Strange Stories,
Moonstruck Musings,
Jenatic Lyrics
& Vexing Versifications

-Haw, haw, haw...
Thank God we’re not part of you.

Your teachings are all wrong.

You suck!

We’re better than you, by far. 0, Great Whore of Babylon.

We’re not good!

You’re corrupt!

Apostates!

We are intelligent.

Damnant

good
The Strange Last Night of Oscar "Big O" Turnbull

&

Other Short Stories and Poems by "Wild Bill" Barnes

Author — Aptly, Appropriately, Arbitrarily, Audaciously, Awesomely, Awkwardly and Alarmingly — Accomplished, Amalgamated and Assembled Absolutely All Accompanying Artwork (and Alliteration)
This book lovingly dedicated to my parents and brother: John Edward, Elizabeth and Johnny

Note: Despite becoming a published book author at the tender age of 32, the author is now “all alone,” and, certainly, needs people to help him. He has now been imprisoned over a quarter-century due to an abortion.

He welcomes all correspondence.

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Ladies: Author is white; a Capricorn. 5' 11", 200 lbs., athletic build. Green eyes, brown hair. Likes music and all sports. About five years of college. Fairly fluent en español.
# Table of Contents

Sheriff Taylor Involved in JFK Plot!!!! .................................................. 1
Just Another Day In Paradise... (Shark Trouble) ................................... 2
Back Again ............................................................................................... 4
The Strange Last Night of "Big O" Turnbull: A Work of Fiction (Maybe) ................................................................. 6
The Mexican Drug Lord ........................................................................ 19
Art and Artifice ..................................................................................... 23
Superman Syndrome ............................................................................ 25
The Unbreakable Bond ......................................................................... 26
4 Haikus ............................................................................................... 29
The Image ............................................................................................ 31
Never Say "I Created" ........................................................................... 33
Chick-fil-A Sonnet ................................................................................ 34
I See Bigfoot ....................................................................................... 36
The Gladiator's Eyes ............................................................................. 39
Saint Valentine's Day Sonnet ................................................................. 42
A Twist on Carroll ................................................................................ 44
Why Did Camelot Have to Die...? ....................................................... 45
*The Walking Dead* .............................................................................. 53
The Three Catwomen .......................................................................... 55
Collective Soul ................................................................. 57
A Child's Incomprehension ............................................. 61
Father's Day 2015 'Membrane ........................................ 62
Mother's Day Sonnet ....................................................... 63
Prayers ......................................................................... 65
A Little Monkey ............................................................. 66
The Crocodile .................................................................. 67
The Night Jethro Went Ape-Shit Crazy... (The Beverly
Hell-Billies) .................................................................. 69
Father Time, Why? .......................................................... 74
Holding My Skull ............................................................ 77
The Harbinger .................................................................. 79
Creeping Up .................................................................... 80
When power leads man toward arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the areas of man's concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of his existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses. For art establishes the basic human truth which must serve as the touchstone of our judgment.

— John F. Kennedy, from an address at Amherst College, October 26th, 1963
Sheriff Taylor Involved in JFK Plot!!!!

Sheriff Andy Taylor was actually one of the shooters involved in JFK's assassination. He was the one atop the Dal-Tex Building, using a scoped 30-06. I realize that'll be hard for you to fathom, dear reader, but it's true. Oh, it's damned true. (Deputy Barney Fife had some nefarious involvement as well, but they never could "pin" it on him. He was so deep "undercover" — from most-feared Parris Island drill-instructor to "bumbling deputy" — as if! — that they just couldn't prove anything.)

But they did catch up with poor Andy for it. After he'd served almost 20 years, he was just about to make parole. (Remember, this was a different, far more forgiving, far less atheistic, America.) Figuring the "au-thor-i-tis" wouldn't be overly concerned with a disgraced old man such as himself, Andy absconded from a minimum-custody prison. Boy, was he wrong.

When they caught up with him a second time, after he'd been on the lam as a freelance truck-driver for a few years, he wound up having to pull damned near another 20 — albeit in a special cell equipped with its own swimming pool. (Remember, 'twas a kinder and gentler America back then....)
Just Another Day in Paradise...

(Shark Trouble)

A day at the beach.

Offshore, the air is rent with horrible, high-pitched screaming — as a 16-foot tiger shark enjoys lunching upon various and sundry gringo touristas from an alien universe.

The tropical sun reflects blindingly from the warm water — blue and blood-red. Lovely shades.

The hot sand caresses our feet as my companion and I stroll along, laughing — as the terrified survivors, temporarily alive, wildly scamper upon the beckoning beach like so many baboon pups after the leopard has visited....
To toast this amusing sight, I hand a wad of pesos to my Sri Lankan mail-order bride, Mahaweli Ganga, and request she go get us a couple cool cervezas to help celebrate this welcome thinning of the herd.

When she returns, I twist off the caps. The aroma of hops drifts slowly up. Both grinning, we clink our bottles together — gazing, for just a moment, into each other’s eyes in sweet and eager anticipation of the night of passion we’ll soon be sharing — before the cool yellow liquid — nectar of Dionysus — courses down our throats....

As the wails of oncoming sirens hum a symphony of despair, my lover and I plan a scuba dive for the morrow. For who knows what valuable jewelry may perhaps be attached to severed limbs upon the bottom — just waiting for recovery.

And the shark? No worries, mate, I’d say he’s — or she’s — probably well-fed.

For now.
You’re goin’ back again...?!” Johnny groaned.

Kitty looked at him with her beautiful sea-blue eyes. “Hey, you know I really don’t like this any more than you do. But ‘duty calls,’ so to speak. I have certain ‘issues’ I need to deal with.... And that always takes time. Sure wish I didn’t, but that’s just the way it is.”

Johnny reached out, taking her soft, light hands in his. They sat, Lotus-position, facing one another. “Why can’t you stay just awhile longer? How come we can’t both continue this life for a while?”

She shook her head, her lovely blonde mane framing her angelic face. “No, Johnny, ’fraid not. It’s already been quite a while here. You know, ever since the shoot-out.”

He cast down his eyes. “Yeah, that was a bad day....”

“Well, what’s done is done. Time is a one-way arrow; and ‘You Can’t Go Back’ is a universal law. You know that. At least in that sense...” she gently, but firmly, reminded.

“Sure is,” he agreed.

“C’mon, Johnny, don’t be so glum,” she cajoled, tapping him on his knee. “You will be perfectly free to follow along behind, at least when the time is right.”

“Can’t say I’m lookin’ forward to it.”

“Yeah, well, who can blame you? Certainly not I. But I don’t believe there’s exactly a ‘void’ of things you need to work out in your own life either.... Not by any means.”
“Yeah, Kitty, but I’m just kinda used to things here.”

“Well, how ’bout the Super Bowl? You would like to see that again, wouldn’t you?” she asked.

“Why, of course I would. But the damned price of the tickets just seems so high....”

Kitty grinned, a soft laugh even escaping her lips; her eyes now reflecting the combined merriment of a thousand beach-revelers engaged in everything from scuba-diving to hitting on chicks. “Okay, baby, I’ve got a ‘plane’ to catch. You can, eventually, come on down to the same town — if you wish. Guess you’ll recognize me by the look in my eyes. Look deeply enough, and you’ll know it’s me....”

“Bye, Kitty,” Johnny sighed resignedly. “I’m gonna miss you.”

“And I you....” she replied. Leaning forward, she planted a soft, otherworldly kiss upon his lips. Then she gazed at him a long while, long even for a realm where that mysterious thing we call “time” is measured much differently. Her eyes changed, slowly, from sea-blue to emerald-green. Then, just as slowly, back again: A wonderful oneness was reflected therein....

Then, with a final smile, Kitty raised her arms, and closed her eyes. An audible swoosh accompanied her as a hole appeared in the cloudy, ethereal floor upon which she had been sitting with her lover.

She disappeared through it.
Rain, by some weird cosmic coincidence, seemed to usually coincide with execution-nights. And now, going on 2 a.m., a pretty “good one” was going on outside, with flashes often illuminating the one distant high window, at the end of a long hall, that afforded the solitary view available of the “outside world” from where we were stationed. Followed shortly by thunder that, sometimes, shook even the massive old stone building in which we were ensconced.

Tony, a really nice Cuban in for smuggling ‘la’ cocainia, was there, as were “Big Al,” as I called him, and “Fat Louis” — as everybody called him. (That’s how it was spelled, but we pronounced it “Lou-ee.”) Also “Eastwood,” an “old-school” black fellow, and “Shabazz,” a younger one.

What happened that night shall haunt me until the day — or night, perhaps more likely — I die. Perhaps even beyond....

I don’t wish to say exactly when, but it was awhile back. Nor where, but it was here in the Southland — a great land, one I dearly love — but yet a land notorious for über-regressive prison systems, where not a single state is above making occasional human sacrifices of poor people — you can, if you wish, break ’em down into “categories” of Indians, blacks, or “just plain white-trash” (to borrow Reba’s phrase from her child-prostitute song, “Fancy”), yet the one common denominator is, inevitably, “poor” — to placate their masses.

Almost all of the many other prisoners were on lockdown already — standard protocol for execution-nights — yet every prison-job has its petty “perks.” And we six, since we all worked, night-shift, in what they called “Unit #1,” the oldest part of the huge prison-complex — the area where they, occasionally, killed folks — had a particularly dark one: As long as the right crew was on, and we stayed really quiet and unobtrusive, we were permitted to watch executions.

God knows, we weren’t in either of the two designated viewing-areas: The two little “theaters” — one for the victim’s (or victims’) friends and family; the other, right beside it, yet with strictly separate ingress and egress, designated for the loved ones of each dark production’s “star” cast-member —
both equipped with relatively comfy seats and the “one-way” viewing-windows. Nope, we were, upon
the strictest orders, made to stay back in the “catacombs,” behind a set of old-fashioned bars, and
looking at the proceedings from only about 25 feet away, yet at such an angle that we could not be
spotted by any of the two little theaters’ “patrons.”

And, furthermore, should any of us emit vocalizations above the barest whisper — Captain Lohan
had assured us, with the deepest sincerity and utmost conviction — not only would our sick little
“perk” be gone forever, but a total of an even dozen gonads would be ground up into the pork
sausage on the morning’s menu and served to the general population.... (A thought probably
particularly disturbing to Shabazz, a Muslim.)

