

THE
AMERICAN
DREAM
BOOK TOUR
(& PROTEST)

PART 1

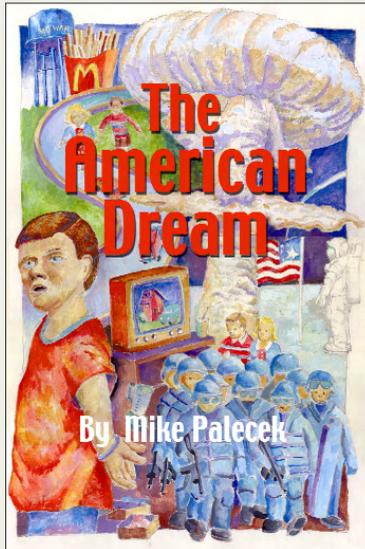


MIKE PALECEK

ColdType

THE AMERICAN DREAM BOOK TOUR (& PROTEST)

"Mike Palecek writes with passion, wit, and always with a profound social conscience." – Howard Zinn



THE AUTHOR: Mike Palecek (seen above during the book tour in Madison, Wisconsin) is a former federal prisoner for peace, small-town reporter and was the Iowa Democratic Party nominee for the U.S. House of Representatives, 5th District, in the 2000 election. He received 67,000 votes on a pro-immigration, anti-military, anti-prison platform.

THE TOUR: On his American Dream Book Tour (& Protest), he is talking about his newest novel, "The American Dream," (CWG Press, \$19.95 – www.cwgpress.com) and calling for the country to impeach President George W. Bush, investigate the Bush administration's involvement in 9-11, and the prosecution of Bush, Dick Cheney, Karl Rove, and Donald Rumsfeld for war crimes against humanity

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INTRODUCTION

“You can’t arrest me, I’m on a book tour.”

— Michael Moore

A punch in the nose for Bush

HELLO. I’m Mike Palecek, somebody from Nebraska who now lives in Iowa, who will soon be taking a country drive, a road trip, because our country seems on the verge of something bad.

Really, I’m not trying to get away.

Actually my mother told me once that when they heard *The War of the Worlds* broadcast on the radio they got in the car and just drove. Just to be going somewhere seemed to help because they were so scared. They thought it was the end of the world. This time the fire.

Well, I suppose I’m plenty scared, but I’m trying to run towards the blaze, trying to see what I can do to put it out.

I have written some books during the Bush era. I’m going on a book tour to promote my

latest, *The American Dream*.

Before I leave I’m also going to send a letter along with a tax form with a black Magic Marker X through it as a protest against George W. Bush.

My book, *The American Dream*, is a punch in the nose to George W. Bush and Karl Rove. Somebody needs to punch those two in the nose.

They smirk while others die. They are getting away with murder. They are robbing us blind.

By sending off this crossed-out tax form and taking this drive around the country in my ‘90 brown Honda with the driver’s side window and radio that don’t work I’ll feel that I’m at least doing something.

Because.

Can we say it? ... Out loud? ... In public? ... Won’t people think we’re crazy? ... Won’t they roll their eyes? Wouldn’t it be easier to just talk about American Idol? The people on Fox and the announcers on the radio don’t say this. They’d say it if it were true. ... Right?

Because.

They – Bush & Co. – did 9/11 themselves. They killed Paul Wellstone.

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They sent the anthrax.

They lied about WMD.

They stole two presidential elections.

They would never have told us about Abu Ghraib.

They have secret torture prisons around the world that we were never meant to find out about.

They spy on us. And not because of “terrorism.”

They steal the oil.

They want power. They want to be rich.

They could care less about us, about the soldiers, about the freedom of the Iraqi people. They snicker about all that in the back rooms. Sure they do.

And there's more.

Some [many?] of our news media “professionals” are actually professional propaganda ministers for this cabal. Who cannot wonder about Fox, Tom Brokaw, Rush Limbaugh and Dan Rather, in this regard.

It sure seems that way.

What's that expression about talking and sounding like a duck?

I was in third grade when our principal, Sr. Ellen, walked into the room just after lunch

recess and said the president had been shot.

A few years later I went to sleep wondering if Bobby would make it through the night. And of course, they had killed Martin Luther King two months before.

So, well, now I'm 51, and those my age would do anything to really understand what happened during those few minutes after lunch in Dealey Plaza on Nov. 22 1963.

