

# 13

## A collection of 13 articles

by Evin Daly

Editor: Leah Tobin

1. Appreciation	1
2. Question of our Existence is Solved	5
3. Domestic Violence: The First Cut is the Deepest	7
4. The Legacy of Suicide	9
5. The Black Dog of Depression	13
6. A shot in the dark: No Israeli Money for James Miller	17
7. How U2 Saved Ireland	22
8. Ireland, by the Short and Curlys	27
9. Married to a Dog Whisperer	33
10. Men, sex 'n porn	38
11. The Bailout: they laughed and they laughed and they laughed	42
12. Crash a Boeing 777. Get a Medal from British Airways	44
13. They shoot horses, don't they?	47

### About the Author

Evin Daly a journalist and the publisher of ButlerReport.com ([www.butlerreport.com](http://www.butlerreport.com)) the popular world news website. He is also the President and founder of Child AbuseWatch.net ([www.abusewatch.net](http://www.abusewatch.net)), a child abuse prevention resource for the community and professionals. Mr. Daly is a volunteer Guardian as Litem at the 15<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit in Palm Beach. He is also certified in End of Life Care as a Care Center volunteer at Hospice by the Sea in Boca Raton. Mr. Daly was an entrepreneur in the technology industry until he retired in 2004. Contact: [evindaly@yahoo.com](mailto:evindaly@yahoo.com)

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## Appreciation

Some day, perhaps soon, our lives will change dramatically. This is a guarantee. To quote an old adage; “it’s not if, but when.”

Our lives are filled with familiar surroundings which, for the most part, we take for granted; people, places, things. Of these most will never change; our religious centers; our banks; schools; where we shop; sports arenas, natural areas, will all be more or less the same throughout our lifetimes. Where we played as children we may well sit and contemplate memories in later years.

Our most important life treasures are often the most under-acknowledged; the people who surround us. They are the most fragile and delicate in terms of relationships and longevity. They can be quite literally, here today, gone tomorrow.

People die. We all do. Who, when, where is unknown. It will happen. Some day we too will exist only in someone’s memory. Tomorrow? Next week? Next year? What we leave behind is up to us. We can start by ensuring that everyone who has touched us – whom we touch – knows that we appreciate them for who and what they are.

A developed, mature, sense of appreciation should be a central aspect of our lives while we are living. It is so because it is the most important emotional variable that we can have control over.

We can choose (or not) to appreciate the company we keep, from our significant other, our children, parents – our co-workers. There are hierarchies of importance of course. Family first. Friends second and so on.

The saddest moment will be the morning we wake up and find that our spouse or a close friend is gone. How doesn’t matter, but the day will come; as a result of old age, illness, an unforeseen event. It will happen. A friend, a best friend perhaps, a soul mate, a lover will be gone forever.

How we prepare for that stark moment will depend on the work we put into the relationship now. If life is a painting, relationships and people are the texture. That texture takes nurturing.

The payoff will come in the darkest moments knowing that we did everything to enjoy our time together and knowing that we let that special person know that we appreciated them; and why. Sadness will be intermingled by satisfaction and comfort of a life well lived through good times and bad; a life in the close company of another.

Assuming that our lives will be the same, day after day, is a lesson in abject naivety. Look around and learn from the experience of others; you'll see scattered remnants of dead friends and families everywhere. All of this may have already touched us, or for now seems reassuringly distant. The distance is a trick however; an anomaly. Change is statistically and realistically very close. It just hasn't happened to us - yet.

Take a moment and examine the people in your life. Who is it that you need to be closer to; to apologize to; to thank; to hug, to hold, to contact, to call? When is the best time to reach out? How about now? Go ahead, reach out; this is important.

Demonstrating appreciation is a brave and emotionally fulfilling responsibility. It takes great effort to make the effort, but it costs nothing. The results are fulfilling for us and for the people we take the time to acknowledge. Leaving with them a sense that they are valued, loved, accepted for who they are.

Don't wait. Life's memories are all the more comforting wrapped in the warm blanket of appreciation.

All the more so if you are the one who initiates it.

## **Question of our Existence is Solved: It's All in Our Head**

Do you ever wonder about who and what 'we' are? I do. Moreover, what makes me 'me.' What makes you, 'you?'

The more spiritually minded perceive our consciousness, our 'we'-ness as an extension of or an entity separate from, our physical beings – our soul if you like. Others see this soul as a gateway to a supernatural existence, perhaps life after death. The question then is - what makes us 'us?' You may be surprised by the answer.

First I need to define what 'we' is: it is our conscious self. Our self-aware, unique personality. By using a process of elimination, we can illustrate what exactly makes up our unique selves.

How do we do that? The same way that medical researchers work out the finer mechanisms of how we function; though observing the consequences of injury to the cells and organs. In this case, the brain.

Our brain weights 3 pounds, is comprised 75% water and 10% fatty tissue. It represents 2% of our body weight, contains 100 billion neurons and consumes in excess of 20% of our oxygen when resting.

Standing in front of you, my ability to know that I am present is provided by a number of sensory inputs - senses - which, when combined with my thought and emotional processes, make up my consciousnesses - 'me.' These senses are sight, touch, taste, hearing and smell.

Damage to any part of my brain will change 'me' – from subtle nuances of my personality to my very existence as a conscious being. Let me demonstrate what I mean.

A hard impact to the right place on my head can make me become instantly unconscious. How hard that impact is will determine just how deeply unconscious I am and when I may wake up; if ever. By damaging my brain, my state of awareness - of consciousness - is instantly switched off. I am no longer me; I may never again be.

Let's delve a bit further. An impact over the right or left eye damages the front part of my brain - my frontal lobe - the seat of my personality among other things. This damage can leave me a changed person – from a delightful, charming (some would say witty) man into a nasty jerk; and fairly quickly too. (My wife reminds me that it doesn't require an impact for this to happen to me; bless her for pointing this out.)

When a lobotomy is performed – the act of insertion of an implement behind the eye and wiggling it around – my personality is also changed. I will be left - again permanently – in a new state of consciousness, unrecognizable as the person you previously knew. 'I' will now be anything from lethargic to vegetative depending on how vigorous the surgeon was with his implement.

Our body is not an integral part of our consciences. Let's, for a moment, examine what happens in the event of a back injury (my back in this case) – the severing my spinal chord right at the base of the skull.

Assuming I don't die right away, I now no longer have any sensory perceptions from my body – none whatsoever. No touch, feeling, pain, motor skills, nada. Indeed my most basic functions such as breathing will need a machine to keep me alive. This does not however deprive me of my 'me-ness' as a visit with a patient with Lou Gehrig's Disease will show; take Stephen Hawking as an example. Sufferers, who lose control of their body over time, are very much 'themselves' as their brain continues to function well.

Let's see what else can happen to 'us' when damage is done to other places in the brain.

An impact to the back of the head can destroy our ability to see by damaging the occipital lobe. Maybe for good. An impact or blow to any part of the top our heads can deprive us of a number of functions including our ability to hear; think, reason, speak, to make sense when we speak, to be aware of or understand our surroundings. It can destroy our memories, our sense of smell, taste, our sex drive. It can interfere with our ability to move and control our bodies. This effect can occur by chemical means also through the use of alcohol or drugs.

Evidence clearly demonstrates that we're living closer to the answer of our existence than we think. As such it negates the concept of our consciousness - our 'we'-ness - as a separate entity from our brain. It's not.

We know this because we can change components of our 'selves' through physical or chemical means. 'We' are very much hardwired into our brain; 'we' are our brain.

These conclusions do not, nor are they meant to, interfere with faith in G-d. The brain is the most amazing 3 pounds of matter in existence. Its capabilities are infinite in the abstract; a whole world – a lifetime of living - for a person.

It is indeed a miracle of creation or evolution.