A large, plump old con named Oscar “Big O” Turnbull was taking the “lead role” tonight. He’d
been on Death Row for damned near twenty years — a punishment, in my estimation, that should
serve, by itself, as sufficient expiation and expurgation for just about any sin. Exactly for what he’d
been ensonced in our beloved Institution of Lower Learning, I knew not. Being “overly inquisitive”
about such matters, I’d long-ago learned, was considered “prison impolitic” and a fairly serious faux
pas. If anyone wanted to tell you, they would. If not, it was best not to ask.

Big O had enjoyed a couple, relatively brief, “furloughs” during that stretch. Twice, his death
sentence had been overturned on some technicality — some stray “i” they’d forgotten to dot — or
another. (And Lord, didn’t his appeal attorneys rake in the dough finding them.) Then he’d lose his
bright-red jumpsuits for a spell, trading them in for “browns” (normal clothes, not the hated
jumpsuits), and they’d send him out to mix with the “regular pop.” Each occasion, if I recall
correctly, lasted a little over a year. These times were when I got to know him somewhat. Learned he
was from a small coastal town (which eliminates Arkansas and Tennessee, in case you’re speculating
on where this occurred), and that he could pick the pure dickens out of a guitar. I’d even played a few
games of checkers with him.

But then they’d drag his ass back to the county court, round up an assortment of village idiots —
who would, quite willingly and promptly, do their “civic duty” — and, again, condemn Big O to die.
It was no contest, really: The Almighty State vs. some poor white cracker. The “Vegas odds” had to
be a 100-to-one against him....

Having been convicted awhile before this particular state had “switched over” — as almost all
DP-states, nationwide, eventually did — to the much more “sterile,” apparently less “barbaric,”
needle as a means of sending souls into eternity, Big O had his choice. “Yeah, Wild Bill, I said fuck it,
I’m a-gonna ‘ride the lightnin’. ’ You know, might as well ‘go out with a bang... ‘” he’d told me about
a month previously, when he’d passed me in the hallway, shuffling along all shackled and cuffed, wearing his blood-red jumpsuit yet again, and flanked by two beefy, corn-fed guards, each with a large black baton in hand.

He’d picked the “lightning,” I surmise, as a way not to go quietly into that long night. He’d wished to make as much of a “spectacle” of the proceedings as he possibly could. They didn’t much like it, of course, but they had no choice; while he did, albeit not particularly appealing ones.

And the good ‘ol “If-It-Bleeds, It-Leads” press was eating it all up, naturally. Something had been on the local news about every night lately — I slept during most days, but they’d probably been “profiling” the situation on the “News at Noon” as well — and he’d even gotten a segment or two on the national news programs. And we bored-stiff prisoners all, secretly, harbored more than a bit of gratitude for all the “attention” he was getting us....

Plus, it made us proud. “Yeah, ol’ O is goin’ out like a soldier...” was a common compliment.

A real dungeon-like feel pervaded the area where our state’s version of “Old Sparky” was kept. It was a separate, long unused, death-chamber — one that reminds me now, rather eerily, looking back, of the one used in The Green Mile. We’d gotten to watch a few “final acts” held in the other, much more “antiseptic,” death-chamber — the one where they employed the needle — but from a decidedly different vantage point. From a window in the attic-like area directly above that chamber’s “twin-theaters,” in fact. This was the first “Ride the Lightning” event any of us had ever witnessed.

All of us had been, occasionally, while cleaning, around this area. I’d once even, just for the hell of it, sat down in “Old Sparky” and rested, almost dozed, for a while. Officer Stevens, walking past, had grinned and said: “Hey, Wild Bill, doesn’t it make you feel a little weird, a-sittin’ in that thing...?”

“Nah, why should it? Y’all are the ones who killed all those folks in it...” I’d replied, with a devilish little grin of my own; whereupon Officer Stevens’ grin had disappeared.

Yet, truth be told, all false bravado aside, I had felt a disturbing “eldritch miasma” while my ass had been ensconced in that evil old contraption.... I’d never sat in it again.

“Wow, Big Al,” I said, remembering to keep my voice to the thinnest whisper, “this is gonna be some creepy shit. I like Big O, and I ain’t never seen anyone ‘get the juice’ before either....” He was just “Al” to everyone else. The “Big” part was just my “personal nickname.” I called him that because, to me, he seemed to embody the “aspect” of an up-North gangster. He was around fifty, tall
and fit, liked to smoke big cigars, had a fearless nature, and sported a thick mane of well-coiffed silver hair — hair that reminds me, now, of Philly-what’s-his-name on The Sopranos — just the hair, not so much his face. (And these events occurred well before the birth of that show anyway.)

"Yeah, I ain’t exactly lookin’ forward to it myself," Big Al whispered back. "But I can’t exactly look away, either, all at the same time...."

Just then a couple of jumbo-sized goons led Big O into the execution-chamber. It was a bit of a shock seeing him: His former thick black — or black-and-grey now, actually — beard was all gone. And his already-balding pate was now completely "chrome dome." The two goons — working rather efficiently, for a pair o’ goons — soon had him strapped, shirtless, in the lethal chair. He was indeed big, and "country strong," but the years in stir, especially with the continual high-carb diet, had left him with a substantial layer of flab. All the body hair had also, apparently, been removed from his upper body, at least from his chest and arms. His lower legs were shaven as well. A few low-quality prison-tattoos — made with guns contrived of any little electric-motor that could be stolen or scavenged, such as from an electric-typewriter or -razor; and only-God-knows what for ink; plus a hep-C encrusted needle — adorned his chest and arms, including an about 4-inch Harley logo above his left tit. (Probably a sign I’ve been locked up too long, describing it thusly, but it was all smooth and hairless.)

Glancing over, he caught our eyes. I quickly gave him a little index-finger-to-the-lips sign to warn him not to betray our presence, then myself and a couple others thumped our chests with our fists, I guess in what you could call "Our-hearts-are-with-you. Be strong, brother," gestures.

Despite his dire circumstances, Big O returned a small nod, and even a wink. If any of the spectators perceived it, they no doubt wondered....

Big Goon #1 and Big Goon #2 — already being "practiced," we knew, from about a dozen "dry runs," utilizing some waterheaded snitch named Arthur, a "Cho-Mo" who liked to curry whatever favor he could from staff, sitting in the chair as a "crash-test dummy," while probably offering to suck any stray chewing-gum off their boot heels — got all the electrodes, and the "skull-cap," in place fairly quickly and efficiently as well. (All items "well-greased" beneath.)

Poor Big O endured all the rigmarole placidly and resignedly. The thought struck me that, with the removal of his hair, it seemed they’d sloughed off whatever pitiful vestiges of dignity he’d had remaining as well (And that made me recall that über-whore, Delilah; and I wondered if a wayward woman had had something to do with where Big O found himself tonight....)
Our beloved Warden Douchebag was in attendance, of course, as the law required. Not that he would have missed it, even if he could. For there was, surely, no better way in which to "strut his 'author-i-ti.'"

Dressed in green polyester slacks, matched with a blue sports-jacket, he was displaying, as usual, his deep, apparently genetic, sartorial inaptitude. We knew, without having to be told, that it wouldn't be a good idea to let him see us lurking in the wings. (Yet, I don't think it would have been a "total disaster," either. If so, his "under-dicks" would never have permitted our presence to begin with. Secretly, perhaps our dear warden didn't really mind all that much having a few eyewitnesses to "report back" on tonight's proceedings. Such might make even a "Life Withouter" think twice before stabbing a guard.... A good way to keep up the "fear factor" — always a potent, perhaps even vital, weapon in the lion-tamer's arsenal.)

"By the power invested in me," Warden Douchebag intoned with faux-grandiosity, "by the Great State of Yada-Yada... Yada-yada. Yada-yada. Yada-yada. ...And do you have any last words you'd like to share now, Mr. Turnbull?" he finally concluded.

O gave him a half-ironic, half-go-to-hell look, then said: "Why, no, reckon not. Let's just go ahead and see if we can't run this 'Great State's' electric-bill on up a little...."

Warden Douchebag frowned at this, of course, but made no retort, probably figuring that flipping-the-switch would serve — quite nicely, thank you — as the ultimate "retort."

As for my buddies and I, we almost had to stifle giggles. Yet our mirth, naturally, was very short-lived. Especially as the grim, ritualized "execution protocol" wound its way inexorably forward...towards its inevitable conclusion.

It was, certainly, a weird, spooky, practically ineffable thing — to be almost in the same room where they were actually about to kill a fellow human being — in the coldest of blood.

You're fixin' to do what?! To kill this here man — our old friend, Big O! What, are you fuckin' bastards crazy?!!!

All six of us, likely, were sharing, via a weird type of "psychic communality" that just seemed to grow in such stressful, surreal circumstances, a thought very akin to this. The whole thing made me sick, and I — almost — wished to just retreat, quietly, further back into the "catacombs" and forgo the experience.... Yet, I couldn't. The need to "bear witness" was stronger.
I glanced at the red phone. Knowing full well it was hopeless I, nevertheless, prayed for a sudden ring. "Hi, this is the Governor's Office. Guess what — our Honorable Governor has just decided that Oscar 'Big O' Turnbull isn't actually such a bad guy after all.... Tell you what, not only hold up on that 'quick-fryin' to a crackly-crunch' thing, but go ahead and give him some civilian clothes, $40 and a bus-ticket — the Guv said he figures that tonight has likely scared the bejesus out of him so thoroughly that he's sure to be a pure-D 'model citizen' from here on out, anyway, so he's granted him a full pardon as well...."

Such a call suddenly coming in, though, was about as likely as Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton writing in "David Duke" on presidential ballots.

I was having mixed emotions. There had to be something, I was deep-down-sure, beyond these mere mortal coils. If the only alternative, for O, was to spend either all, or nearly all, of the remainder of his days behind these cruel walls of stone, there was certainly something to be said for his being "freed" — one way or the other — from them....

I'd lived this shit way-too-long myself by then. People who've never experienced it just don't, and can't, understand. The same environs; the same clothes; the same food; the, mostly, same folks: the simple inability to fish.

It all wore on you, soul-crushingly. Until it began to melt away that essence, that most sacred of things: Your very mind.