My kids will grow up wondering what really happened on Sept. 11, 2001.

Perhaps none of us will ever know. They keep the truth locked away, marked to be opened after we are all dead. The rest they strike out with a black Magic Marker.

But the Bush family is in power.

And American oil companies recorded record profits last year.

The world turns.

They want power. They want to be rich. Human traits, desires.

Quack.

The American Dream.

You look outside your window, you see robins and squirrels and Snickers wrappers and Labrador poop.

Fair to partly cloudy.

It's all a fairy tale. You are a living character inside of a children's book, with dragons and monsters and evil kings and queens.

How did we come to this?

We have fake history – our junior high and high school history books should be all in italics, presented with a wink by the teacher handing out the textbooks on the first day of school: Remember the Maine, Pearl Harbor, Gulf of Tonkin, Iran-Contra, Waco, OKC, moon landings, Watergate, stolen elections – millionaires in Washington D.C. who spend long days agonizing over the lives and living conditions of dump truck drivers and nurses aides. Right? Sure they do.

But even so, to talk about conspiracy in the United States ... it's like being ... a person who has spent the day upstairs alone writing poetry ... and he steps out onto the corner to hand those poems out to passersby. You can imagine the looks he's going to get from people.

Because we accepted the Warren Commission, we got the "9/11 What Controlled Demolition?" and our children will get the "XYZ Non-Investigation By Rich People Covering Up For Other Rich People Leaving The Poor Folks To Drown, Again."

After the Supreme Court stopped the counting of votes. ...

Stopped the counting of votes.

Stopped the counting of votes.

I sat by the upstairs window and looked out at the robins and the squirrels and the Labradors and thought, of course they killed the Kennedys, they can do whatever they want.

I thought about tossing a concrete block through the military recruiters' offices over in Sioux City, just to put up some kind of resistance against all this. I even drove over there, about an hour away, to drive around the area and see how I might do it and get away.

I asked others to join me. Nobody wanted to.

Then I drank a quart of beer out on the patio and sort of measured in both hands the weight of a concrete block against a piece of paper, and decided to keep writing.

I don't know what good I can do. Maybe I'm just driving around just to be moving because I'm scared.

Kurt Vonnegut once said that an anti-war novel is as likely to stop war as an anti-glacier novel is to stop glaciers.

But you still gotta. You gotta walk out the

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back door and put yourself up against that ice and push. Set your feet and lean and get your hands cold. Push with all your might, until you've got no push left.

There are many of us who see the murder of the Iraqi people for gold as evil, and who want their children to grow up in a world not perverted by the mind of Karl Rove. Those are also human traits, desires.

You got something better to do?

Join me. I'll be writing a column along the way.



PART TWO

March 27, 2007

Drinking with the liberals

HELLO. Tomorrow I give Ruth a hug and drive away to Kansas City for the first stop on my book tour, a meeting of the K.C. Drinking Liberally group.

It's been one hundred years since I really went out and socialized. I think this trip will be a learning experience for me.

Just finished updating the itinerary. There are seventy-eight stops between drinking with the liberals in Kansas City to drinking with the liberals in Colorado Springs on July 3.

Got my car worked on, tune-up, oil, two new tires. Cost about fifteen hundred or so. And so, of course, this afternoon I'm going back to the shop because the windshield wiper fluid still doesn't spray. And maybe I should have got that driver's side window and the radio to work, I don't know, maybe.

I did figure out the iPod, with the help of my

kids, Sam and Emily. Ruth bought me a map and Lisa Casey at All Hat No Cattle and Bart at Bartcop.com sent me T-shirts. Awesome.

At 51, it's been awhile, almost thirty years, since I took my last road trip in my dad's 1959 Chevy with the wings, and my dog, and cowboy hat I bought in Fort Collins after visiting my sister. I always called her derisively "my rich sister." I shouldn't have done that. That's maybe not fair, but her husband, once the manager of KCOL radio in Fort Collins, was up on the dais when President Gerald Ford visited Fort Collins in the 1970s. I don't like Gerald Ford. He's dead and I don't like him any better. He was supposed to be a man's president, football player and all. If he was half a man he wouldn't have lied to us all with the rest of the Warren Commission. Oh, well, what you gonna do with rich bastards? About all you can do is holler. They're still gonna do whatever it is they do.