## **Domestic Violence: the First Cut is the Deepest**

I stopped by the house; my friend was crying. Her tears, not from pain. They were tears of bitterness, humiliation, disbelief. She rubbed her shoulder as she wept; she couldn't look at me. Her husband had hit her again.

She wouldn't call the police; there was no point. When she did there was little they could do without a court order or visible marks of assault. He was long gone anyway. The children had witnessed his rage against her as usual. Watching their father beat their mother cut the remnants of their innocence to shreds. The eldest teenage son was torn between wanting to protect her and knowing that in his anger his father would beat him senseless if he tried. The neighbors, when they finally heard of the problems believed her husband's story not hers; he was such a decent guy, he could never act like that.

There's a reply that follows many domestic violence incidents that has become a cliché, when the victim is asked why she is staying with her attacker; 'because I love him.'

As I explained to my friend, her husband did not love her. There were a hundred 'buts' in response but they fell on deaf ears. I could only advise, 'leave...today.' It was up to her. In the end she did leave him and never looked back. She had a happy-ever-after story but many don't.

Domestic violence can follow a predictable pattern and it's progressive. It can start with shouting, threats, broken objects, punched walls. It moves to a push, a blocked doorway. A blow, a twisted arm, a black eye. Sexual abuse. Right up to death. The progression is no guarantee, at times it starts with death – by choking, gunshot, being thrown out the window, pushed from a moving car.

Where it stops depends not on the abuser but on the person being abused. That ability to put an end to it implies a responsibility to face what is happening and to make it stop. All the more urgent when children are involved.

People look for a cause for the abusers actions, as if that will change it. Alcohol, drugs, poverty don't cause it – they exacerbate it. If you're a batterer, you're a psychopath in need of treatment or jail. Just not at the expense of using someone as a punching bag as a gateway to treatment. You know it already. You're also a coward. Post-battering remorse, pleading "I'm sorry," means nothing. Empty words.

A good rule of thumb. The first time he or she hits you, leave. It's better live in a car with your kids than to live for a moment with someone who can defile or hurt you. They will eventually kill you, emotionally if not physically.

Victims give batterers permission to hurt them. Not the first time of course; certainly the second time.

It's done by not leaving after the first time; by not blowing the batterers brains out when they raise a hand to you or your kids; by not calling the police and filing a complaint that leads to an arrest.

Change starts with the victim. Change starts with you.

**For more information about Domestic Violence or to get help:**

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). <http://www.ndvh.org/>

All about DV: <http://www.turningpointservices.org/domesticviolence.htm>

[International Directory of Domestic Violence Agencies](#)

## The legacy of Suicide

“The paper called it suicide  
A bullet from a .45  
Nobody cared and nobody cried  
Don't that make you feel sad”  
Thin Lizzy. *Suicide*. 1975

Have you ever sat in a chair, detached, dejected, in crushing despair?

Your life; meaningless. Your head filled with self-loathing. Numb, your insides are bound with the knot of hopelessness.

You're surprised for a second by the heft of the gun; it's a lot heavier loaded than it looked on the desk. A glimmer of golden oil shines on the grey stainless steel frame; the copper nubs of the bullets peek menacingly from the cylinder. You sniff the gun oil; it's smell mechanical; familiar. In one motion you put the muzzle of the barrel to your temple. It's cold. Leaning your head against it, your thumb rests on the rough edge of the hammer. With a little effort you draw back and cock the gun, hearing the clicks as the sear engages.

A last breath; your heart beats in your chest. No thoughts now; calm envelopes; a light surge of adrenaline; your forefinger takes the slack...

Too people many reading this are familiar with, if not the action, certainly the feeling. 16,000 Americans do 'take the slack' every year and commit suicide with firearms. Double that comprise the annual suicide statistic. Countless more get to that point and put the gun down, either through changing their minds or intervention.

Suicide is the intentional taking of one's own life. It's one of the leading causes of death in the world with 1 million suicides a year – more than all the deaths from murder and war combined.

In 2005 32,367 people or 1.5% of deaths were attributable to suicide in the U.S. Of that number hanging and suffocation accounts for 22%, poisoning 18%, suicide by firearm 52%. Typically at risk were young and old white men. That however has changed over the years so that there is a broader spread in the risk demographics, particularly among middle aged white women.

There are as many causes to suicide as there are methods. These include, a previous suicide attempt, mental or physical illness, a history of sexual assault or abuse, a family history of suicide or mental illness, access to lethal methods (firearms, pills); alcohol or drug intoxication, stressful life events, hopelessness, violence perpetration or victimization, exposure to suicide in the media, or a firearm in the home.

Suicide is a response to an inability to cope; of intolerance to pain and suffering, physical and mental. It's described by some as a cowardly act; the action of a weakling. It's not. It takes incredible courage for someone to decide when and where to end their lives. They must, in the time prior to carrying out the act, go through a seeming lifetime of self-incrimination and self-loathing; face an avalanche of hopelessness to conclude that the world would be better off without them. They die many times prior to the final act. There is no upside for the suicidal; it's not an escape to somewhere; it's an end. A termination.

Sometimes nobody is left behind and the person becomes a footnote in a medical examiners report. More often however, there is a family who have to deal with the mixture of suicide-derived emotions in addition to the feelings of dealing with a violent death. Violent death is very different to death from natural causes; there are the unique and appalling stresses on family and friends in coping with it. There's a social stigma still attached to the news of a suicide; a tendency to flinch, hold back, as if perhaps it's dirty, contagious. There is also something else.

Suicide is hereditary. Once a family member carries it out, a Pandora's box is opened for other family members by creating an acceptable or alternative end-of-life option. Ernest Hemingway killed himself in 1961. His granddaughter

Margaux did so also in 1996. Bing Crosby's two sons Dennis and Lindsay committed suicide. In this writer's dealings with researching families with a history of abuse, one family had eight suicides in their immediate relatives. Eight. Suicide creates a precedent; bestows permission; forms a familial legacy that may be impossible to eliminate.

The issue of suicide prevention is not without controversy. Politicians and medical professionals alike question whether governments should interfere with the personal decision to end one's life. The counter argument is that suicidal people are mentally ill as only a mentally deranged person would want to end their life.

The World Health Organization noted that someone commits suicide every 39 seconds. There are an estimated 10 to 20 million non-fatal attempted suicides every year worldwide. One million attempts are successful. Several studies reveal the close correlation between alcohol consumption and suicide rates. Suicide as a recorded cause of death is being reported more frequently as cultural and religious barriers against it erode which may account for the apparent up-tick in (recorded) suicides as opposed to an actual increase in number of suicides.

People die by suicide more often during spring and summer. The idea that suicide is more common during Christmas is a common misconception. In the USA, males over the age of seventy die by suicide more often than younger males. There is no such trend for females. Females attempt more than men, however men are successful 3 to 4 times more often.

There are 'good' suicides. Those who are terminally ill, in terrible pain, deserve the opportunity to decide to end their life early to extinguish their suffering. Unfortunately society is reluctant to allow them the legal method or the opportunity to do so.

For more information on prevention, explore the resources here - [American Association of Suicidology \(http://www.suicidology.org/web/guest/home\)](http://www.suicidology.org/web/guest/home)

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## The Black Dog of Depression

Often overlooked and seldom detected, even by our close friends, this monster skulks amongst us daily. It is attracted to those susceptible to its influence, into whom it burrows like a worm, while normal people suffer nothing more than an occasional glancing blow.

Churchill called it his “Black Dog” and kept it at bay with copious amounts of Brandy and distractions such as the Boer, the First and Second World Wars. It quietly envelopes the susceptible with the illusion of a warm blanket on a cold evening before constricting and lowering its leaden unyielding weight. I am talking about the big “D,” depression.