I'd had trouble, grasping, the opening verse of the Gospel of Saint John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Always striking me, it had, as rather odd that a term as prosaic as "word" — even capitalized — would be equated with the very Author of the Universe.

But I'd eventually learned that the original Greek word was logos. It's the term from whence "logic" comes, and can mean so much more than simply "word." And, armed with this knowledge, the opening passage had, suddenly began making a whole lot more sense....

"In the beginning was the Mind, and the Mind was with God, and the Mind was God."

So, knowing what I did, via firsthand experience, just what interminably long incarceration — most especially for the "fun 'n' profit" of others — did to one's very "sacred essence," there was little that sickened me more than some weak liberal idiot whining about, "Why, there's no need to actually kill them — not when you can just keep them locked away forever...."
What was the point? All that amounted to was a, much worse, “slow death” penalty anyway. People who held the views quoted above, I felt, were simply too “squeamish” to stomach executions.

I’d studied the history of the death penalty a little. From roughly 1950 on back, there were actually a lot of crimes for which Americans could be executed. Not only murder and espionage, but burglary, rape, arson, armed robbery, “chestering” — hell, a couple dudes had even been “offed” for “aggravated assault.” (Probably upon the Governor’s grandmother.) But, one thing they didn’t do back then was simply lock many people away forever. Americans of those eras still cherished freedom — still recognized what a rare thing indeed it represented in a long world history continually stained with slavedom and serfdom. (Even Clyde Barrow’s relatives had been trying to talk him into turning himself in, on the slim chance that, even being a confirmed cop-killer, he might escape the chair and then have to pull “only” about 20.) Back then, they’d either go the hell ahead and “put you out of your misery,” or give you a shot a redemption.... There just didn’t seem to be much of this damnable, wishy-washy, “Make-'em-die-slow” shit.

D.P.’s were actually, I believed, the more merciful.

I also thought back to a story Big O had once told me, about a boyhood encounter — a “close encounter” — with a bear. If I remember right, he’d only been about ten or 12 when, hunting in the swamps, a big male black bear had charged him. “Little O’s” shotgun-blasts had stopped the creature with its snout only about six feet away.

I’d also read, and even reread, some, highly engrossing, books by a gentleman named Jim Corbett. A very brave fellow, an Englishman — a “sahib” — whose “hobby,” if you will, was hunting down — on foot, by himself — man-eating tigers and leopards, in India’s Himalayan foothills during the first half of the 20th century. A truly chilling avocation in which he, the hunter, often became the hunted. (With a particularly gruesome fate lying in store, should he make even a single serious mistake.)

Corbett remarked, in one memorable passage, upon how fickle was “Atropos” — who I assume is a Greek goddess — in “cutting the cord of life.” (Her job, apparently.)

It’d all drive you quite mad, if you thought too long about it. If one distant, distant ancestor hadn’t managed to — perhaps “by the skin of his teeth” — escape the jaws of a saber-tooth tiger, would any certain individual even be here today...?
Likewise, had that bear gotten to young Oscar that day, the world would be, at least slightly, a different place — with O's victim probably still walking upon the earth — and me and my five buddies just goin' about our "usual chores" upon this rainy night....

As I said: It'd all drive you crazy, if you let it.

Well, God knows, — since that big bad bruin had been stopped just short — it was certainly a "weird milieu" in which we found ourselves tonight. Not surprisingly, no last-minute reprieve from the Gov was phoned in. Warden Douchebag, with nauseating pomposity, waved his hand forward, index finger extended, saying: "Let the execution begin...."

One of the goons flipped the big switch, and a few hundred thou, I guess, volts of electricity entered Big O's frame. He jerked mightily, his eyes rolling back up in his head, his hands clutching the chair's arms in a literal "death-grip," every muscle bulging, straining, taut, and I felt more freaked out than ever. Everything just felt "surreal" as hell, making me wonder, later, if we're all nothing more than just a bunch of holograms in the Mind of God....

Time itself, momentarily, seemed to stand still. Then — finally, and mercifully — the executioner flipped the switch back to its original position. And it was "all over but the crying." The juice was off, and Oscar Turnbull's lifeless form slouched in the wicked chair.

I closed my eyes. "God, please accept Brother O's spirit," I asked, then I crossed myself, even though I'm not officially Catholic.

"Lord, rest his soul...." I heard Eastwood, the older black fellow, whisper.

Whatever mercenary "Dr. Mengele" they had in attendance — an older, tall, thin man, with an angular face and a bolo necktie, tonight — stepped forward. He felt Big O's neck; then his wrist; then held a stethoscope to his freshly-shaven chest. He pursed his lips slightly, then said: "I declare this prisoner to be deceased."

"The execution has been successfully completed, as per the death-warrant required" said the warden, his "pomposity," it seemed, finally somewhat subdued.

We all remained where we were, quietly, each lost in our own thoughts, I guess, for a while. And that strange feeling that that mysterious fourth dimension — Time — had, somehow, slipped its usual boundaries, or precepts, lingered as well....
Whatever witnesses had trekked here this rainy night, who'd beheld the spectacle we had beheld, had, we knew, been promptly escorted out. ("Show's over, folks. Nothin' left here to see....")

"Man, that was a terrible thing," said Tony softly, but not in the "total whisper" we had been employing, as such was no longer necessary. "Dios mio, Dios Altísimo, tenga misericordia en su alma..." he added. And then Tony — who was indeed "fully Catholic" — crossed himself solemnly, finishing by touching his hand to his lips.

For whatever reason, we all continued to linger, gazing at Big O's now lifeless body. Warden Douchebag and Dr. Mengele strolled on out — and I recalled the late radio commentator Paul Harvey's supposed comment: "If you wish to see the scum-of-the-earth, go down to your local prison — at shift-change."

I guess the tableau was just so freakin' horrible — a man, a fellow human, one with whom we'd all, I believe, "interacted" with to at least some degree or another, all slumped over, having been "reduced," without a vestige of dignity, here in a "Christian" country, to just a corpse, just so much "dead meat" — that we simply couldn't tear our eyes from it....

Then something remarkable happened.

I thought I saw Big O's eyes flutter ever-so-slightly. I knew it couldn't be, of course, but yet I, naturally, now focused very intently upon them. And, within moments, it was very definitive: Big O not only opened both eyes — I could see his deep blue orbs very distinctly — he actually winked at me. And he even raised up a little in the chair.

My God, Elvis was still in the building!!

I nearly fainted.

I was, so far, the only one that had seen it, I think. "Guys, my God, O's still alive," I managed to croak out.

I wonder if the Apostles, upon beholding the Risen Christ, could have been any more shocked.

I doubt it.

It was as though God had said: "Nope. I'm not ready for this one yet. I don't care if you juice him with a trillion megawatts and poison him.... I'm simply not ready for him yet. I AM that I AM. I am Sovereign. Signing off.... See ya later, you little alligators...."
Looking back, these many years later, I always wonder — and am haunted by — what we could have done differently. I’m pretty sure that Tony, Big Al, Fat Louis, Eastwood and Shabazz are — wherever they are, and if they are all still “with us” (I’ve heard an unsubstantiated rumour that Eastwood has “gone on,” and I imagine it’s true) — still “haunted” as well.

There was starting to be some commotion inside the execution chamber.

“Hey, Big O, my God, you’ve made it! You’ve ‘ridden the lightnin’,’ and you’re still alive! My God, I can’t believe it!!” Fat Louis yelled out exuberantly.

“Yes, and they can’t, by God, kill you again! I’m enough of a jailhouse lawyer to know that much...” old Eastwood added.

I wasn’t quite so sure. I wasn’t all that capable of “thinking things out” at that moment, yet I do recall having the vague notion that Eastwood was probably right: After all, Oscar Turnbull had been sentenced to death; had, in fact, been electrocuted; and had also, in fact, been declared deceased.

At the very least, it would certainly seem, he’d have to be taken back to court and sentenced to be executed again before he could be executed again. And would such even be considered “double jeopardy”? I looked at Oscar, still strapped in the chair. He had the aspect of a man attempting to shake loose a few “cobwebs” from his head but, other than that, seemed fully conscious and functional. It wasn’t like he had any external burn marks or smoke arising from his skin. Gazing down at his hands, he began flexing his fingers. “Woooooo!” he exclaimed, shaking his head as much as he could, and sounding like an electrified Ric Flair.

A tall blonde C.O. that everyone called “Trailer Whore Sally,” a relatively pretty woman, yet a “nine-fingered” person, as poet James Dickey had alluded to in his Deliverance novel, approached. “You guys just need to get on out of here, now!” she screeched like Hillary Clinton on a “Don’t-Eat-the-Brown-Acid” bad-trip — while looking über-stressed. “We’re gonna take care of this situation...."
“Don’t you people dare try to kill him again!” Shabazz yelled. “Al-lah sees all. You shall be judged, harshly, if you do....”

They always practice “overkill,” in terms of staffing, on execution-nights. “Extra guards galore” are always in attendance — most doing little more than “standing around and looking stupid” — and tonight was no different. Within moments, Big Goon #1 and Big Goon #2, along with about eight others, had come out of the “catacombs” behind us to escort us back to our “proper place.”

Big Goon #2 — the one who had actually flipped the switch — grabbed ahold, none-too-gently, of my upper left arm. “Time to go now, gentlemen,” he declared, unequivocally. Two things I shall always remember about him: One, he had pale, icy-blue eyes — as had had almost all of the notorious killers, the gunfighters, of the Wild West — and they seemed possessed, I thought, of a rather “evil gleam.” Two, there was the distinct smell of alcohol — whiskey, I think — upon his breath.

Both the black guys, to their credit, tried locking their arms through the bars — in a, forlorn, attempt to “stay put” and bear witness.... We all wanted to. But, at the end of the day — and after long years of having it, relentlessly, drilled into our consciousnesses — we were all, acutely, aware of one harsh reality, one brutal fact of life: They were the ones with “All the guns and all the bullets.”

So it was, ultimately, useless. All their efforts wound up garnering Eastwood and Shabazz was a bit of “roughing up,” and about a week, each, in the Hole.