Anyway, dad's brown and white Chevy, my dog, Nicki, sitting in the front seat, ears flapping in the breeze, looking around at me, out the window with Buddhist detachment. Headed out west, to Oregon, to find the sun, the truth, the girl of my dreams, my ass with both hands,

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I really don't know. Dad died in 1981 in an Omaha hospital, of kidney failure, the day before Ruth and I got married. That has been awhile, too. Wish I still had the white plastic Jesus we used to have on the dashboard of the Chevy. It might come in handy.

I never did want to do this, take a book tour. In my mind, that's the reason you write books, because you don't or won't talk. But my books are good, really, trust me, and they deserve a chance to live. So I'm going to give about eighty speeches more than I have ever given in my life – and I think it will be a blast. When it's all over, after you get back and sit with a quart of beer in both hands on the back porch, that kind of a blast, not necessarily while, oh, well, that's enough.

I need to just go do it. Right. I hear you.

First, I need to put this letter to the IRS in the mail.

Seeya



March 27, 2007

Internal Revenue Service

Kansas City, MO 64999-002

Hello,

Enclosed is a crossed-out tax form.

I will not cooperate with the murderous regime of George W. Bush.

President Bush and his administration planned and carried out the attacks on the United States on 9-11-01, in order to attack Iraq and steal their oil.

In the eyes of Bush and Cheney and Rove, the war is going according to plan. They and their friends are making millions, billions, from the oil, from the defense industry, while the poor go without, while social services are cut in order to pay for more war and killing.

As a Christian, I cannot go along with this.

I must protest.

Sincerely,

Mike Palecek

PART THREE

April 1, 2007

My first-ever book signing

OMAHA – It's incredible the number of times I have to pull over to pee. Hello from the road, The American Dream Book Tour & Protest Across the USA has arrived in Omaha.

This past week I left my home in Sheldon, Iowa and traveled south to Kansas City, then Newton, Kansas, Lawrence, then back to Kansas City, and now Omaha.

I am so lucky to have this chance to see all this, to meet these people, to try to fight the murderous Bush government, the killer of Paul Wellstone, the perpetrator of 9-11, torturers, thieves, killers of young people, men, women, babies.

All thanks to Ruth for her support and letting me have this unbelievable opportunity.

I'm staying this week with Kevin and Laura McGuire. Ruth and I lived with the McGuires, and others during the 1980s in a resistance com-

munity in Omaha called Greenfields, which Kevin named after an anti-war song, *The Greenfields of France*.

Wednesday night I met with the Kansas City Drinking Liberally group in downtown K.C. at Harlings bar, and stayed with someone who writes greeting cards for Hallmark. Then Thursday, it was on to the Mennonite community of Newton, where I stayed with Don and Eleanor Kaufman. Don is from Ruth's hometown of Freeman, South Dakota. Eleanor is on the board of A Thousand Villages and Don is a tireless, lifelong peacemaker and war tax resister.

I spoke to a group of six at Peace Connections on Main Street in Newton, then down the street to Faith & Life bookstore where I sat through my first-ever book signing, just me and the table. I did manage to sell one book.

In Lawrence I spoke at the public library on Friday evening, then Saturday joined the weekly anti-war vigil at the courthouse then across the street to the Solidarity bookstore to introduce myself. Met some great people, notably Marvin, who has just gone through prostate cancer surgery and still makes it to the vigils and also works at the local soup kitchen.

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It was very cool to have Greg and Michelle Albrecht in Lawrence shooting a documentary of my book tour. They also met me in Omaha the week before to film at the Pottawattamie County Jail, the Douglas County Jail, St. Cecilia's Cathedral and Offutt Air Force Base.

In Lawrence I stayed with Char and Joe Grant. Joe's is biography one of the amazing American resistance stories waiting to be told. He has tales to tell of the Cuban revolution, Leavenworth penitentiary and independent publishing. He once had his paper in Cedar Rapids burned down because he was doing his job too well. Nobody burned down Dan Rather's building. There would be no need.

