, one design.

The key? Do one thing well.

Doesn't hurt – at all – that the founder and patriarch, Dave Piper, he likes what he's doing. Last time I spoke with him, his family and so on, the work was enjoyable, and each year, when I get mine resoled? I got a personal, handwritten note, thanking me, punctuated with "Walk well."

I've visited the Piper World Headquarters, oddly enough on a street with the same name, and the business, the workshop? Talk about a garage business? That's where the main production facility was located when I last visited. On Piper Lane or something.

Find that one love, that single calling. Do one thing and do it well. Do it for love, too. Now, more than ever, is that evident.

I have, in my career over the last dozen years, written daily, weekly, monthly and yearly horoscopes. I happen to like the weekly version best. Enough room to play with an idea, and not as mechanical as a daily. It's what I enjoy the most.



December 28, 2008

Free versus “Free”

(Spell check chokes, so I’ll misspell) Flickr is free. So is my side project, BexarCountyLine.com. The difference is, I have to fork out money for the domain name, the web hosting, and then, there’s the time update and manipulate web underpinnings, not to mention the pictures themselves. However, there’s a substantial difference, too.

While Flickr has much greater reach, it’s limited, too. “Free” limits the list to 200 – guessing – most recent uploads. While bandwidth and digital storage is getting cheaper by the minute, there’s a catch, too.

Did you read all of the fine print? All of the terms of service?

I looked at it, but I get glassy-eyed after a few moments with a standard contract, the EULA. I’m sure there’s a “hold blameless” clause. I’ve got ‘em, for sure.

The other question, I can recall when a friend of a friend, told me to try this new website, called “Google.” The rest is history, right? Likewise, the imminent demise of Yahoo!? Yeah, they own Flickr, last I checked. Me? I have an English degree – you do the math on that one.

The behemoths come and go, and the little guy, like me, the independent, we’re the ones who keep on ticking. There’s a question, now, I have about how to support the “free” service. I know that advertising revenue hasn’t been very much. Even with about billion page views, it’s still not a lot. For the sake of demonstration purposes, I’ll suppose that a website on stable host costs around \$80 per annum. Then, unless I’m paying by the year through Register dot com, the name costs \$20. That means the total bill is roughly \$100 per year. About every ten months, I get a check for \$10 – direct advertising revenue.



Liberty Foods.

While that revenue spans several websites, most of it, almost a dollar a month, is direct from the side-project alone.

Two regular half-hour readings make up the difference, after applicable taxes are paid. While the site doesn't really generate 2 readings in a year, I enjoy what I do and it's worth an hour of my time. It's a worthwhile endeavor.

In part, the side-project could be titled, "How not to take pictures." Then, too, when I'm in a mood, it's the best therapy. A quiet walk in place that inspires awe and wonder? Urban decay and its subsequent renewal? That town – San Antonio – it's been there longer than the States have been a country.

The rules are simple, to me, in the last five years or so, I've accumulated quite a tourist's eye view of the confines of Bexar County. One picture a day, from within that line. Simple. At that rate, that's 365 images in a single year, and it's been going for two – outstrips the Flickr guidelines. There are other free outlets for similar services, but there's always a catch – someone gets paid for the advertising, and the advertising must pay enough for a profit.

Me? I haven't seen that. Then, too, not every image is enigmatic, or captivating. Or artistic. Or whatever. Some images only speak to me. For example, Liberty Food Store, a currently abandoned shell, south of downtown, and oddly evocative of (something).

I just suppose that, as a working artist, I can earn some kind of income from the efforts, be it written or other. The images for the web are not the full-blown high-res – although I do have the digital files in all their glorious color and detail.

There are currently a little over a thousand files in the image basket for the side project. Means that there's three years' worth, so far. And means it's way over "free" limits.

Epilogue

Two years in the flood plain for the San Pedro Spring creek. Hard to imagine life as defined by bodies of water, however, that's the way it's been. There's an additional weather note, sort of a post script, about the weather. When I moved into this flood plain, as a way to define a location? There was, in the first six months of the year? More rain than ever — ever — on record. More water fell from the heavens between January and July than was previously ever recorded.

That stopped. By September, there was two-year drought that stretched even further. Flood or drought, no median average.

That, more than anything else, defines the boom or bust sentiment.

KRAMER WETZEL

Not many things can explain him but here are a few. Kramer was born and raised in a small town in East Texas. He has degrees in English literature and considers Shakespeare his soulmate.



Kramer sometimes thinks he was Shakespeare in a previous lifetime, but that's another story.

After many national and international exploits, he decided to make his home in the heart of Texas, the capital city of Austin. He currently resides by the shores of Town Lake, which is really a fork of the Colorado River, in a modest trailer at Shady Acres Trailer Park less than one linear mile from the State Capitol building (which is taller than the one in Washington). He hopes to add indoor plumbing to his residence in the immediate future. "Yes Kramer, we all have dreams."

Like any good Sagittarius, he has lived a number of lifetimes in this one: motorcycle mechanic, nightclub owner, computer guru and now his current, unparalleled specialty: Fishing Guide to the Stars.

From his careful study of mythology to his contemporary journalistic documentation that Texans are descended from a race of Space Aliens, Kramer is a professor of the human condition.