*   *   *   *   *

I’m out of prison now. After a quarter-century of, doggedly, trying — all without any family or friends — I finally got some “help from the courts.” Got out free and clear. No long parole; no nothing. The conviction itself has been taken off my record; and the murder (as they called it, not I) for which I was in is, officially, unsolved.

But what will interest you more, I’m sure, is the “aftermath” of that surreal night.
As far as "The World" knows, Oscar Turnbull was duly executed — upon the first attempt — that long-ago, rainy, night. That's how all the "drive-by media," uniformly, reported it, both in print and on television.

We tried, of course. God knows, we did.

As crazy as our story surely sounded, the fact that all of us related, almost exactly, the same story — with only the "minor variations," as are only natural from six different witnesses, and as are evident in the four Gospels — certainly helped increase our "believability factor." As did the fervency with which we recounted them. So I'd guess, after about a month, at least 60% of our fellow prisoners believed us. There are always some folks who will always, of course, "practice incredulity," no matter what. (I mean, hell, there are still plenty of folks who actually believe JFK was assassinated by a "lone gunman" — with a "magic bullet," no less.) So most of the rest were of the opinion that we'd concocted the whole thing as a "sick joke." Just as a way of garnering "attention" to our selves.

Let them have such opinions; they are welcome to them.

Yet we did indeed do all we possibly could. We tried contacting the ACLU; the U.S. Department of Justice; even the NAACP (in spite of the fact, as noted, that Oscar had been firmly of the "Caucasian persuasion"). We sent letters to 60 Minutes, Nightline, Unsolved Mysteries, and a few other such shows. (Most such letters were "smuggled out," so to speak, inside envelopes that close friends were mailing to others, with "forwarding" instructions — to help assure, under the circumstances, that they'd actually get there....)

Here and there we'd get a polite response. But the phrase "unsubstantiated rumors" seemed to appear in several.

I've also tried — we all have — to imagine scenarios in which they didn't kill Oscar A. Turnbull a second time that night, whether it was by "refrying" him, unceremoniously; or the two Big Goons taking him into a room and beating him to death; or whatever....

My personal favorite is this: Warden Douchebag takes — the presumably still-groggy — Oscar into his office: "Mr. Turnbull, you're a very lucky man. Tell you what — since I have no wish of letting the world know what actually transpired here tonight; it would just be too much of an embarrassment, not to mention opening up an entirely unwelcome 'can of worms' — I shall grant you this offer, if you will swear to abide by it: I shall get you properly dressed; give you a $100.60 of my own money; and escort you out the front gate. I shall take care of keeping everything quiet; and we'll
bury an empty casket. But you must, never, contact anyone you used to know — most especially not your own family, presuming you have any left....

"You'll be free to start, as best you can, an entirely new life. Tabula rasa — what do you say?"

I swear, with all my might, I hope this is what happened that long-ago night. Though I know the odds are, probably, much against it....
The Mexican Drug Lord

The Mexican drug lord,
tall and lonely
filling, ably, the niche
That Society demands he fill...

Exits his bunker,
and scans
the building-obstructed horizon...

He contemplates
He looks back

He, once upon a time
Had actually tried to “go straight”
Had tried, even, to become a Christian

But there was just too much,
Baggage
He's been "raided"
three times
By government thugs
whose badges
have holes
eaten
by malignant worms
of corruption...

Many people lay still
in covering earth
thanx to his career

And many more
lowly "mules," mostly
Are dripping their lives
s-l-o-w-l-y
Down prison drains...

But commerce is commerce
and certain "demands"

*Have* to be met...
Among his many hauntings
Are a "lost" wife
And a daughter, shot
— wounded, not killed —
By his own hand...

So, to "get away from it all"
for a while, anyway
he mounts
his motorcycle
— it's red, and really, really fast
model #_________
best-money-can-buy —
and rides,
really, really fast
sans helmet
wind-in-his-black-hair...

To a race-track

It's Mexico's largest
"dirt-track"
— but its surface isn't actually dirt
it's gravel-coated —
Which sits
Upon a wide, lonely plain

With saguaro cacti
sprouting up
like crosses
in the background...

And he parks his bike
in its center,
dismounts
and gazes, slowly, about...

Not another soul to be seen
Under the burning desert sun...

He breathes the dry, yet scent-laden, air

And he thinks,
wistfully,
of his two hot, young girlfriends

A Suicide Blonde
And a Suicide Redhead
Art and Artifice

The other day, I was talking to Ben
My atheist friend
And I thought of a new way
To try to share, the Good News

When I create
There's not really much "I"
In the process…

It's more like I allow my mind its rein
And it journeys

Somewhere

Somewhere perhaps best described, as "Gold Mine of the Mind"
And it's free to see
Just what it can find…

But, what it does find
Stories, songs, poems
What-have-you
Are, in a sense, already there

And all the "I" does
Is knock a bit of dirt
Off the "nuggets"
Just simply "spruces 'em up" a little...

But, fact is
They already exist.

Are "discovered,"
Much more than "created."

This is art.

For, mere humans
Could not possibly
"Create" thusly...

When humans do try
to create
all on their own

It is merely artifice.

And, in a Godless universe
"Artifice" would be all there could be...
Guys have to think they’re Superman
Just to survive
All that’s “thrown at” them:

Wars, fights, commercial fishing, diving with sharks, boxing, prison, truck-driving, stupid stunts, professional wrestling, sky-scraper building, taxi-driving, working on oil-rigs, flying jets, sailing the seven seas, saying “Hey, guys, watch this...!,” para-gliding, drag-racing, spectating at NASCAR, rappelling, breaking up dog-fights, bouncing in biker bars, mining a mile underground, inhaling toxins, baseball, football, welding, bull-riding, bungee-jumping, rugby, lacrosse, being the “enforcer” in ice-hockey games, judo, soccer, karate, kung-fu, grizzly bear hunting, sky-diving, scuba-diving, cliff-diving, working in nuke plants, carpentry, masonry, “hot-shot” fire-fighting, bull-fighting, running with bulls, MMA, UFC, running from the police, motorcycles, etc....

But, at the end of the day
It’s this very mentality
that proves to be Kryptonite

And kills them.
The Unbreakable Bond

Pressure building
Far beneath
The sustaining blue

The plates
Of Mother Earth
Restless

Something’s got to give...

* * * *

Far away
On an idyllic beach
A mother and child play

The sapphire sky
Incandescing benevolently
And beautifully

The sun, gazing down
Gently kissing
Their brown skin...

And quietly blessing
An unbreakable bond
Between mother and son

* * * *

A thousand miles distant
With a shudder
Of such unimaginable force
That it dwarfs
Man's puny A-bomb efforts
At mass destruction

An adjustment occurs

And this force
As fast as a jet
Yet silent and unseen and unheeded
Races outward...

* * * * *

Mom watches
Vigilantly
— as it is always with mothers —
Yet unconcerned
As the product
Of her womb

Splashes playfully

And happily
At gentle ocean's edge...

All is well in their world
Poor, yes
In materiality

Yet the love they share
Makes this gauge
Of wealth
Meaningless...

A faint sound
A subtle change
In timbre
Of the great lake's
Usual calm melody
Her first hint
Something is amiss

Arising
Her mahogany eyes
Gaze towards the horizon...

A Great Monster
Beyond the imagination
Of the most depraved writer
Of Hollywood fiction
Also arises...
With a shriek
Of unbelief
The young mother
Crying out her son’s name
Has barely time
To rush forward
And scoop him into
Her futilely protective arms

And then, turning
Begin a mad dash
Towards the nonsafety
Of the beckoning jungle
Before

The Wall
Of Sudden Death
Envelops all

Destroying all

Except,
The unbreakable bond
She continues to share
With the still child
Still in her arms...

Note: When I authored this, shortly after the tragic tsunami, the image of a lifeless woman, still holding tightly to her likewise child, was, pretty much, simply a "literary device." I didn’t believe it really could happen.

A few months later, however, in *Guideposts*, I learned that life had indeed — before the fact — imitated art. A Sri Lankan mother — one, obviously, of the *best* sort — and child had been found in exactly such a state....
4 Haikus

My mind a razor
Keened by endless tragedy
Satan's old whetstone...

The moon in the sky
Ancient orb on a journey
Without rest nor cease...

The doe's eyes widen
Scent of danger in the air
Fearing for her fawn...
So jealous of God

Who is able to create

Man ever destroys....
The Image

A Great White shark
I'm doubtful has
hardly any concept whatsoever
of God.

Yet, I wonder
When our fellow mammals,
usually through some extremity,
Turn man-eater

If some part of their intelligent,
yet much-less-than-human,
brains
manifest a vague notion
– as they study their potential prey –
Perhaps with just a twinge of guilt
or even hesitation-in-the-attack
A small part that says:

Still thy claws
Still thy fangs
For *this* one
contains the Image

Of thy Creator
Chick-fil-A Sonnet

The poultry sacrificed; hath given all
That we a tasty sandwich might partake
The fowl hath answered, when the farmer called
And layeth now upon ceramic plate...

The coleslaw, fries and beans are by the side
A carbonated drink to quench the thirst
A salivating leer; our eyes are wide
Consuming birds until our stomachs burst...

An opiate to us, the seasoned flesh
A major, mighty, mighty whelming jones
— the uncontroll’ble urge to get the best —
Hath we to nosh the chicken, sans the bones...
Forbid that we shall feel a bit ashamed
As such *ambrosial* feast enjoying here
The patrons of the great, amazing chain
That frowns at matrimony of the queers...

Unbridled pleasure is our find today
As we ingest *delicious* Chick-fil-A’s....
I See Bigfoot

I see Bigfoot in a photograph
She stares
— for I can indeed see it’s a “she,” from her hairy, pendulous, “zaftig” breasts —
back at me
quite enigmatically...

The image is clear
No semi-distinguishable blob, this
But what, oh what, to “make” of it...?

A huge hominid
Living
In our nation’s most populous — and “hip” — state
Quickly running, wisely, from “our kind”
I want to reach into the picture
To pull something out
That will "explain" things further...

Something that will "clarify," somehow
Our interrelatedness
Our kinship
From the primordial past...

And reveal,
Just what astounding secrets she contains
And "embodys"
About my "place"
in this strange, über-strange
Universe

But there's nothing more there,
that I can see,
to "glean"
She is what she is
A moment in time
Frozen forever
A still image captured from
The "Zapruder film"
Of Sasquatchology...