In Kansas City, on Saturday night, I spoke to four people at the Crossroads Infoshop on Troost Avenue. Before the talk I drove around the neighborhood and looked at the murals of Martin Luther King Jr. and sat in the parking lot at McDonald's, catching up on my writing, and wondering why the blacks live here, looking down those streets into those neighborhood and wondering what goes on there, what stories are there that need to be told. And why is it that black people live in neighborhoods like this. How did that happen and why do we

tolerate it? Jason Miller, the internet journalist, and Chuck Monson, the longtime radical writer and publisher, were there to hear me, and I appreciated very much having them there.

On the way out of Kansas City that night the highway passed the downtown area and I could see the big building and the lights out of the corner of my eye while I clutched the paper with Chuck's directions in both hands on the steering wheel. I remembered coming to Kansas City once in the '80s from Omaha on a bus, walking the streets, "becoming a homeless person on purpose." I took the bus back to Omaha later that night. I couldn't be a homeless person. I had a place to go to. I couldn't go where I did not belong.

So many smart people I'm meeting. It reminds me of my first experiences as a peacenik in Saint Paul, Washington, New York, Omaha – everyone so smart. I shouldn't be here. I hang around anyway.

I am way outside my comfort zone as I drive around these cities and meet and speak to these people. It's good for me, as my comfort zone is sitting on the sofa with a yellow and red afghan pulled over my head.

I did a phone interview on the way to

Newton with a reporter from Sioux Falls who agreed with me that Bush and Co. did 9-11 themselves. That night I was suffering from iPod withdrawal as somehow I lost all 259 songs. I was going down the road without Natalie Maines, John Prine, Guy Clark, Jerry Jeff Walker, Jackson Browne. I turned on the radio and heard the usual clutter, turned it off and enjoyed being away from America for a while.

When I drive I gawk. I'm always looking for Bigfoot, not in the metaphorical sense of one of my books, but in da flesh. I think I saw one once near Spearfish, South Dakota in the early '80s and once on a rainy night on the interstate in southern Minnesota in the early '90s.

I also like to look at old, lonesome dirt roads that I pass. The ones that roll, wind, are rocky or muddy or just go on forever to nowhere to everywhere. I like to imagine the mystery of where those roads lead and the interesting people at the end.

I remember when Ruth and I moved to the Sandhills of Nebraska in 1990 so that I could work as a reporter on the Ainsworth Star-Journal. I loved the idea that there was so much land and so few people. I had just gone crazy, insane, clinically depressed during six months

in the Council Bluffs county jail for civil disobedience at Offutt AFB and the farther away I was from people the better. Then the first Gulf war came and I wrote in the newspaper that I did not support the troops. We got threats, my column was cancelled. I quit the paper and we found our own tiny paper to run in southeast Minnesota.

Being in Kansas made me recall the night I arrived at Leavenworth Penitentiary on a prison bus. It was a dark and stormy night all right. The lighting cracked and the front steps looked like a thousand steps straight up to hell.

Later I would walk up those steps as a reporter to interview Leonard Peltier and the steps did not seem so steep.

Roads, streets, steps, to nowhere, everywhere, dead ends, new beginnings.

I recommend it.



PART FOUR

April 8, 2007

Right, wrong and prison

SHELDON, IOWA – Hello all. I am home this weekend for Easter, watching the Red Sox and Rangers on Sunday Night baseball.

I was in Lincoln, Omaha, Wayne, Sioux Falls since writing last.

Lots of memories in Omaha. Ruth and I lived there during much of the 1980s in a resistance community in north Omaha called Greenfields, named after the anti-war song *The Greenfields of France*.

“Oh how do ya do young Willie McBride. Do you mind if I sit down here by your graveside.”

I think I carved that into my cell in Terre Haute Penitentiary while I was there for three weeks waiting transfer to El Reno, Leavenworth and La Tuna.

Terre Haute. “Dog-ass Terre Haute” somebody on the prison bus said as we pulled within sight. We had come from Chicago and

stopped at Marion earlier in the day to pick up a couple of guys bound for Leavenworth after years in lockdown at Marion. Or maybe Marion came after Terre Haute. Not sure that I remember anymore. ‘Scuse me.

You get out of the prison bus and you walk up toward the big brick penitentiary, through the guard towers and the shotguns and rifles. And you know that none of it has to do with right and wrong. It has to do with we are bigger than you and we could give a shit about thou shall not kill and the poor and any of that shit and we will kill you if you get out of line and run toward home and your son and your wife.