Trying to explain what depression is to someone who does not suffer from it, is like trying to explain the space time continuum to a toddler. Sure there are words we hear to which we nod wisely when we hear them as if we understand. Maybe we read them in a book, heard them on Oprah, but we can't truly share the space of the sufferer; depression is a personal, insidious, opportunistic disease. Its complexity is individual; its power at times absolute, it is near impossible to explain. It imparts mind sheering anxiety and a feeling of utter and complete hopelessness on the sufferer. Even therapists and psychiatrists have a hard time getting their heads around it. That's why they have thick prescription pads.

Depression has been described as a large wet carpet draped over ones body. It's impossible to move with it; harder to remove it. Sometimes the only solution is to go with it and lie down - stay in bed. Fighting depression can be a futile and infuriating action and rarely works except to increase its intensity. Depression, like an enemy in warfare, is best dealt with at a distance and by avoidance.

True depression can be fatal; a natural born killer if left unattended. Leaving someone who you know is in an episode of severe depression alone may be the last time you see them alive. Trouble is you never know what's going on in their minds, how severe it is, or if indeed they're depressed at all. They'll rarely tell

you. Generally you learn to notice through their behavior or body language. You'll develop a nose for it, if you care to.

People who have severe depression rarely see themselves as victims, though many do struggle in the quicksand of self pity without truly understanding why. Rather they see themselves as the cause of their problems and therein lies the rub. A depressive's universe is torture by a thousand cuts as the whirlwind of the disease swirls around the afflicted, reinforcing negative thoughts that assemble to become a harsh - authentic - reality in their minds.

Depression magnifies the perceived cause of the negativity or life problems completely out of proportion, as if viewing a speck of dust through an electron microscope. The depressed can feel completely alone in a crowded room. They feel isolated; isolation is their bedfellow. Indeed bed is where they retreat to hide in the hope that depression will forget them and leave them alone. Eventually it does. And when it does the sufferer must act quickly to stave off the next onslaught.

What helps? Martin Luther King Jr. told us that the best 10 cures for depression are "do something for someone less fortunate. Repeat that nine more times." Good advice.

Deep melancholy can last from days to months. It can wax and wane like an irregular and unpredictable tide. Its severity can eviscerate the minds and souls of those who have it and those who live with the suffering – it's merciless, intense and its effects cumulative for all concerned.

At times it can drive the sick insane - to the brink of suicide; to a point where suicide as an option is perfectly logical in the mind of the sufferer. They're convinced absolutely, that ending their life makes perfect sense. For example, they believe that their family would be better off without them; that the pain is too much to deal with; that there is no purpose in living – there are a hundred

variations. It can be like a light bulb of realization going off. It makes perfect sense.

Sometimes - rarely - there are a number of indicators of a terminal decision. Subtle signs such as giving away personal property; a sudden change from melancholia to calm; a tidying of affairs. An intervention helps as it buys time; time for the mind to re-address its warped logic.

Whether they push beyond the brink and commit suicide is only determined by results. If they're alive, they didn't go through with it. In simple terms, given time the mind will turn the thought around and the instinct of self-preservation returns and they go on to live another day. About 30,000 people commit suicide in the US annually for various reasons many stoked by depression, which, in case you haven't already figured out, is a mental illness. Older white males are the leaders in succeeding at suicide while white females attempt suicide the most often, most times unsuccessfully. Perhaps the availability of means is why men have a higher success rate.

Why do people with severe depression stay alone? Many reasons; mainly it's a coping mechanism. Sometimes it's to avoid the plethora of advice from the amateur psychiatrists that fill the world who cheerily advise "oh, just shake it off...go for a walk...mind over matter...fight it, man, fight!...you're letting it get the better of you...you're weak." There is a simple two word response to these pieces of advice and the second of the words is "off." To a depressed person the advice - while well meaning - only increases they're own feeling of worthlessness.

Medication can help. It is, I believe, the unmonitored medication of depression that leads down another fatal path, the path of addiction. Booze, pot 'n pills, all work, albeit temporarily, to alleviate the symptoms of depression. The mind figures "if it worked last night, let's do it again tonight, and tomorrow." And you're hooked. Alcoholism - addiction - in time intensifies the depressive cycle - drinking to fight depression; depressed because you drink, both chemically and emotionally. On and on - an initially unconscious but vicious cycle.

The few who succeed in getting out of this addictive cycle can enjoy a newfound method of harnessing, anticipating and, to some degree, controlling depression. A 12 step program promotes three key components; belief in a higher power (thus giving purpose to life); advice to help someone less fortunate (purpose and measurable outcome promoting self worth) and enforced humility by tidying up the past through facing past problems squarely and making amends for harms done (responsibility). Effective. Not bad advice for regular folks too. If we all did it the world might be a better place. Therapy and exercise are a key component in recovery as is prescribed non-addictive medication if needed. To work, the recovery tools are a life long daily process. Sometimes the dog slips its leash and bites again. It happens.

Next time you're feeling blue and you wonder if you know how it feels to be truly depressed, you are as likely to be right as a person with a head-cold when comparing their symptoms to a person with terminal cancer.

If you want to help, be a friend, shut up and make them a cup of coffee. Oh, telling them you love them helps too. As does a hug.

And don't judge.

**A shot in the dark:  
No Israeli Money for James Miller**

The night was sultry, quiet. The air heavy with the smell of burnt diesel.

My friend Mike, a US Army soldier was on a tour of duty in a recent Middle East conflict. He was on the perimeter, in a free-fire zone protecting his combat unit, a couple of hours into his watch.

Boredom and having the shit scared out of you are the two hallmarks of being a combat soldier. Nerves get frayed; tension underlies every moment even off-duty where action though rare, is but a heart beat away.

Mike watched his sector, his mind wandering between peering through the glow of his night-vision goggles and fighting the temptation to space out. Suddenly out of the corner of his eye he saw movement; someone was approaching. More than one person, five, eight; eleven as it turned out.

He quietly took aim and fired. Mike's night vision was instantly lost by the repeated muzzle flash of his M-16. This was followed a second later by a sustained blaze as the M-60 gunner to his left opened up raking the targets with machine gun fire. They were immediately accompanied by other gunners on the perimeter who kept firing until they were ordered to stop. U.S. standard operating procedures dictated no warning shots especially at night. Simple logic - there's no way of telling if enemy's clothing are stuffed with explosives or not.

Silence ensued, broken only by the rapid metallic ticking of the cooling machine gun barrel and the occasional scuff of a boot in the dirt. Soldiers went back to their positions and waited as their sight and hearing became accustomed to the night once more.

In the morning a curtsey glance at the target area revealed little left of those who approached. A report was filed and life went on; a new day had begun.

A couple of items worth noting here.

First it's a true story. The second, it's a soldier's job to avoid getting killed. The third is that approaching a combat ready patrol even during the day, is foolhardy. Fourth, doing so can be fatal and often is.

In May 2003, Briton James Miller, a seasoned combat news camera-man, found this out when he approached an Israeli Armored Personnel Carrier (APC) in the dark of night emerging from a Palestinian house in Gaza to do so.

He and his colleagues walked into the night – at 11pm - carrying a small flashlight and a white flag and approached the APC which was situated in the no-man's land between Gaza and Egypt; patrolling the area to intercept suicide bombers, terrorists and smugglers. The wide area was cleared flat during the day by Israeli bulldozers. Miller, for whatever reason, intended to tell the soldiers that they - the news crew - were leaving the area. He decided he couldn't wait for daylight.

As they approached the APC the female in the group of three called out "Hello? Hello?" and "we are British journalists" assuming that the Israeli soldiers in the APC spoke English. The news crew believed that these soldiers were the same ones who had addressed them earlier, in Arabic. As it turned out they were a part of a Bedouin unit. It was a rash assumption that these soldiers could understand English.

A single shot rang out. Miller was fatally struck in the neck. Five other shots followed; not automatic fire but single spaced shots. The other members of his team, though badly frightened, escaped unharmed.