Fading back into the mists
Of mystery....
The Gladiator’s Eyes

The gladiator’s eyes
    Fix me
With a vacant stare...

    The stare
    Of a soul
That has traveled
    The Via Dolorosa
A thousand times...

    A soul
    That well knows
The existential horror
    When Atropos snips
The slender Thread of Life
    Yet again...
Yet realizes further
That the horror
 Doesn't even mean anything...

That this animated flesh
To which a soul so tightly clings
 As to a life-raft
 In a shark-filled sea...

Is nothing more
Than meaningless dirt
 Into which
 The gods
 Have breathed life,

Merely for amusement.

* * * * *
("Joey, do you like gladiator movies...?")

Life Sentence

You transgress. They row you way out into a shark-filled sea. They toss you overboard.

You say, "This is pretty bad. But, can I at least try to swim back to shore?"

They say, "No, you son-of-a-bitch, you gotta just keep treading water — until either the sharks get you, or you just get tired and drown...."
Saint Valentine’s Day Sonnet

The arrows saintly Valentine hath loosed
Hath surely ev’ry heart exalted well
At least for moments, turtledoves shall roost
Upon the branches under Cupid’s spell...

The sting, however, is a lasting wound
That antiseptic cannot ever cleanse
A soul doth go to womb to grave to womb
Escaping not the twisted path that wends...

Amongst the limbs that lovers Intertwine
As searcheth they for heaven-worthy bliss
Imbibing wine that Aphrodite’s vine
Never Say “I Created”

I hesitate to say “I created” anything. It’s blasphemous. Everything I’ve ever written (well, except maybe for the porn) — or painted, or sculpted, or played — was, actually, created long ago....

And God, by Her Bountiful Grace, allowed me to “channel” it down into this earthly realm.
Hath given them to sweeten ev'ry kiss...

Their longing, yearning never pass away
Their celebration, maketh we today...
A Twist on Carroll

How doth the little crocodile
Improve his shining tail...?
By eating, with the Devil's smile
My flesh, corporeal...

How cheerfully he seems to grin,
How neatly spreads his claws
As I pay the wages of sin
For breaking God's Own Law...
Why Did Camelot Have to Die...?

Like a lamb led to the slaughter
Kennedy rode into Dealey Plaza that fateful day
With beautiful Jackie by his side,
To the crowds they cheerfully waved...

The skies were clear and blue
As all the angels cried
Asking, forlornly, “Oh why, oh why, oh why?
Why does Camelot have to die...?”

Cold-hearted killers gazed
At the young prince through scopes
Mercilessly tracking this handsome champion
Of the common folk...

One shot rang out
The Free World's leader clutched at his throat
While his limo slowly crawled on
Down the charnel house road...

There'd been some who'd wished to profit
By sending our youth off to a jungle land
To fight and bleed
While killing the yellow man...

And those who deal in black gold
Were angered over his plans
To stop their hoarding of wealth
And return some to the common man...

And those who inhabit the shadows
Felt double-crossed and betrayed
For they felt certain debts
Were being poorly repaid...

And his own Top Cop
The one who liked to wear a dress
By thoughts of forfeiting his fiefdom
    Was much distressed...

But can this answer the haunting question
    That the angels did cry,
    "Why, oh why, oh why?
    Why must Camelot die?"

    And the banksters too
    Were deeply displeased
    By his plans to rein in
    Their runaway shylock bleeding...

    And the cloak-and-dagger boys
    Had been runnin’ wild and out of order
    So he’d vowed their little empire
    Would have to be destroyed...

    And there were some who still held a grudge
    Over a failed invasion
    So they wished a puppet
In charge of this nation…

And his underling
Also wished him gone
For, power-mad, he lusted to usurp
The coveted Throne…

And all these dark forces
Of evil and greed
Had, from their dark mountain
Issued a ghastly decree…

The greatest nation on earth
That awful day they would steal
And, in so doing, inflicted wounds
That would never heal…

For the great experiment called "America"
That moment ceased to be
Her brave people no longer
Truly free…
And all of Heaven
Shook and moaned
As the vile deed
Continued on...

And even his own Palace Guard
Turned a blind eye
As the treasonous death warrant
Had come down from on high...

Triangulated fire
Defiled his handsome head
While, onto his horrified wife's pink dress
His life-blood — and brains — were spilled...

And, as the trained rifles barked
With an awful sound straight from hell
In front of God and everyone
The Young Prince was felled...
And the people didn’t even realize
What had truly transpired
For the conspirators had already concocted
A witch’s brew of lies...

A patsy already in place
A sacrificial goat to bleed
His executioner already waiting
Anxiously, in the wings...

The shocked nation mourned
As his body was whisked quickly away
And all the Dark Lord’s cover-up plans
Were, also quickly, put into play...

By nightfall, the prince lay cold upon a slab
Eyes staring out vacantly and wide
As Americans, unbelieving
Bitterly wept and cried...

And, on this sad, awful day
All the angels also did cry
"Why, oh why, oh why?
Why did Camelot have to die...?"

* * * *

A riderless horse paraded
While his young son bravely saluted
Unaware his dear father had been taken
By a scheme diabolical and convoluted...

They lit a flame
To burn, eternally, upon the grave
Of this great man
So cruelly slain...
And the many who loved him

Could only bid him a sad good-bye

While all Heaven's dear angels wept and cried

For Camelot had, indeed, died.
The Walking Dead

I believe I’ve figured it out. The reason The Walking Dead is so popular, so addictive, is because it represents a certain worldview.

It’s a parable for a monde that is essentially evil; pervasively evil. One in which the vast majority of one’s fellow inhabitants are mindless droids — whose one overwhelming desire is to actually consume you.

And if they get just a nibble you, too, will surely become “infected.” Will become just like them....

Their hallmark: Utter relentlessness.

Yet, as unrelentingly dark as this post-apocalyptic milieu may be, there is one redemptive element: The killing of these blood-sucking, flesh-craving morons carries no sanctions. No death penalties nor LWOP’s will be handed out. You can terminate (with extreme prejudice) these abhorrent bastards at will — while only having to avoid their slow-witted bites — merrily sending them, en masse, on their way to a richly-deserved hell.... (Quite contrary to
our contemporary society, which does hand out such Draconian punishments, crowing about “cherishing life,” while the objective facts tell another, much darker, story.)

And the condition above — a delicious freedom to kill-at-will any and all scumbags — represents a deep fantasy-fulfillment for far more souls than polite company would ever care to admit....

So The Walking Dead is, sadly, the cruelly ideal paragon of humanity’s pathos, hopelessness — and its underlying outrage — while forlornly trying to survive in this current Culture of Death which Pope, now Saint, John Paul II so accurately, and poignantly, warned.

The show indeed “strikes a chord.” One in which the first is cannibalism, spiritual and actual; the third is the omnipresence of danger; and the fifth is existential loneliness. (With harmonies of vengefulness layered atop.)

A perfect metaphor for post-9/11 Amerika.

(Dear Readers, please Spread to Walking Dead fan-sites for me.... Thanx! Bill Barnes, #0020569, P.O. Box #2405, Marion, N. C. 28752)
The Three Catwomen
(or Three Faces of Catwoman)

Little did I know,
as a wide-eyed youngster
that three women
portrayed
the masked and leather-clad
and bea-u-ti-ful, object
of my
Overwhelming desire...

Lee Meriwether

And the great Eartha Kitt
(Who, certainly, possessed an exceedingly appropriate name, and
who once rendered an über-sultry, über-sexy version of "Santa, Baby")

Julie Newmar — her name, much later, showed up in
a movie title, a movie about
cross-country-traveling
cross-dressers —

All three of these smokin' hotties

Appeared, in the campy
“Batman” TV series

As “Catwoman”
How my young hormones
would rage
— even prepubescently —

When these black-leather-clad
babes

Three sirens, that I thought
were one

Would “strut,” feline

And, cloyingly, flirtatiously,
and coquettishly whisper —

“Purr-fect...”

The strange feelings,
centered in my loins,

that they, seemingly magically,
invoked

were an otherworldly,
dimly understood,

Precognition

Of sexual horizons

Yet still afar

But beckoning, mightily...

Perhaps this is why

Years later
— but only a few, looking back
from this perspective —

I fell

So deeply,

So desperately,

So hopelessly,

In love

With a blonde “Kitty”

Of my own...
Collective Soul

When I was young, growing up in Greensboro, N.C., the county had a small zoo. And this was, unfortunately, before “enlightenment” had arrived. There was a large fenced-in area where whitetail deer, and even a buffalo or two, were kept. But, up front, in a cruelly small cage, a black bear was kept — on “solitary confinement.”

The poor thing would “pace,” constantly. Round and round he would go, in a cage so tiny, he (or she, I don’t know) could only take a couple steps in one direction before having to turn. My mother, Elizabeth, a sensitive, kind-hearted soul, understood, I believe, the mental anguish the creature was undergoing.

Each nation has, I also believe, a sort of collective soul — as does the entire world. And such is a dynamic entity — it’s either growing or diminishing, but never still. Overall, I’m afraid America’s soul, and probably that of the entire Western World, is now on the latter path.

Two events, it seems to me, were critical turning points. One was somewhat gradual, the other very demarcated.

Before roughly the 50’s, “factory-farming” of animals — sentient beings — was rare. “Free range” was the norm. Antibiotics and steroids were uncommon.
Such animals lived decent lives. One “bad day” was all most saw.

The ever-present “profit incentive,” though — combined with the demands of world overpopulation — soon had God’s creatures cooped in cages of misery.

And the people were dulled to their pain.

The other event occurred on a single day. (Though it took longer to fully implement.) It was Roe v. Wade. The most precious and innocent life of all — a child — could now be, legally, “knifed.” And this crime would occur in what should be considered the holiest of sanctuaries — the mother’s womb.

Having grown up in the dark shadow of this decision — and now in prison, in large part, because of it — I know, first hand, how it has deadened the collective conscious of America. This Supreme Court ruling was, simply unGodly.

I wonder, sometimes — during dark nights — if the Draconian nature of criminal sentencing in Amerika nowadays isn’t a “compensation mechanism” of some sort, the product of a guilt-laden people. “Oh, yes, we cherish life, absolutely. And we’ll give out DP’s and LWOP’s galore to anyone who dares take one. (Unless it’s the life of the most vulnerable, of course. That’s something to which we’re pretty much turning a blind eye.)”