And ‘scuse me, but that walk up from the prison bus to the big brick walls of Terre Haute Penitentiary is where I formed a good deal of my opinion of America. Even days and weeks and years spent in hot and cold classrooms, wooden desks and Formica desks, listening to Sister Anita and, Lucy, Monique and Luellan, studying American History and religion and English and hygiene, from impressive, hard cover textbooks made in Texas could not compare.

The guns were pointed at me. My son was sitting at home in Nebraska looking out the

window wondering when I was coming home.

America. It is big and it will kill you. It is mean. It is rich. It is obnoxious. It is beautiful. It has people capable of stopping their car in rush hour traffic to move a baby bird to the grass, or of looking the other way for forty years while people suffer and suffer and finally die.

America. A big, red brick walled country.

But, shit, the people who will stop in traffic for the little bird are far and few between, while the ones who will take money to build big, red brick walls are lined up from here to the hardware store.

Anyway ... Omaha.

Dog-ass Omaha.

I went to jail for the first time in Omaha, along with the second, third, fourth and fifth times.

I went to seminary from Omaha, too.

Took the bus, Greyhound, from Norfolk, to meet the bishop. Then up to Saint Paul where I met Fr. Daniel Berrigan, a priest who said there were better things than becoming a priest, such as working for peace and for justice and the poor, and I believed him. I still do.

During the summer I got my teeth cleaned back home in Norfolk, and I guess I liked clean

teeth, so I ended up marrying the dental hygienist. We moved to Omaha and moved into Greenfields.

I wrote a letter to Archbishop Daniel Sheehan asking him what he thought of Offutt Air Force Base, home of the Strategic Air Command, which was responsible for the targeting of all of America's nuclear weapons. Sheehan said the targeting was cool with him and the Catholic Church. Threatening all those people with murder was cool, spending all those billions of dollars on weapons and not on the poor people of north Omaha was cool with the bishop and the Catholic Church.

So I made up my own little sign.

It said "The Omaha Catholic Church Supports SAC – Why?"

I picketed outside the bishop's offices on Dodge Street, inside his offices, outside the Masses of the jillion Catholic churches in Omaha. I went on a hunger strike once inside Douglas County Correctional Center to try to get the bishop to say "thou shall not kill." I once stood in front of the congregation at St. Cecilia's Cathedral while the bishop gave his Easter homily, holding my sign.

I once took sanctuary inside the Cathedral,

went there instead of going to federal court for an Offutt protest, again asking, demanding that the bishop say “thou shall not kill.” He raised a strong chin, firmly placed his red bishop’s cap on his head and smoothed his gold-laced, ankle-length robes and said, of course, he would not.

I decided not to let the FBI take me – they were all around the church – one was posing as a stations-of-the-cross sayer inside the church.

While a friend held a diversionary press conference on the front steps I pulled a sweatshirt hood over my head and threw a black garbage sack over my back and walked out a side door, took out the Cathedral garbage, and hopped into the car my wife had left for me in the parking lot.

Ruth and I and our young son were on the run from the FBI for about two nerve-racking weeks, staying in the cabin of a sympathetic priest, at the mother house of a local religious order, in a friend’s apartment, out at her family’s farm in South Dakota.

Then I ended up giving myself up at a press conference, again at the Chancery, the bishop’s office, after which my wife and son went home alone. I went to Douglas County Correctional

Center, where I went crazy, insane, clinically depressed, from missing my young son ... and the bishop ... he went golfing.

Dog-ass Catholic Church.

It is big and it will kill you.



PART FIVE

April 9, 2007

The real truth is out there

HEADED TOWARD ROCHESTER, MN – What if you went underground and nobody came looking for you?

Start thinking of yourself as a big deal and by law of nature you will get a rock handed to you on Christmas morning.

Tuesday I went to Spirit Lake, Iowa for a reading. I was feeling pretty good because I have sold some books thus far on my book tour: one here, two there, sometimes three in one place. Awesome, to my way of thinking.

Stopped into Hill Avenue Books and began visiting with owner Jill Krebs. She pointed to a stack of books by an author who lives within stone-throwing distance.

“I’ve sold a thousand copies.”

A thousand. A thousand?

Geezuz God, a thousand copies of one book?

That’s ... well ... well ... that’s a lot.

How’s that one copy of my book, “Terror Nation”, coming along? I ask.