Examine for a moment the two scenarios. Both are practically the same. Both are in combat zones. Both involve people who walked deliberately into harms way. The outcome however was very different.

The American troops followed their training and by pouring gun-fire in the direction of the incursion eliminated the threat; everyone died. The Israeli patrol,

showed far more constraint, firing six or seven shots. They had no idea if they were being approached by Palestinians carrying a Rocket Propelled Grenade or a suicide bomber. The waving flashlight was a distraction threatening to destroy any night-vision the Israeli soldiers had. It is safe to assume that if they had intended to kill the other members of the approaching group they could have but chose not to.

The other difference is that the British courts who investigated the incident decided that the shooting of Miller was murder. Murder, no less; in a combat zone. They wanted to prosecute the soldiers involved who were later cleared of wrong doing by the Israeli government.

Following a British trial the Israeli soldiers (not present) were found guilty of murder. The British threatened to attempt to have the soldiers extradited to face charges. Just recently the Israeli government gave Miller's family 1.5 million pounds. The family says that this is as close to admitting guilt that the Israeli government came to. Guilt to what I have to ask? Millers actions were reckless and arrogant.

Miller's family does not deserve to receive any money from the Israeli government. Not a penny. That they did receive any should be viewed in the context in which it was given; a gift to end the fuss. The funds that Israel gave the family, at the very least, deserved gratitude for the generosity with which they were given. The gift was not an admission of anything. Nor should it be. It was the result of diplomatic black mail on Britain's part.

Compensation was in order from Miller's employers or the British government who were directly accountable for his being in the area. The British government's loud protests were to drown out the obvious lack of coordination on their part in letting Miller film in a hot combat zone in Gaza. They were responsible for his well-being and ultimately for his untimely death.

Miller himself should have faced charges – difficult when you're dead admittedly – for endangering his news crew by bringing them on a fool's errand into the night as he did. He also endangered the family whose house he was in prior to setting out, as well as the other film crew who recorded the incident.

The entire event was documented in a film called 'Death in Gaza' which won awards in 2004. HBO showed it and I was fortunate enough to see it twice. You can see the final section featuring the shooting on youtube (below). It is the last of an eight-piece reel and I recommend you watch it all to understand the context. The film crew traveled through Gaza with children who were filmed living their lives which included preparing bombs and peppered the Israeli bulldozers with rocks. The news crew were guarded by heavily armed Palestinians.

The British establishment's fuss over the incident reflects badly considering their own practiced insensitivity to their army's actions over the years. For example, as a young boy I watched the British Army shoot and kill 13 people in Northern Ireland – unarmed peace demonstrators – for whom justice or checks never came; no cash awards there, as Britain continues to cover-up a crime on its own doorstep. U2's "Bloody Sunday" keeps it immortalized, despite the British Governments wish for it to be swept under the carpet of history.

See the video for yourself (link below). The narration has that a-typical British monotone - you know this isn't going to end well. Otherwise it is an excellent documentary.

Miller's blood money could be better used in Israel for many pressing domestic needs.

I call on the Israeli government to rescind this decision and let the Millers apply for, and receive, compensation from British sources which is where the blame and guilt truly lies.

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## How U2 Saved Ireland

One Saturday afternoon a long time ago in a land far away a young Irish (good looking) teenager had the choice of spending his 50 pence to see a new Dublin band or pay a little less for some hot sugar encrusted batter balls. The venue; a dilapidated street corner called the Dandelion market. An abandoned city block that flanked the north edge of St Stephen's green. A well decayed corpse of brick and mortar filled with the aroma of damp, cigarettes and patchouli oil.

There was a chill in the air; the rain fell sporadically and with irritating regularity on the rusted limp corrugated roof. Trudging through the soggy market, the strains of music and chatter mingled with the shuffle of feet on broken concrete. In the end, the food won, the band wasn't that good anyway. He decided he'd see them again another time.

Fast forward twenty years. The venue Joe Robbie Stadium in Miami, the teenager now a (good looking) adult, father of five, married to a hottie he'd met shortly after the Dandelion incident finally got to see the band again. Arriving in a badly-fogged stretch limo, this time he had paid \$150 a ticket to see the band. I am referring of course to the Irish band, U2.

Even if you didn't like U2, you'd have left impressed as much with the music, as with the bands effort and humility. And an amazing stage show. Bono made the point of thanking the audience for their continuing support – a touch not lost on this member.

Bono and I share one thing in common; we're both Irish. I was born a redneck, he a true Dubliner. He was destined for greatness; I, well, history is still being written. Be that as it may, U2, and their behind the scenes manager Paul McGuinness, did more than produce great music.

They represented a country that was wallowing in the morass of a sad and sullen history, a sodden weighted economy and relative anonymity in a fast-paced

world. U2 single handedly brought this country from the shadows to the main-stage in a matter of 13 years. How? Let me explain.

Ireland's best ambassadors have not been those of a diplomatic bent, despite their attempts to intellectualize their claim to fame. Nor have they been the State representatives traveling the world over-pitching industrialists for investment into Ireland's eager, educated (if worldly naïve) workforce.

Those successful emissaries to whom I refer are the musicians, who, over a period of thirty years, showed the world that Ireland was capable of competing on the most important stage of all and of becoming an economic flytrap through the booming culture of rock and roll.

Starting with Rory Gallagher, who is reputed to have sold his Donegal soul to the Devil to play the blues, Ireland took its tentative steps into the world. Followed by Van (the Man) Morrison from Belfast, who's crooning still graces the airwaves, he broke into the most important market of all, America.

Who can forget the rock engine that was Phil 'Rosin Dubh' (Black Rose) Lynott and Thin Lizzy? A bedraggled group of insecure musicians, who became the dueling guitar powerhouse, known the world over. During the 1970s this mega-success culminated with their important lesson in 'how to do' live albums, "Live and Dangerous," still capable of raising the hairs on a dead man's neck; an album and band whose rhythmic influence still echoes through bands today.

Then came U2. Initially a lost cause, by this writer's initial first impression, they got a world class manager and great producers. U2 came from the dark, damp back alleys of Dublin to become – undoubtedly - the best band in the world, and one of the most influential in music history.

They were known before they became famous thanks to the strategy that their manager Paul McGuinness put into place early on. He had the band play all over US, from one horse towns to big cities. The art of his deal was that when U2

finally broke into the mainstream, they already had a fan base who lofted them to the dizzying heights of superstardom practically overnight. That's not to say that the depth of their talent and music had nothing to do with it, it did. McGuinness's plan was the sling shot to success. And that's why he's regarded as the fifth member of the band.

So what does a musical five-some have to do with Ireland's economic emergence? Everything.

U2s audience was wide-ranging demographically and geographically. Their music swelled the hearts of listeners of Irish descent; their dedication to Martin Luther King Jr. ("In the name of Love") rang clear when the first waves of political correctness were washing ashore. Unapologetic, with the steadfastness of youth, Bono stood and used his stage for righteous causes bringing attention to the downtrodden and in doing so highlighted the most downtrodden of all, the country of his origin.

Fans on the boards of directors over the US reacted. They overcame the reluctance to relocate to a geographically and technologically isolated country which was viewed then through the lingering lens of "Paddy" prejudice, and acted on the basis that if U2 was representative of people there, it couldn't be all bad. (That and a unique 12% corporate tax rate.)

Sure, River Dance (the art of the mime), followed quickly bringing another shot in the heart of Ireland's popularity, but it was the icing on the cake; perhaps even the sprinkles. U2 had done all the work.

Encouraged by U2's success, more talent greased the economic and image skids of Ireland in the early 1990s. The Cranberries ('Linger'), the Coors ("Breathless") the girls graced many a "would shag" list. Sinéad O'Connor, who's dusty MTV award graces Hourican's Pub on Lower Leeson Street, would have been a colossal pro-Ireland lever but for her insanity and self-destructive instincts that cut short her US career.