It didn’t used to be like this. For one thing, throughout most of its history, America couldn’t afford to lock people up, en masse, for interminably
long stretches. The general practice was to do one of two things: Kill an offender or, eventually, say "enough" and grant them a second chance.

Yet, despite the propensity to employ state-sanctioned violence, America's collective soul was actually much more compassionate. The sons and daughters of "The Land of the Free" — a rare experiment indeed during world history — actually did cherish freedom. Only with great reluctance were humans consigned to cages. And, if such was necessary, it should be for as short a time as possible. There was, certainly, no "industry" built around imprisonment.

Cole Younger, for example — cousin and cohort of Jesse James — was apprehended in Minnesota (always a no-DP state) in 1876. For multiple counts of murder and robbery, he served a quarter century. But then, in 1901, they did say "enough." And, two years later, he was even pardoned. Had his transgressions been committed recently, God only knows how many "life withouts" he would have been buried alive with....

For Americans, then — hell, call 'em naïve — still believed in redemption.

And forgiveness.

My, my, how things have changed.
Around 1950, factory-farming began to rear its ugly head. In ’73, unborn children were deemed “disposable.” Around 1980, the Prison-Industrial Complex began its unholy existence.

The nation’s psyche grew dull. Then duller. And its collective soul grew stained.

And the bear, the poor bear, keeps pacing in my troubled mind, as I sit here writing, stuck in this cruel — and endless — cage of my own....

(From author’s long-finished “prison book,” Bad Monkeys and Sick Puppies. Need help getting it published.)
A Child's Incomprehension

My Dear Mom,
and my Dear Dad
took me once,
when quite young
possibly pre-school
to Mount Vernon

And I remember seeing
The tomb of George Washington
and thinking, —
in my childish
way
Just how "cool"
it woulda been
If the docs
could have
"saved"
him, and George
could still
be leading
the country...
Father's Day 2015 'Membrance

Daddy held me
— dear ol’ Dad, John Edward Barnes —
in his loving arms
in a line
in the check-out line
at Mr. Morgan’s store, I think…

A stranger, a lady, asked,
“Your grandson?”

“Oh, he’s grand, alright
But he’s all mine…”

Dear Dad,
who was 40
when I was born

Proudly replied.
Mother’s Day Sonnet

A Mother’s love, a thing beyond compare
As limitless as ocean’s breadth and depth
The incandescent amour brightly glares
The newborn’s welfare she considers wealth...

As Mom doth wonder what shall be the fate
Unquietness is engraved upon the brow
The swells and storms that possibly await
As years doth pass; the cruelties world allows...

A prayer doth sendeth she that Christ protect
The perfect product of the sacred womb
That child shall suffer not regret, neglect
As she doth gently hum a soothing tune...

Endureth pain to give incarnate soul

Hath knowledge full that tears and blood shall spill

To suffer piercing; sorrow she shall know

The birth, the giving; womanhood fulfilled...

Our Mother Mary will exemplar be

The Queen that bore the Prince that setteth free...

by

William Thomas Barnes

Hath he a Mother dear, Elizabeth

(Since Moms are so great, I wrote a "bonus

quatrain" for this one...)
Prayers

Lonely Songs
Sung on lonely nights
Floating out
Into the vast, silent Cosmos...

Traveling way beyond
In a way I cannot comprehend
The Speed of Light...

Jesus and Buddha and Krishna
Zeus and Thor and Beowulf
All the eternal seeking...

The longing
Toward Valhalla...

Does my dear
Mother Mary
Full of Grace
Manage to hear
Each 'n' every Hail
To Her Holy ears...?

As they go whizzing past
Along with all the others...

Or, are a few missed
Amidst all the hustle and bustle
And Speed by
Screaming
Toward the Outer Edge
Of Nothingness...?
A Little Monkey

I'm a little monkey
A-sittin' in a tree
Wonderin' why life's always been
So cruel to me...

I coulda had it all
But the bananas just wouldn't fall

— Can you imagine the gall?! —

Where this little monkey had called...

Ain't life just a freakin' ball?

A barrel of monkeys in a hall

Yeah, that's right, y'all

Life is a freakin' ball...

With little monkeys contained within self-made walls....
The Crocodile

The crocodile
Half-submerged
In gray, murky waters
Gazes at me
Slit-eyes gleaming
His heart's desire
To devour me whole
So clearly stamped
Upon his ancient face...

Have we met before?
Perhaps beside the Congo or the Nile?
In some bygone days
When I met one of many ends
Providing sustenance
Just generic protein
To those huge, clasping jaws...?

No, there's more
I believe he wishes to consume
    My very soul
    To eat me slowly
    Till I'm little more
    Than cosmic dust
    Twisting in the wind

Or merely detritus floating
    Forlornly
    At the bottom
    In the mud

Of some dark, nameless estuary

    So such is my fate
    And the beast knows it...

    And that is why he smiles.
The Night Jethro Went Ape-Shit Postal...
(The Beverly Hell-Billies™)

One night Jethro went crazy
And I mean "crazy" with a Capital C

Went stalking around that big Beverly Hills mansion
He was gonna make 'em bleed...
See, the spirit of Charles Manson  
(An inversion of Christ's own name)  
Has invaded poor Jethro's soul  
Dark transubstantiation  
Evil, pure evil, has taken hold...  

Jethro is holding a big, gleaming butcher-knife  
That Granny uses to slaughter hogs  
Jethro is hell-bent on a-killin' 'em all  
And feeding 'em to the dogs...  

First he goes, furtively  
Into sleeping Uncle Jed's room  
With Jethro so infected with evil  
Poor ol' Uncle Jed is surely doomed...  

Leaves Jed laying graveyard dead  
In his gore-soaked bed...  

Then he sneaks next door  
Knife-murders Mr. and Mrs. Drysdale  
Sends their filthy-rich asses  
Right straight to hell...  

Then he slinks on back  
Around the recently-deceased Drydales' tranquil, moonlit pool  
Thinking himself a Double-Naught spy  
All savoir faire, "de-bone-air" and cool...  

Then coming back onto Uncle Jed's property  
Under the hazy moon and gently swaying palm fronds  
Jethro takes a quick, blood-cleansing dip  
In their big ol' Cement Pond...
What has gotten into poor Jethro?
What, oh what, can it truly be...?
He's madder than a Hatter
Overcome with sheer lunacy...

But he strides warily on
Thru' that polluted Hollywood air
Perhaps he's been taken over —
Under the city's bright glare...

By the selfsame demon
That awful, vomit-spewing fiend
Who'd once infected and ravaged
Sweet little Linda Blair...

And, oh my God!
Now he's thinkin' about makin' a fillet
Out of his critter-lovin' cousin
The dazzlingly-beautiful Elly May...

Stop him, Lord!
Still his diabolical hand
Put Your Awesome Power
On full display...

'Cause we sure can't afford to lose Elly
The stunning babe
Who pours herself, oh-so-just-right
Into those rope-circled denim jeans...

The oh-so-fair focus
Of many an adolescent dream —
Is this curvaceous gal
This budding, bodacious little Hillbilly Queen...

This sweet, young darling
Hickory-nut crackin' lass
She of the gorgeous blonde hair
And the über-fine ass...
Oh, no! —
Now he's opening the door
Easin' in
Hoverin', menacingly, over Elly's bed...

The bloody knife is raised
The debased bastard is about
To plunge it
Deep into quiescently-sleeping Elly May's lovely head...

Jethro's a
Demon-possessed
About to pay further homage
To that Dark Master he now faithfully serves...

Elly is startled awake! —
By a double-barreled blast
Her enchanting face, now

A horror-rent, sangre-splatterd mask...

Good ol' Granny
Has arrived
Just in the nick of time
To forestall further mayhem...

Having discovered
Uncle Jed's still-warm corpse
She'd known her only choice, about
Jethro
Was to slay him...

With a despondent sigh
Of soul-level, besmirched despair
Granny hugs Elly May
Before traipsing down the mansion's wide stairs...

She takes up her trusty jug
And gulps down a big ol' Triple-X swig
For all this crazy shit Jethro’s just done
Has *totally* flipped her wig...

Better call up Miss Jane
For she’ll know what to do
And maybe she’d best
Phone up Robert Shapiro too...

But, before that happens
Before she gets on the line
She thinks she’d best
Gulp down another
Healthy shot or two o’ ’shine

’Cause all this Hollywood shit
Is about enough
To make a poor ol’ Ozark gal
Just about lose her freakin’ *mind*...
Father Time, Why?

Father Time, why are you
gettin' all up in our fuckin' way? —
when all we're tryin' to do
is just have a little fun...

Girls just wanna have fun
But, for that matter,
So does every freakin' body...

Z Z Top's Billy Gibbons
— lead guitarist (and only guitarist, actually)
of that "Little Ol' Band from Texas" —
I just realized
has got to be almost 70 now...

(Ditto for Dusty Hill and, the ironically beardless, Frank Beard)
So just how much longer

*Can* they

Keep on "kickin' it"?

And it's all on account of *you*

*Father Time*

*you dirty old bastard*

*you *cabra*n*

you miserable, miserly, unkempt, stinkin', malodorous, no-good, skeezy, scummy, absolutely trifling and not-even-worth-the-price-of-the-bullet-it'd-take-to-kill-you (and, one of these days, I promise, I'll stop "holdin' back" and will tell your sorry old ass what I *really* think...) ol' pile of putrid puss...

(And son of a prostitute who has "serviced" the *entire* Chinese and Indian Armies)

You who would,

so cruelly,

steal our boogie...
I truly hope you
rot away in hell
(Maybe suckin'/tea-baggin'
Hitler's balls)

For all time...
Holding My Skull

An archaeologist
Holds my skull
Some countless millennia
hence...

He, or she
Gazes, wonderingly
At the empty sockets
Out of which
My green eyes
Once upon a time
Gazed, wonderingly
Themselves...

This scientist
Speculates,
Whimsically,
Upon the nature
Of my existence...

Who I loved
— Who, who, who
Who did I love...? —
Who stole my heart
What strange foods
Did I eat
How I died
Etc., then —

She, or he
This person
Who lives
In a world
Beyond my
Comprehension
Notes
The barbarity
Of my epoch...