Fine, fine. Still right there, over there.

I go make a visit to my book, check it out, leaf through it.

Yep. Looks good.

I set it back, kind of on edge, to make it stand out from the ones next to it. Marketing.

There was a nice crowd at Hill Avenue that morning. It was snowing pretty good outside and five solid souls came out to hear me, some curious to come see the author mentioned in a letter to the editor that morning in the Spirit Lake Dickenson County News saying that Krebs should not have allowed me to speak at her store because of my anti-war, anti-Bush views and books.

They passed the protesting note around the circle and then asked what I thought. I thought it was okay, that the man sent this. It’s not right to try to limit discussion, which was what he was trying to do, and what happens routinely on a national scale in the United States. Yes, that is wrong, but for the guy to feel strongly enough to say what he thought, that part is fine with me. Lots of people might disagree with

you, but only the rare ones step out of line to look you in the eye. You have to respect those folks. Though, this man did not show up at my reading.

And, I do have strong views, I guess. I don't know. I think the things I am saying should be on everyone's mind these days.

In my talks I say that I think Bush & Co. carried out the 9-11 attacks. I also say that they killed Wellstone. I talk about conspiracy in the United States in the same vein as apple pie, Chevrolet, and steroids and home runs. I can't believe we let them get away with killing the woman at Ruby Ridge or the children at Waco, and I think there is reason to believe the FBI was involved with the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City. I have no idea why. Maybe they would know.

Did we land on the moon a few times back in the 1960s and never go back? I dunno. Could we really get through the radiation belts? Why were there no stars in the photos. Where did that breeze come from to make that American flag ripple perfectly? And did you ever see the press conference with Buzz Aldrin, Michael Collins and Neil Armstrong after they were supposed to have landed on the moon? They

are morose, certainly not excited. They look dejected. You can imagine by watching the video that they could be depressed at having to be part of such a thing. They hardly talk at all, and they just came back from the effing moon? I would be like, dude, you gotta see this place!

Well, it just makes you wonder.

And you read in the last Rolling Stone magazine that E. Howard Hunt says it was LBJ and Hoover who had JFK killed? And the Canadian filmmaker who found footage of CIA agents in the Ambassador Hotel that night, agents who hated the Kennedys and who would have no reason to be there in support of Bobby Kennedy.

It goes on and on. Somebody said, maybe it was Stalin – the bigger the lie, the easier it is to get people to believe it. It's just too huge to comprehend.

Maybe. Who knows? Could be. Sometimes I wonder.

Is that as close as we're ever going to get? And if so, when will it ever stop? Probably not. And that would be the goal of disinformation, to confuse, to convince the public that the real truth will be impossible to find.

That can't be true. The real truth is there. If

we want it.

Warren Commission, Gulf of Tonkin, Pearl Harbor, Iran-Contra, torture, WMD, 9/11 Commission – lies, lies, lies. Any reason here to believe these people? I am open to suggestion.

I'm saying that, though it's hard to imagine, anything is possible in the United States, not only in the little guy makes it big sense, but in the they murder in other countries to bring about their desired ends, why not here sense.

Surely not because they are the good guys. Can we imagine any scenario where Dick Cheney or Karl Rove, George Bush or Donald Rumsfeld would say no to an action because of it being immoral?

Absolutely not.

The only guideline our appointed leaders employ is whether a certain action will help them to maintain power. A search for truth, for right, for goodness, never enters the discussion, the equation.

But, even so, along the road, I am finding out that many liberals, progressives, doubt that Bush & Co. had anything to do with 9-11.

And I will also often get the question, what political candidate do you support?

Well, I would support anyone who would

get us out of Iraq immediately, initiate a real investigation into 9-11, and prosecute Bush, Cheney, Rove, Rumsfeld, Rice, et al for unspeakable crimes against humanity.

Onward. See you in Rochester, Des Moines, Iowa City.



PART SIX

April 13, 2007

Reflections on Paul Wellstone

“You open up their hearts, and here’s what you’ll find ... some humans ain’t human, some people ain’t kind.” – John Prine

DRIVING TO DES MOINES – It’s sixty-three songs from Sheldon, Iowa to Rochester, Minnesota.

I got my iPod back up and running. I won’t be alone anymore.