Throughout it all, pulsed the artery that is U2. Solid and steady, they gave Irelands maturing world image a framework for the vine to grow upon. They were cool; they produced hit after hit, filled stadiums and the fans never tired of their evolving musical style.

And into Ireland flowed the money transforming Dublin from a dirty drunken paradise into a modern drunken paradise where people were, at last, proud to be from and more importantly to go to. Although this was not new for U2; they were Dublin men through and through. In came Dell, Intel and a plethora of financial and industrial giants transforming the small country into the place to be.

From 1995 through 2007 Ireland – Dublin - was probably the best place in Europe to visit. In my mind it will always be. It was hip, hopping and happening (Jesus). Times have changed as the world enters a recession but that was nothing to do with U2. (The ‘boy band’ WestLife perhaps can take the blame, but not the lads from Dublin’s Northside)

U2 have been distinctly denied the credit for all they had done; turning a banana republic into a modern economy and country to be reckoned with. That needs to be rectified immediately.

A bronze statue, something subtle, similar in size perhaps to the Iwo Jima monument in Washington DC, is needed honoring this great band.

It should be placed adjacent to the Central Bank or perhaps in the forecourt of the Government offices in Kildare Street in Dublin to remind politicians, business men and passers-by who it really was that dragged the hissing kitten that was to become the Celtic Tiger into the open and ushered Ireland into the modern world.

## Ireland, caught by the Short and Curlys

Ireland has two big problems; the economy is f\*cked and the Government is daft.

What was once touted as a model economy has exploded in a shower of drenching stinking cow-poo. Banking, technology, hospitality, building – you name it – are in deep, deep trouble. With such a small economy, each sector is closely reliant upon the other. If one sneezes, the other farts. Uniquely, they are all currently failing at the same time. Not good.

Senior Bank executives are quitting town faster than famine immigrants to a free all-you-can-eat buffet. The banking sector is in ruins awash in unrecoverable debt from gross mismanagement and outright fraud. Even the past Prime Minister Bertie Ahern was accused of receiving ‘campaign funds’ from his amigos, albeit in cash-laden brown envelopes. It cost him his job.

The bank executives played hard and fast with money that wasn’t theirs, for personal gain. They found themselves left standing however when the music abruptly stopped. Perpetrators of financial chicanery need have no fear however; white collar crime goes famously unpunished in the Emerald Isle. “Ah sure, it’s only money.” Great words when the money isn’t yours.

The Irish government, always a great source of national amusement, decided in a moment of giddy exuberance to guarantee all bank deposits; no upper limit. Translation: the state has bet the house, the farm and the outhouse (which it does not own) to keep business friends cash safe. They transferred the risk from business to the public. Aren’t politicians great?

Ireland is bankrupt plain and simple. Borrowing is forecast to be close to a blood-chilling 10% of GNP this year which has the European Union (EU) in Brussels wetting their pants with anxiety. The fact that Ireland Limited is still running at all, is that it is backed by its membership of the European Union. That’s the same

EU that the people of Ireland, en masse, said 'f\*ck-off' to last year when asked to support the Lisbon Treaty.

The State has taken over Anglo-Irish Bank which looks like a piece of Swiss cheese - so great are the holes of reported impropriety in the bank's financial infrastructure. A suspected banking conspiracy has come to light following the takeover. This will cost the Irish public – at a minimum – 300 million Euros to pay for a scheme that in the U.S. would get you locked up indefinitely in a \$7 million penthouse apartment in New York.

Ireland has, in a short year, gone from light-speed into full reverse into an economy not seen since the 1970s. Budget surpluses piled up over the good years were squandered by the government, on nothing. There's no reserve, no nest-egg for a rainy day; just empty dusty coffers reminiscent of years past. No lessons were learned.

Unemployment is projected at 10 to 14-ish percent over the next 12 months; nobody knows for sure as companies wrap up and leave on a weekly basis barely stopping to turn out the lights. Healthcare is a joke. Visiting a hospital for any length of time is a practical guarantee of leaving – dead or alive - with a disease you did not come in with.

On the plus side most of Ireland's infrastructure development over the past twenty years have been paid for by tax payers; just not Irish taxpayers. The EU, to be fair, was far more than a spectator in Ireland's economic boom.

Irish politicians have, for the most part, proven themselves as useful as tits on a bull, from the Prime Minister on down. Successive politicians crowed and basked in the glory of a booming economy pounding their chests like drunken monkeys. Their ineptitude, cronyism and political immaturity have proven once and for all that Irish politics and politicians need supervision and oversight from the EU. It can be no other way. They cannot be trusted with anything more important than picking out the colors for the State Christmas cards.

A new breed of Irish leader is needed.

New politicians need to be Euro-savvy, worldly, responsible and internationally astute. They should be modeled on the great leaders of Irish culture; Bono, Tony O'Reilly, Bob Geldoff, Michael Smurfit, O'Leary and what's-his-face from Riverdance - Flatley. Having a balls-to-the-wall to succeed attitude has a way of permeating throughout a society. Similarly, having a herd of sheep, a farm or a pub in the country is no longer a qualification for election.

Despite everything, all is not lost.

To suggest a slide back to depressing times is to do Ireland and the Irish people a disservice. The country is small, as is the workforce. That is a unique advantage. Another is the corporate tax rate – assuming the Germans don't take it away for the aforementioned Lisbon Treat refusal – at 12.5%. Ireland has, as the pretty investor-wooing catalogs say, 'a young, educated workforce etc.' Don't be fooled, investors don't give a bollix. The tax rate is the honey pot that attracts them.

The country should learn from America, where adversity is faced with a gritty determination to succeed; where failure is met not with despair but with the resilience to keep trying. I know I'm painting with a broad (Hollywoodesque) brush but you get the picture. Ireland, when it comes down to it, has no choice but to soldier on.

The doom and gloom will end much sooner than the prophets forecast. Ireland should use the down time to retool, to prepare, to beat the bushes for new business. All of the elements of success; the years of social investment are in place. Success goes to those who are ready for it.

Whether Ireland is ready or not will depend whether the people work together for the betterment of all (as they have for the past 10 years) or choose to wallow in the hot-tub of collective misery as only the Irish know how. The choice will

## 13

determine whether the Ireland of tomorrow is the booming Hong Kong of Europe, with fast cars, wadgins of cash and nervous sheep; or not.

Either way, start by dumping the gob-shites in Kildare Street.

## Finally: The meaning of life

You realize, despite all indications to the contrary, that we are all perched on a blue rock hurtling through the universe on a journey to who-knows-where.

Our paper thin (and unbelievably fragile) atmosphere is all that protects us from the void; from a blood-boiling brief, but excruciating, demise in the near-vacuum of space. Our balance of existence so delicate that if an angel farts in our direction we're toast.

What, you may ask, has this to do with the meaning of life? A little, and a lot, as it turns out.

It would appear that after millennia - nay eons - of evolution that our purpose has finally been pinpointed. The voyages of Darwin, Scott, Aldrin, the interplanetary space journeys; the discoveries of Newton, Edison, Galileo and Einstein have, at last, brought us to the center of it all, to the essence of meaning, the holiest of holies, sweet Jesus - the journey's end. The meaning of life is...the mall.

Really?

Is that all there is? It that IT? No spiritual encounter; no fantastic revelations, no blazing flash of blinding light?

Nope. Doesn't seem so. The end of the world, according to our consumerist human race, may come as long as it's mid-week in January when the sales are over.

We are in the midst of an economic meltdown as yet unseen in the history of the world; perhaps of the universe.

However we are also in the midst of a hectic shopping calendar around which everything revolves. Holidays, SuperBowl, Valentines Day, Easter, Birthdays, and Anniversaries - all have become the new Stations of the Cross; the summing up of

the Midrash; our existential guide to the universe. It can be summed up as follows. If it's April it must be Easter – let's buy Bunny eggs.