For the signs
Are etched there, clearly
Upon my bones...

And this archaeologist
Of an unfathomable
Epoch hence
Whispers
A little prayer...

Of thanks.
The Harbinger

The Young Virgin Maiden
Hath received a visitation
Everything shall ever be changed...

An angel sent by the Most High
Ne'er 'fore hath announced
Greater News
Earth shall soon be given Grace
Let loose rejoicing, sing Heavenly Hymns...

Great is the Goodness
All shall have chance to share
Because the Incarnate Truth's
Reign shall soon begin...
Into this world, so torn by war
Enters the New King, Son of the
Lowly servant girl, — now Queen, forevermore...
Creeping Up

As I write this,
In the Year of Our Lord, 2007
1907 is about the furthest back
In which many people were born

Who are still “with us” today...

Oh, there are a few “hangers-on,” of course

With earlier birthdays
But their “quality of life,”
for most,
Can’t be worth much anyway...

So I’m lookin’ back, apprehensively

At 1907 as kind of a creeping shadow

One that, inexorably, marches forward...

There’s a certain date, 1958
Square in its path
That it is bound, eventually
To overtake...

And I want to scream at 1958
“Hey, get out of the way!
Can’t you see that the bloody bastard
Scythe in hand
Is edging ever-onwards
This way...?”

But 1958 just stands there
Immovable
Dumb as an ox
While the shadow
Creeps forever forward...
An Open Letter from the Author

Sunday, December 11th, 2016

Dear Future Friends,

Hi and "Merry Christmas!"

I've just finished, after about six weeks, an intense "labor of love" in compiling this book. I started writing poems, seriously, early this millennium. All herein were already written when I started putting this together — "The Crocodile," being the oldest, I believe. (Perhaps appropriately, I've heard those critters live a long time....) I have many, many more, "Logistics," not lack of material, kept this book relatively short.

I've got about 300 songs as well — but who's stopping to count? Yet the world shall never hear them, unless I can find a partner to assist me. They're in many genres. Any "widely talented" musicians out there? (I'd like to contact two musicians who are old friends: Scott Allen and Tom Byars. They both can be located in cyberspace.)

Being all alone has "killed" me. I could have gotten out of prison, case overturned, before the millennium. The only meaningful witness against me, in my murder trial, was herself, the other suspect. She wrote me an "apology" letter for lying at my trial about one month after sending me to prison. But the authorities got a hold of the letter and "hid" it from me for several years. With no family to apply pressure, it took me way too long to get it back.
The "deathblow" came from my own trial attorney. I sent the motion I'd drafted in via his office, requesting he draft an accompanying letter to remind the court how critical her testimony had been. He, apparently, lost his ability to understand plain English. Only the threat of a bar complaint managed to "get his thumb out of his butt."

The four months he had "dragged" me, though, cost dearly. By the time of my hearing, my witness, Mark, had taken an intentional overdose.

By three months.

* * * *

A "Dr. Quack" they had here has inflicted serious damage upon my lower right leg. A free person would have gotten, long ago, at least a six-figure settlement. And, of course, free medical care to alleviate the damage.

I've got maybe a year left to find a doctor willing to testify on my behalf, or else I'll get nothing—not even the needed medical care.

* * * *

Ten years ago, God "gave" me a really good book, a humorous novella of political satire called "George Goes to Jail." Its publication would have changed my life. Heartbreakingly, though, I "lost" it due to a lying "chaplain" — "Chaplain Nancy" — we had here. It's a long story about how things devolved, yet it was her bald-faced lies, delivered two weeks prior to Christ Mass, that cost me so dearly....
If there is someone out there who admires my work herein, please help me get "George" out there. It's rather "dated" by now, of course, but it's still funny. And maybe, just maybe, its publication — at long last — would stop the dreams that haunt me...the ones about being held captive in a world so relentlessly dark that you cannot even trust clergy to refrain from lying to you.

The "characters" in it include George W. Bush, Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, Vince McMahon, Mark Burnett and The Grateful Dead, among many others...

The world would have loved it. And no one is sorrier than I, world, that I have been unable, so far, to get it to you. But life is hard, especially, when you cannot even trust the "shepherds" not to deceive you....

* * * *

I'll try to end on a happier note. I hope you've enjoyed this little collection. As you can see, my "range" is quite w-i-d-e....

The next thing you'll see is a few strips from a comic I wish to start called "Prison-Industrial." And I have another set of "characters" that could make it as the stars of a cartoon series and/or as dolls.
Hope y'all have enjoyed what you've so far read.... Past this point you'll find a little "bonus material." I've even included a "Donald" crossword. (Give him a chance, folks. Practically everything said about him was said about Reagan. Now they want to put Ronald on Mount Rushmore.)

I recently sent a letter-to-the-editor to Rolling Stone. Since I doubt they'll print it, I'm going to copy it and share it here.

As y'all can see, there's a lot "goin' on" in my troubled mind, — I just need someone to help, so that my "life's work" will not all go to waste....

And, by the way, if you're harboring "literary dreams" of your own, I can help. Editing, proofing, "coaching" — I can do it all well.

P.S. Someone please find Kitty Gullett for me—born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1958, I think — and ask her to read this....

Thanks &

God Bless,

Bill
Hi there! This is Ginny McClottermeyer, reporting live from where they're constructing yet another new prison!

This one, to be known as "Happy Hole Correctional," is gonna be bringin' many new jobs to this area...

It's really goin' to impact the local economy in quite a positive way...

Jobs! Jobs! And more jobs to an area that has been economically depressed lately...

- Blah, Blah, Blah...

I'm the one that's depressed...

- Jobs, Blah, Jobs...

I'm beginning to feel like a "factory-farmed chicken" or something...

Cluck-cluck
Jeffrey Skilling!
Welcome to prison, my man! Thought I'd get off easy.
Bobby Mcgee here to play you one...

Well, you robbed poor widows
Of all they had
And you thought your scheme to steal
Was ironclad...

Hard-workin' folks
You picked 'em clean...
And you thought you'd make you a clean get-away
With all of that green...

You wanted it all
Thought you'd have you a ball
But you never envisioned
All these bathroom stalls...!

Yep, thought you'd live you the high-life
Footloose 'n' fancy free...
But here you are a-scrubbin' toilets
Down on your knees...

Yes, Karma caught up
And it didn't take long
Life can teach a hard lesson
When you do something so wrong...

So now you're here in the pen
Right where you belong
Listenin' to ol' Bobby Mcgee play you
This "Just Desserts" so-o-o-o-o-o-ay!
Hello, Wild Bill. Let's go for a walk...

These two "life" sentences just make me wanna "tap out" sometimes...

I'm about ready to tell 'em to take me back to court and let me take a plea-bargain for the D.P. ...

Yeah, I feel you, brother. A plea-bargain for the death penalty — or maybe just take up smoking. That might be quicker...

Either that or try to "muscle in" on the Mexican Mafia's dope-smuggling biz...

That'd work...
So, Freddy, now you wish to convert to Buddhism, huh?

Yes, sir.

And then you decided upon Judaism, shortly before the Passover Seder...

Let's see... You converted to Christianity right before Christmas.

Then to Islam just before the Ramadan Feast...

Now, I don't suppose your "change of heart" has anything to do with the fact the Buddhists have a feast of their own comin' up in a couple weeks, now does it?

Of course not.

Well, at least, for God's sake, take your yarmaluke off...
Well, look at it. I mean, could it be worse...

Yeah, I thought you might like that...

Yes, how would you like that... sweetness?

They just broke the news to me. I'm gonna hafta be cellmates with Willy the Rat...

What's wrong, Georgie Boy?

Well, how 'bout if you got locked in a cage overnight with "Big" Tommy? How'd you like that... huh?
What Kind of a "patty" is this one?!  

A "God-Only-Knows" patty? "Himalayan Possum" patty.

"Himalayan Possum?"

Yep. As in "Him-a-layin' in the road..."

@*!# right!
Letter to Rolling Stone Magazine

Up yours, Katy. Up yours, Miley. (Though you are both sexy and beautiful.) Up yours, Bruce. (Though you’re an awesome musician, we North Carolinians can address our “bathroom issues” without the “help” of a meddling Yankee, thank you.)

And up yours, Matt Taibbi. (Though you’re a talented writer, you and your cronies are, in fact, a “monolithic herd of leftist snobs.” A herd who, as The Donald approached victory, didn’t even bother to try and “hide” it any longer....)

Sorry, gun-grabbin’, atheistic, baby-killin’ elitists: we, the people, won this election.

Bill Barnes
Clues 4 Two Main Goals of the Trump Presidency

Across

#1.) A yellow Dutch cheese
#5.) Perform a certain mathematical function (Such as 8 years of Obama plus 4 more of Hillary = Disaster.)
#8.) (3) María — a Mexican coffee liqueur brand
#11.) “Stolen goods” adjective
#14.) Talk back to impudently
#18.) Breaking Bad star Gunn
#19.) A revered Southern general
#20.) A, usually pejorative, short synonym for “sort” or “kind” (Hillary might apply it to us “Basket of Deplorables.”)
#21.) Peyton’s younger brother
#22.) Impart a hue to
#23.) Sergeant, e.g.
#24.) An East Indian shrub
#25.) Cicero’s 1,051
#26.) Abbr. for a divinity school subject

#27.) “_(4)_ the Lonely” — Roy Orbison hit
#28.) Appalachian star of History Channel’s Mountain Men
#31.) Shaq’s org.
#33.) ZZ (3)
#35.) Rank just below alphas
#38.) Rds.
#39.) Genetic material
#41.) Drama set to music
#45.) South American camel relative
#46.) Fisherman’s woe
#48.) Notre Dame Cathedral sets upon a small island in the middle of it
#50.) Blue-roofed restaurant chain
#51.) Deduction made to compensate for a container’s weight
#52.) Stepford Wives author Levin
#53.) Something neat avian parents definitely don’t wish to do.... (With “the” or “their” in the center.)
#55.) Mrs. Clinton has absolutely no __(5)__ fiber
#58.) “Few Hollywood actors possess quite the degree of rugged good looks (2) __(4)__ Neeson.”
#60.) Who’s the Boss? star Judith
#61.) Tristan’s three
#62.) Musician’s “call-out” for the key a whole step below G
#63.) Musician's “call-out” for the key a whole step above G

#64.) Frequent activity at Cannes and Sundance (2 wds.)