Got the Dixie Chicks, John Prine, Guy Clark, Jerry Jeff Walker, Mary-Chapin Carpenter, John Denver, The Clash, Bill Hicks, Cat Stevens, The Soggy Bottom Boys, Alison Krause, The Eagles, Green Day, Greg Brown, Woody Guthrie, Steve Forbert, Harry McClintock, all squeezed into the brown Honda.

Austin, Minnesota is thirty-four songs from Rochester.

It is the home of the Spam Museum. I’m

probably in there somewhere, maybe in the hall of fame with all my emails over the past ten years trying to hawk my books.

In the early 1990s, Ruth, Sam, Emily and I lived in Byron, eight miles west of Rochester. We owned the tiny Byron Review, ran it out of the north side of our home on Byron Avenue. We scrimped and saved and hustled and fought with the city council, school board, lumber yard, elevator, fire department, and won the newspaper of the year award from the MNA in 1994. We went out of business later in the year.

Sitting in traffic in Rochester was the first time I felt kind of vulnerable with my bumper stickers: 9-11 Was An Inside Job, Jail Bush, Impeach Bush. Rochester is a conservative island in Minnesota. But it wasn’t really that. I think I was just tired, depressed a little from having to leave home and think of three months ahead of me on the road, and so maybe I was poking along a little and getting some looks from my fellow Americans.

But I’ve got a license to drive slow – Iowa plates.

And now I remember how fast people in southeast Minnesota drive. They are busy people, getting things done, going places. I try

not to get in the way.

Sitting in heavy traffic on Broadway Avenue in Rochester I kept an eye on the fat blonde woman behind me with no neck driving the forest green Dodge Caravan. Had my hand on the auto-lock in case she opened her door.

Once when I was a seminarian at the College of St. Thomas in Saint Paul in 1979 I flipped a trucker the bird as I drove past him in my 1959 brown and white Chevy. Just because I thought I could, and get away with it.

As I sang along with an Eagles song I could see a familiar truck getting bigger in the rearview mirror.

I had to stop and the trucker pulled up next to me, got out of his truck, came around to my door and pounded on the door and the window, saying somebody should teach me a lesson.

I did learn a lesson.

Don't stop.

Or if you have to stop, keep one eye on the lady in the fur-lined jacket in the side mirror.

When we were in Byron in the early '90s I did a story on the Leonard Peltier case, and interviewed an FBI agent in the Rochester office.

One of them, David Price, was mentioned in the book *In The Spirit of Crazy Horse*, and had been accused by some in the American Indian Movement of having murdered Anna Mae Aquash. He wasn't in the office the day I was there, so I did not get to meet him.

The other, Don Dealing, did visit with me. He talked about Peltier, Jack Coler, Ronald Williams, Wounded Knee.

He had been at Wounded Knee as a member of some sort of FBI special forces team.

By searching Google for Don Dealing tonight I found that he testified in 2004 in a trial regarding the death of Anna Mae Aquash. He says he was the first FBI agent on the scene. I don't recall talking to him about that. In the 20044 testimony he also says that his only knowledge of COINTELPRO is through what he has seen "through media and that sort of a thing."

Have you ever met an FBI agent? I have talked to a few, while in custody, as a reporter, watching a friend be arrested by a boatload of them once in Omaha. They don't seem human. They have a non-terrestrial aura. Stay away from them if you can. Your life will be richer for it.

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Anyway, I spoke last night to the southeast Minnesota peacemakers group in Rochester, perhaps the most organized peace group in the continental USA. They have name tags and agendas and motions and seconds, and non-acidic tea.

In my talk I raise the question of whether Senator Paul Wellstone was assassinated by the Bush government. I really didn't know what to expect in giving the talk in Minnesota. But during and afterwards some said they agreed, and some thanked me for saying out loud what was on people's minds.

They were not aware of Jim Fetzer's book, *American Assassination*.
[http://www.assassinationscience.com/American_Assassination.html]

And so when someone asked what additional information I had about the Wellstone affair, I told them about the book. And I said that an electro-magnetic weapon was a possibility, and told how the FBI was on the scene too soon not to have left Minneapolis before the plane crashed. And the fire burned blue-white, which is how an electrical fire burns.

These are things I found out from reading

Fetzer's book.

I have to admit, out loud, that a lot of what I say comes not from knowing, but from feeling.