No wonder the Muslims hate us.

As earthly passengers we have become, as described in the 'Matrix', (a movie of great promise with a lousy ending) a virus; all consuming, all possessing, all over the place.

Granted seven billion heartbeats have to be fed, cleansed and entertained but geeze, at what cost? The essence of modern life support has become fast-food, Budweiser, Netflix, (free) on-line porn and the one world religion, shopping.

The acute concern isn't that we might be wiped out by a super-volcano (Yellowstone is rumbling rather peculiarly lately) or that a stray asteroid might wobble our orbit by slamming into the Pacific at 500 billion MPH. No, what worries us is the implosion of credit, the catastrophic decrease in our purchasing power; that our favorite stores may go bankrupt and leave us unfulfilled and wanting.

Is this what the scriptures foretold? Did Torah, the New Testament, the Koran, all point to this? I don't recall 'Mall' or "online shopping" anywhere in my biblical studies. Where are the horrors promised us for enjoying worldly rewards or was that just the Irish-Catholic version?

The plagues, inquisitions, wars, famines, pestilence, disease, sickness, Bill O'Reilly, Gonorrhea, Martin Luther, what's-her-face-Coulter, Genghis Khan, the Roman Legions, the Beatles. The human race went through all that so we could go...shopping? Who'd have thunk? And to think that the meaning of life could be so obvious?

Or so dull?

## Married to a Dog Whisperer

Imagine, if you will, a bed. Not just any bed; a bed filled with a mound of heaving, seething bodies. A bed occupied by pretty ladies with names such as Margaret, Orla, Nessa, Izzy, Bella and guy named Charlie. (Hot eh? eh?) Can you imagine? Well stop imagining, you're dealing with my reality; where dogs rule.

The first thing I noticed on waking this morning was that the six inches of the king size bed that are mine were occupied. By myself (obviously) and my bad tempered ginger-cat Morris who sleeps curled up in my arms. As he falls asleep he likes to be rubbed until he's had enough. How do I know when enough is enough? Easy. He bites my arm, gently, the way a lion snaps the neck of a f\*\*king Zebra.

There's more. My territory had been encroached upon during the night.

A Beagle (Orla) has somehow managed to burrow beneath my pillow. Now snoring loudly; she twitches as she dreams of chasing the cat that's asleep inches away from her. Not the smartest tool in the shed our Beagle. Hey, what's that?

The pit-bull (Bella) has muscled between my leg and the edge of the bed and is sound asleep, her breathing that much quieter than the disturbingly frequent puffs of gas emanating from her bepuckered tush. My wife's toes touch mine as they always do; as I track my foot up her silken thigh I meet a barrier; that's Charlie, the red-boned coon hound, sleeping the sleep of the dead until he feels my advance and growls. He growls AT ME! He sleeps 21 hours a day; I can't imagine what he dreams about. It can't be about living since he does so little of it.

I turn sleepily toward my wife and nuzzle her head with my nose looking for a morning smooch. Except that's not her head, it's Maggie's. Our Harlequin Great Dane who, when I open my bleary eyes, is staring blankly at me. Between us is the length of her nine-inch proboscis, the tip is dewy with morning moisture. She

loves me. To confirm this she licks me twice with her wash towel of a pink tongue. No shower needed for me today, I'm drenched.

Don't wander; I'm not done. From beneath the bed growls Nessa the miniature Shepard, angry at the world that she now has to wake-up. She's the Alpha, a position in the pack that has its perks; like sitting at the dinner table beside my wife to eat left-overs ("to reinforce her dominion," I'm assured), as I struggle to eat my own dinner. Wiggling like a little pig around my (ample) groin, Izzy the Chihuahua awakes suddenly and struggles to the top of the quilt, bursting forth, full of the joys of life. So full indeed that she licks my bald head like an ice-pop for a full two minutes (my arms are trapped under the covers), her eyes bulging at the joy of a new day.

You're probably wondering what is on the rest of the bed beside my wife. Mainly Maggie's body; how big do you think a shagging' King Size is?

I have a choice. I can lay there and enjoy the warmth that only sleeping with a pack can bring or I can slip quietly out of bed without waking the sea of bodies. Either way there is a price to pay. Staying ensures a stampede when my wife decides to get up. When that happens oddly enough both Maggie and Charlie have an uncanny knack of using my (well endowed) crotch as a spring board.

Or I can get up. I do. That I instantly know is a mistake. The Alpha (Nessa) starts the warm-up bark and is immediately joined in a chorus as the other howlers join in; the hound, the Beagle; the Chihuahua sings a sweet accompaniment; Maggie hums; Bella, the pit-bull, looks terribly confused by it all.

"Cup of tea, darling?" my bride's soft voice asks. "Why yes, please," I respond, knowing it wasn't a question, rather a request.

Minutes later I stumble back to the bed where my beloved awaits resting against fluffed up pillows tucked in tightly with a comfy array of neat bed linens. As I enter six heads swivel to greet me (the seventh, my wife, is watching TV) and

quickly assess what's for breakfast. Despite my protestations, they all receive an equal share of whatever's on the menu; cereal, toast and even a muzzle full of cold coffee for the pit-bull who's an out-and-out addict.

As I prepare for my day I hear the bathroom door open and a firm order of "Out!" followed by the patter of multiple dogs exiting. My wife has been followed as she heads for the shower and despite the predictable response it never gets old for the dogs. My wife is easily tracked in the house; just listen for the posse. And the running conversation which goes something like this.

"Get down off the sofa, Charlie, you know you're not allowed up there." (He's been there an hour) "Maggie, leave Victor and Jack alone" (two large brother cats who were rescued during a Hurricane who think the pooches are stark raving mad).

"Izzy, don't eat Morris's ears." (Izzy sacks Morris at every opportunity and yet, remarkably, the cat hasn't yet killed her. Amazing)

"Orla, you've had ENOUGH already, that's quite enough you little piglet...alright here..." (Orla eats. She's a Beagle, apparently it's what they do.)

"Charlie, if you're going to sit on the sofa at least lie on the blanket." (Jesus H. C.)

"Morris, don't bite the mommy," (While Morris – my friggin' cat - rips me to shreds, 'the mommy' is treated with tenderness usually reserved for the very sick or old),

"Nessa, get away from the window and leave the ducks alone..." (The wild ducks are another story; they come to the front door to be fed at breakfast time otherwise they share the shade under the Hibiscus with the Iguanas. Yes, they get fed too).

This goes on all day.

Only two words can end the near constant conversation, but they bring with them a terrible, frightening response; "DOG PARK!"

I don't know if you've ever seen that picture from the 1970's of the college kids in California attempting to set a record at filling a Volkswagen Beetle with bodies. A similar scene occurs here after the mention of the "DP" words as the dogs attempt to open and enter my wife's X5, leashes dragging from necks and mouths; a frantic frenzy of barking, scrabbling, biting; a symphony of howls and screeching fighting over who's going to sit where.

The journey is worth seeing as Maggie sits with her front paws on the seat divider and her head, giant lips flapping, poking comfortably (like a tank commander) through the sun roof. All of the other windows are lowered but for some reason the other dogs all want their heads out of the same one. Izzy has decided never to go again. She was unsettled the first time she went to the dog park and realized – along with much snarling and growling - that there are more dogs in the world other than her pack. That was not a good thing. She's not gone since and regards the whole effort as a complete waste of time. Except for the smells that are brought home later.

Let's fast forward to bed time as this is nearly as much fun for me as morning. I finish up late, too late to be the first person to hit the sack; which one must be to get pre-allocated room for the night. The room is, for the most part silent, as the dogs cock sleepy ears listening to my approach. It is an indignant silence as they are convinced that I really should sleep on the sofa or at least on the floor; there's barely enough room for them as it is.