#73.) Position we hope Hillary will be in, on the night of 11/8/16

#77.) Continent the unwanted Pan-Pacific Partnership trade agreement focuses upon

#78.) One full movement when “pumping iron”

#79.) (3) Paolo, Brazil

#80.) Pre-Euro Italian currency

#81.) “America will, surely, experience many a (4) of regret if it chooses Hillary....”

#82.) What many consider Everest to be.... (2 wds. Perhaps preceded by “The”)

#88.) Long, flowing body of water, south-of-the-border (Fem.)

#90.) Tick-off

#91.) (3) -Haw — a favorite old show amongst us “Deplorables”

#92.) Favoured firearms of British commandos

#94.) Prepares for an athletic contest

#97.) Two words upon a May gift-card, perhaps

#100.) San Diego major leaguer who hasn't yet had to slide...? (2 wds.)

#103.) Small shot of liquor

#104.) Anger

#106.) Canoe, e.g.

#107.) Fathers, biologically

#108.) “Defeating Hillary, we certainly hope, will be a (4).”

#110.) Bull-riding locale

#111.) Showed Mr. Capone to his chair? (2 wds.)

#113.) Electric guitar pioneer Paul

#114.) Yoko's last name

#115.) The Great Hunter constellation

#116.) A pretty lady's leg, slangily

#118.) “If you’d like to see Mr. Trump’s health records, all you have to do is (3)....”

#120.) Mild reproach directed toward the beautiful Ms. Lovato for being naïve enough to support Hillary? (2 wds.)

#122.) —51 (X-Files focus.)

#125.) The NRA — thank God we have them — encourages good this....

#127.) Type of winding curve

#129.) Variety-show host Sullivan and a certain “talking horse”

#130.) Ollie's comedic partner

#134.) E. (4) — bad stuff, in food

#135.) Greensboro-to-Arlington direction

#136.) Siesta

#137.) Jerry (3)d — country star/comedic actor

#138.) Bathroom or roof piece, often
#10.) Similar to

#11.) “The robber, (2) (3) (2) on me before I could react.”

#12.) Bullring cheer

#13.) Pinball infraction

#14.) A main goal of the Trump Presidency (3 wds.)

#15.) “I feel your p_(3)_...” — Bill Clinton claim that’s hard to believe

#16.) NBC show that Donald Trump guest-hosted in 2015

#17.) Hog’s home

#29.) Country that — desperately — needs new leadership

#30.) Old Russian rulers (Alt spelling.)

#32.) Freshwater fish often consumed by us “deplorables”

#34.) Most famous buckshot round

#35.) Three-ingredient lunch-counter sandwich

#36.) Retired Denver Broncos’ kicker Jason

#37.) Poi source

#40.) Incredible Hulk director Lee

#42.) Doubled “geezer interjection”

#43.) _(4)_rum — platform for public speaking

#44.) Quick at learning, as a pupil

#47.) “Elly May Clampett was the prettiest (3) (2) all Bugtussle.”

---

**Down**

#1.) Obama has a big one, on each side....

#2.) Genetic material

#3.) *In Trump We Trust: E Pluribus Awesome!* conservative author Coulter

#4.) A main goal of the Trump Presidency (4 wds.)

#5.) Shakespearean interjection of sorrow

#6.) What America can expect many more of, from radical Islamists, on Hillary’s watch....

#7.) Slow down My Big Fat Greek Wedding start Vardolos for a while...? (2 wds.)

#8.) Something that is not “on our side,” when it comes to saving America....

#9.) What Hillary seems to be quite often lately
#48.) “Thy rod and thy _(5)_ they comfort me....”

#49.) Famous island near Lady Liberty

#54.) “Wow, Hillary aficionados have got to be a real gang o’ _(3)_ steins....”

#56.) What a campaign ad is “put on”

#57.) “If her lips are moving, Hillary is, most likely, telling a _(3)_.”

#59.) Present participle-forming suffix

#64.) Ice-T’s genre

#65.) “That one,” feminine, en español

#66.) Something Bill Clinton does often, especially when around women

#67.) Also something Bill Clinton does often, same as above

#68.) “Born as,” en français

#69.) Initials of a popular brewed alcoholic beverage from the subcontinent

#70.) Suffix added to “guitar” re Jimi Hendrix, Keith Richards, “Slowhand,” Billy Gibbons, et al

#71.) What criminals will “go on” when Trump becomes President....

#72.) Bovine vocalization

#74.) Jimmy Buffett’s favorite highway?

#75.) _(3)_ Lanka

#76.) You can probably get a good one at Donald’s Mar-A-Lago....

#82.) What will probably issue from the mouths of snobbish elitists on the night of 11/8/16....

#83.) “Hillary _(5)_ easily now, it seems....”

#84.) A certain historical period

#85.) Side opposing the “shirts”

#86.) Higher-numbered channel range, on an old TV set

#87.) Star of The Matrix

#89.) Roadhouse

#92.) Key gin ingredient

#93.) Metaphorically, lazy people often wish to “Suck on the government _{(4)}_.”

#94.) Long lock of hair

#95.) Children, en español

#96.) “Spare the rod, spoil the child” folks

#98.) Medium-length skirt

#99.) Most people born in August are _(1) _(3)_.

#100.) Truckers’ radios

#101.) Feel poorly

#102.) “The Donald is the real leader the passengers upon this ‘rudderless ship’ have long _(7) _of.”

#105.) A very long time

#109.) What the peas did, shortly before harvest-time

#110.) Important part of computer hardware

#112.) Site of 1984 Olympiad

#117.) Provides personnel to, as a ship
Game popular in Vegas casino restaurants

Small liquid measurements used in cooking and mixology — 5 milliliters each, to be exact (Abbr.)

"Those ones," en español

(3)tung, Baby! — U2 album

Sons of the Pioneers singer Rogers

Popular shade tree

Musician's “call-out" for the key a whole step above D

British commando force

"Well, '(3) we meet again...." 

Pub offering

Kind of leadership America — desperately — needs....

© 2016

by

“Wild Bill” Barnes

Please write: P.O. Box #2405,

Marion, N.C. 28752

Please write.

Please distribute onwards. God save us from Hillary! (Thankfully, He did.)
Two Main Goals of the Trump Presidency

EDAM ADD TIA HOT SASS
ANNA LE IL K ELI TINT
RANK AAL ML I REI ONL
EU STACE N BA TOP
BE TAS HY S RN A OPERA
L LAMA SNAG SEINE IHOP
T ARI TANG LENEST
M ORAL AS L I AM L I G H T
III INF I NA
RE SCREEN ING FILMS LAST
ASIA REP SAO L IRA
P AN G REA T MOUNTAIN
RI A IRK H E E
STENS TRAINS FORMA
CLEAN PADRE NIP RILE
BOAT SIRES SNAP RODEO
SET ALES ONO ORION
GAN AM ASK TSK DEMI
AREA AIM LESS EDS STAN
CO LIN NEE NAP RREE TIL E
HY MN S ED OSS SDS L EW
Yes, Virginia, it is "magic." Regarding your observation the other day concerning how a "tribesman," when shown a flashlight, "Couldn't be convinced it's anything other than magic": I believe the main point for consideration is that it's the "ignorant" tribesman who is, in truth, absolutely right....

There's a lot to be learned in your perception of that situation. And the "resignation" I heard in your voice — the "end-of-story" timbre while describing it — rather saddened me.

Is it not inevitable that the more "educated" one in that transaction would succumb to the temptation to demonstrate his "superior intellect"? To use it, probably subconsciously, as an "ego-builder"?

"Ah," he says to himself, "this poor benighted savage doesn't realize that it's all accomplished via a switch completing a circuit, which occasions an electron flow that releases stored energy, which is then converted, via the heating of a filament, into illumination...."
Yet, does the “educated” one’s ability to articulate the process in terms of physics truly make him wiser? Truly give him some sort of “deeper understanding”?

My premise is that it’s the tribesman who, in reality, may well be wiser…. For this “primitive” hasn’t yet been blinded, via “academic sophistry,” to the most important underlying truth.

It is said that there are only two ways of looking at the world: As though nothing’s a miracle; or as though everything is….

Is it not a “miracle” of sorts that we live in a universe so ordered that electrons can flow? — thereby accomplishing all manner of amazing feats….

And do not academics, by and large, subscribe to a philosophy of “reductionism”? Are they not continually trying to reduce the ineffable into “mentally-digestible” chunks? And is this not, in essence, a quixotic quest?

Having the ability to “explain” things, I think, doesn’t mean that we truly understand them. And, at the end if the day, and at the most fundamental level, I doubt any human can.

I believe your “tribal” is right. It is magic.
One Night in Atlanta

Thinking ahead, the young man, *muy guapo*, purchased, by mail, three tickets for ZZ-Top, at the Fox Theatre, in Atlanta.

Hanging around outside pre-concert, he overheard two girls, a blonde and a brunette, inquiring about tickets.

“You girls need tickets?” he asked.

“How much?” the blonde inquired skeptically.

“Well, for free…” he shrugged.

“Are you for real?” she asked.

“Yes, you can reach out and touch me, I’m real…” the sly young man replied.

“Grab his other arm, Deidre,” the grateful blonde told the brunette as the trio entered the plush Fox.

*I’m bad, bad, bad — I’m nation-wide…* the handsome schemer thought to himself, a pretty gal on each arm, while other guys looked on jealously.

They had good seats. This was about ’82 or ’83. He’d last seen ZZ at the Greensboro Coliseum, in 1974. Then it was sequined suits,
cowboy hats and close-trimmed beards. Imagine his shock when the curtain arose, and they beheld tres bad hombres, wearing shades, Hawaiian shirts, black berets, and — two of ’em, at least — with beards-from-hell...

ZZ kicked ass.

They especially loved when, as part of an encore, ZZ played, “She Don’t Love Me, She Loves My Automobile,” while playing in front of a movie screen that had come down — on which they “starred” in a video, playing saxes, while riding across the desert in a convertible...

"Wild Bill" Barnes 3/20/08
The Great Emperor, Cornholio
Ruler of the Known World