I agree. My wife however insists that I rest in the nuptial love nest (don't go there). Looking at the bed in the near darkness is to know despair. They and I know that there's no room. The fact is that there is no room. Somehow, slowly, with gentleness not for the pack but so as not to disturb my sweet love's rest, I slide in and lay claim to my six inches and pull what covers are left over one of my feet.

I gradually rest and relax listening to the sound of the sleeping canines. Maggie lets out a long sigh signaling her descent to the land of nod. I won't see her again

until the early morning (3:30am) when she wakes me to go for a pee. I congratulate myself (too soon) that I have squeezed enough space out of the deal to lie on my back and I drift off to sleep.

I awake abruptly as Morris jumps up claws extended onto my by now badly bruised and familiar crotch. He lies on top of me stretching out his front claws, brushing my neck. He purrs gently; it's back-scratch time.

And, believe me; I'll know when he's done.

## Men, sex 'n porn

So much has been written about women's sexuality it is time to publish some bare facts to explain, unpolished, the other side of the equation; men.

When it comes to sex, men are by nature predators; women are selectors. That happy mix ensures the continuation of our species.

Men are not by nature monogamous; that explains their wandering eye. Indeed consciously or unconsciously men are constantly and compulsively on the hunt.

For example, that guy you passed in the hall has already mentally undressed you, decided if he would have sex with you; and how. So does every other man you meet unless he's gay, then he's looking past you and focusing on the guy standing beside you. Surprised? Hurt? Flattered? Don't be, its men's nature. And in the great scheme of things, meaningless.

Sex drives men from puberty through old age. It is their "raison d'être", their purpose in life; to reproduce. Everything else is, well, fluff. It diminishes with age but never disappears. Sex is a primitive - primordial - urge.

The sex urge drives them hard; it is wired deep into the primitive levels of their brains; alongside the other basic drives. The bottom line? Without this urge we would never survive as a species.

Men are emotional animals too. They can and do meet and stay faithful to one woman for life. They fall in love and trust completely. Men have been compared to dogs; bright, fun to be with, a hair dumb at times and if unfixed, constantly horny. If we're dogs, then women are cats and have all the traits that go with the feline makeup. That, however, is another story.

Women have sex drives too, however theirs is not driven by a unique glandular and hormonal combination. A German study found that while women's sex drives drop significantly after they enter a secure relationship, men's don't.

Unlike girls, at puberty, boys are given two special and important gifts from nature; testosterone and a prostate gland. The prostate is the main producer of seminal fluid and once it's turned on it never turns off. Manufacturing semen 24/7, its fluid lubricates the urethra and ensures reproductive system health; in addition to its primary purpose of ensuring the safe delivery of sperm. Testosterone is what drives this system and injects aggression into the mix.

As an active gland the prostate insists on being emptied frequently. Depending on age, and the man, this may be as often as once a day; maybe more. Less as they age and hormones diminish.

This is accomplished through sex, masturbation or nocturnal emissions. And it's not an option; it has to be done to maintain health – mental and reproductive. In a practical sense frequent emission of semen ensures healthy sperm.

There are many other glands that makeup the male reproductive system that also produce fluids. There is the Cowpers Gland (Bulbourethral gland), glands of Littre, seminal vesicle, vas deferens, epididymis (where sperm are stored), and of course, two testicles. The testes produce billions of sperm on a weekly basis; billions that don't take kindly to sitting in the epididymis for long. They want out. Men produce an estimated quadrillion (1,000,000,000,000) sperm in a lifetime.

As any sexually active woman knows, her significant other is driven to have sex. This is nature at work, pushing the male to reproduce above all else; sometimes to the expense of all else. The reward is an orgasm, relief, a reduction in stress, emotional bonding; and the start of a countdown until the next time.

If sex is not available, men masturbate. If they don't, nature empties the glands while he sleeps. The prostate doesn't care; when it's filled to capacity it has to eject; fortunately not spontaneously. In many men a full prostate is painful.

Men are visual when it comes to sex; it is part of the feedback loop. That's why women appear pretty or sexy. It's what attracts men to women.

How does pornography fit into this picture? Simple. It is a visual feedback stimulant.

Many men have a need for additional stimulation. This is accomplished in various levels depending on a combination of factors including character, sex drive, sex life, stress, hormones – any number of things. Porn adds a visual stimulant that helps taper or increase the sex drive. Porn adds pleasure during masturbation also filling in for an absent female. Porn is material fantasy; a replacement for, or supplement to mental fantasy. Women get confused about this. Men aren't having sex with the models in the pornography, the stimulant is watching others having sex.

Some men find a trip to Hooters stimulating. Others frequent strip joints. Some up the ante with drugs or alcohol. Others employ the world's oldest professional, prostitutes. Still others are compulsive cheaters. The testosterone is all controlling, demonstrable through male risk taking and aggression (an observation, not an excuse).

If you want a demonstration of how primitive men's sex drives are add some beer to the mix. Watch as his social barriers diminish and his sex drive take over. Men will have sex with just about any female after a few drinks; hence the term 'beer goggles'. Some men need alcohol to have sex as they need help in reducing inhibitions or they find their mate unattractive. Too much liquor however and all bets are off.

Many readers may disavow this article and they're welcome to. Men are however all wired the same and subject to the same urges. Indignant women may think "my husband's not like that." Knock yourself out. Sex drives all men from Presidents to the preachers and all in between. What differs is the intensity of the drive and the means used to satisfy it. Like all other aspects of our personalities, life experiences and morals may add further tweaks to that mix.

## 13

The male sex drive has been around since the beginning of time. When it disappears, so too shall we.

**The Bailout: They laughed and they laughed  
and they laughed**

October 8, 2008

My friends, we've been taken for suckers. We called, emailed, wrote and instructed Congress not to vote for the \$700 billion bailout and did they listen? No.

Did they smirk, give us the patronizing finger and not only vote for the bailout with unabashed gusto but also tacked on pork at our additional expense? They certainly did.

Did they give in to their banker buddies who have spent half a trillion dollars on banking special interests to Congress over the past 10 years? Yup, they did. Putting their loyalties to bankers above their loyalty to us, the people who hired them. And how did the market respond? Well, it crashed and burned; not only here but world-wide.

It seems that last weeks brief up-tick was not attributable to the congressional and presidential lie that the market was responding to the prospect of a bailout. No, it was in fact responding to better consumer confidence numbers for September. The market, which reflects the most elusive and valuable of currencies – consumer confidence – crashed because Congress neglected its duty to listen to the American public and gave the gangsters our cash. Indeed, as if \$700 billion wasn't enough, they even went so far as to generously 'sweeten the deal.' Sweeten it for whom I must ask?

Some financial companies have decided not to accept bailout money after all because they want to avoid the tacked-on conditions especially on controlling CEO salaries. It seems that when push comes to shove they can survive without help with old fashioned 'squeeze the budget' economics.

Others took the cash and spent it lavishly, unable to hide their utter contempt for the American public. AIG, who a couple of weeks ago were on the verge - nay, the very cusp - of implosion, apparently revived quickly. You'll be delighted to hear that to celebrate they had an executive retreat in a \$500/night hotel a week after receiving the \$85 billion and spent \$440,000 on a week of frivolity, spa treatments and room service.

The bottom line is that Congress, politicians, Senators and especially Presidents, should not have any public fiduciary responsibility except perhaps to spend their own paychecks. They are not to be trusted with public money. They have collectively bankrupted our nation in a psychopathic approach to spending funds that aren't theirs to spend; hosing away money we don't have, pretending to put out a fire that they know can't be quenched except by running it's natural course.

When will we - Joe and Jill Public - finally act on Congress's insubordination? How about the November elections? Here's how I've done it. I've written to my congressman (Wexler) and told him that because of his vote for the bailout that we're voting to fire him. Wexler 'you're fired!'

You should do the same. Vote for anyone except the incumbent who voted to give our money away. Maybe they'll get the message when they find themselves shoulder to shoulder among us - the great unwashed - without a job.

Take a second and open your window; listen. Hear that? That's the sound of laughter echoing through the concrete canyons of Wall Street. Those loud guffaws are from the offices of the bailed-out bankers; the very same ones that caused this mess. They can't believe that they've fooled us twice.

Which brings to mind an old saying on Wall Street; 'it's morally wrong to give a sucker a chance.'

Yeah. We know.

## **Crash a Boeing 777. Get a Medal from British Airways**

August 28, 2008

They say that if it looks like a duck, flies like a duck and walks like a duck, it's probably a duck.

And so it was when BA flight #38 crashed short of the runway at Heathrow Airport in England on January 17, 2008. It landed heavily and fortunately there were only nine injuries and no fatalities.

Initial thoughts were that it has run out of fuel – THE major 'no, no' for a pilot, THE worst of mortal sins, THE big Kahuna of screw ups – but British Airways insisted that we all wait for the investigation and promptly gave the pilots and crew medals.

In fact in the pre-launch days of ButlerReport our editor argued in a number of short articles strongly in favor of the 'out of fuel' theory based on considerable insider aviation knowledge from a friend of a friend who dates the sister of a pilot.

The BA reports that have been made available stated that on approach to the airport the autopilot ordered an increase of engine power and that none was available; first on one engine followed by a reduction in power on the second engine, eight seconds later. The pilots were left to coast - glide – and control-crash at the end of the runway. On crashing there was no fire or fuel leak emergency.

After seven months of testing, analysis and head scratching all of the obvious reasons for the crash have been ruled out. The fuels pumps tested well, the flight computer checked out as did the fuel management system, no water or contaminants in the fuel, no weather anomalies and the rest of the plane seems to have been working fine.

The smoking gun of running out of fuel lies in the fact that the engine power reductions were eight seconds apart - as opposed to both engines losing power at the same time - a typical response for fuel starved engines.

The investigation has taken a surprisingly long time to complete considering the plane had the good manners to land in Britain, right next to a British Airways facility and did not burn or get destroyed. Tools, technicians, equipment were readily available. It was, may I say, a technically perfect crash for the investigator. It could only have been better if it had slid to a halt in a hanger.

Major air crashes have been analyzed and their results released far more quickly than this one. One has to wonder why.

At risk of course is a potentially gigantic lawsuit if the pilots were indeed negligent and flew into London low on fuel, “on fumes” as we say in the car-driving business. Boeing certainly wants to rule out any liability on its part for the same reason.

The pilots - one of whom was featured as a bit of a ladies man in a racy newspaper article - who were praised as ‘heroes’ (who isn’t a hero these days?) have got to be biting their nails down to the quick. The consequences to their career and possibly their personal fortunes for this potentially major faux pas are unimaginable, except that future career options may include working for that Scottish sounding food company – McDonalds.

The investigation, led by the British Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB), has kept the media apprised with the odd update now and again to keep the sharks at bay. One hopes there is nothing iffy going on and British Airways are not trying the public relations ‘last year’ tactic of letting the report slide into next year so the press will refer to it as “last year’s crash...” which makes it all the more disinteresting. Mere speculation on my part of course as the British establishment are well known for their fairness, humility and transparency in matters that have the potential to make them look bad.

We may as well wait a little longer and see what news waddles out of the final report.

Background:

*British Airways Flight 38 (call sign Speedbird 38) was a scheduled flight from Beijing Capital International Airport which crash landed just short of the runway at its destination, Heathrow Airport, London, on 17 January 2008 after an 8100 kilometer (4400 nm) flight. There were no fatalities, but nine people sustained injuries. It was the first accident that resulted in a Boeing 777 hull loss.*

Good overview of results so far at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British\\_Airways\\_Flight\\_38](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Airways_Flight_38)

## They shoot horses, don't they?

October 20, 2008

Politicians are many things; they certainly are whores. Too harsh? Hookers then. The more I watch them prostitute themselves on television, the more I realize that nobody is really qualified, per se, to be President.

The mainstream media touts qualification. For example: the need for experience in government, foreign affairs and leadership skills. But when push comes to shove, these are the meaningless mutterings of a confused and unbelievably biased 4th estate.

This bias is demonstrated by the media's frantic pursuit of Obama in their effort to hoist him onto the Presidential pedestal.

I have heard every mistake and foible of McCain and Palin but practically nothing about Obama. And who ever hears about Joe "teeth" Biden these days? I know all about Cindy McCain's fortune and drug rehab but nothing about Michelle Obama; nothing at all. One would get the impression that she has never so much as farted in church.

The media polls all point to Obama's certain victory. Their margins are suspiciously broad; ranging from a 4 to 11% lead for Obama over old man McCain. With margins that large, the numbers are either badly organized or the interviewees confused by the questions. Or the polls are confirming the age-old fact that polls don't so much reflect opinion as much as shape it.

My point is not that the media employs monkeys to compile their poll results by throwing poo at candidate's images even though, entre nous, I believe that is how it's done. No, it's that the media ignores their own qualification standards when it comes to their favorite candidate.

Bottom line, Sarah Louise Palin has more political experience than Obama. We all know it but ridicule her nonetheless. True she's a woman which seems to be an issue for some; a strong one with an opinion on abortion to which she is entitled. Regan, if you remember, slid into office on an anti-abortion ticket. During this campaign I find that the biggest enemy of women isn't men, its other women.

Despite copious public humiliation and being made fun of on SNL weekly as dumb moose-shooting bimbo Palin did well, as herself, on SNL when invited on the show. Indeed Palin held her own in the debate against Biden, a politician with 20+ years more experience than she. It's a strange and oft ignored fact that his qualifications are far more impressive than the Presidential candidate he's running with.

If a minor league womanizing governor from Arkansas or a retired dubiously B-rated actor from California or a dry-drunk from Texas can learn to become president then Palin's got to be a shoe in, given the opportunity. The aforementioned banditos all learned on the job by surrounding themselves – or being surrounded - with seasoned and capable staff.

All things being equal, with the exception of George Jr., who obviously sold his soul to the devil, they all turned out pretty well. Think about that before you cast the next rock at blessed Sarah. Like it or not she's the only chance women have to break that glass ceiling on Pennsylvania Avenue perhaps for four terms. As a superpower, as the world superpower, this fact is truly shameful for many reasons.

What it comes down to is that the candidates real qualifications are in persuading us to vote for them. Think about it – we've got a choice between two people; on one side a severely aging, if humorous, war hero Senator supported by a beautiful Alaskan governor. On the other a half-black Senator who is an excellent orator but has no public service experience at all, who's VP is more qualified than all the other candidates combined.

Powell endorsed Obama. Big deal. He also endorsed and sold the Iraq war to the UN – even when he knew the evidence was dubious - so you'll forgive me if I regard his word as suspect. As our dear President says in his fireside words of wisdom “fool me once, shame on — shame on you. Fool me — you can't get fooled again.” Words to live by. Jesus H. C.

Are these candidates the best we could come up with? I mean really? Out of 300 million people that's it? With the economic and social realities we're facing I fear that one will keel over from a heart attack shortly after the inauguration, and the other will declare himself a Muslim and have half of America wearing burkas by Easter. With a name like Barack Hussein Obama, who are we fooling here? The Middle East is already celebrating the first Muslim U.S. President. It really is. To illustrate, if his name was Haim Samuel Goldberg would you have any doubt which way he was leaning?

There is an expression in Ireland that describes what we – the general public – are, in the face of elections and in believing what these guys tells us year after year, election after election; “gob-shites.” A powerful word that captures the essence of our self-delusion and denial.

As you decide who you want as the next grand fromage, think it through. We need leaders with seasoning and a pretty face to which Biden and Palin qualify. McCain could be the only one with teeth long enough to shoulder the mess his party got us into.

Let him clean it up.