I don't apologize for that.

I don't think there is anything wrong with saying what you feel. I would actually like to have someone show me, to my satisfaction, that I am wrong about Bush and 9-11, Bush and Wellstone. That would be fine with me.

To have to imagine the alternative, that persons within our own government did these things, is not particularly easy to live with. I would be glad to let it go.

I first found out about Wellstone's death when I turned on my computer that day and went to Common Dreams and there was Wellstone's photo. I then went over to run on the treadmill at nearby Dordt College, and the Wellstone news was on the TV in the corner. A couple of college girls were snickering, implying that he got what he deserved. Gotta love those pro-lifers.

The timing of the death of Wellstone was perfect for the Bush administration. They needed that seat to control the Senate. Wellstone stood in the way of a lot of things.

Think how excited they would be at about

that time, after pulling off 9-11, and set up perfectly to run the table, to take over the world. Would people like this let one guy stand in their way after all the work and struggle they had committed to become rich and powerful?

Not likely.

There was an investigation. The National Transportation Safety Board determined that pilot error was responsible for the plane not maintaining adequate air speed, which led to a stall from which they could not recover.

And so we can be certain Wellstone was not murdered, because a commission said he was not.

Well, I don't agree.

I think these things can be rigged: the Warren Commission and the 9-11 commission come to mind.

I just think someone like Wellstone, who had heart, who was twice the man, twice the human being, that George W. Bush is, deserved better. He deserves justice. He deserves a real investigation.

He deserves to not be forgotten.



PART SEVEN

April 17, 2007

My idea of high living

“But Tonto he was smarter, and one day said Kemo Sabe, kiss my ass, I bought a boat, I’m going out to sea.” – Lyle Lovett, *If I Had A Boat*

SITTING IN THE MAY DAY CAFE, SOUTH

MINNEAPOLIS – I got a hug from a black lesbian in Iowa City. She was wearing a black stocking cap and heavy coat and dreadlocks.

It was great. A hug.

Wow.

It probably says a lot about me, the way I describe that event. Sorry.

Or not.

I am from Norfolk, Nebraska. When I lived in Norfolk the only blacks were the basketball players for Norfolk Junior College, and the only housing they could find in town was in the locker rooms of the Catholic elementary. I guess nobody else would rent to them. I remember

seeing them in there, coming in and out, when we went to the gym for P.E., didn’t think anything of it.

Oh, well.

Cherry, “as in the tree”, made a comment during my presentation that she didn’t come to a point in her life where she had to “break up with America” because of finding out the truth. She never trusted America. She always knew what it was about. She did not have to go to prison. She did not have to wonder after 9-11 whether her government could have done it themselves.

“I totally believe the conspiracy stuff,” she said. So do I, and I’m from Norfolk. I didn’t always know about America. I had to learn it, along the road, from people like Cherry, like Dan Berrigan, like Kevin McGuire, Darrell Rupiper, Jean Petersen.

Yesterday I pulled over at a rest stop 40 miles out of Saint Paul to be a guest on a radio show with Kevin Barrett in Wisconsin. It was a nice break to a long drive from Iowa City to Minneapolis, during which I played and re-played Lyle Lovett’s song *If I Had A Boat* about twelve times because I like the line from Tonto. That line makes that song, gives it heart, gave

me some strength for the road, same as the hug from Cherry.

I read at Magers & Quinn Books in Minneapolis last night, and tonight it will be Magus Books, then tomorrow morning on to Duluth and Winnipeg. The College of St. Scholastica booked me at the Holiday Inn in Duluth for tomorrow, so I'm hoping to put my feet up at some point and locate a quart of beer and the Twins game. That's high living to my point of view. I'm from Norfolk.

Well, I'll take this chance to tell you something about my book, since it has turned into a sunny afternoon, and I have a while until I have to try to find my way over to Dinky Town for my 7 p.m. reading.

The American Dream, is a satirical novel which I wrote last summer each day in my head as I drove from my home in Sheldon, Iowa to my work at a group home in Hull, Iowa, about twenty minutes away. Then I wrote it down on paper when I was supposed to be working, then typed it into the computer when I got home, when I was supposed to be mowing the lawn.

The focal character is Michael M.

M also works at a group home. He wants

with all his being to get on the Home Helper Show to get his little house fixed up and make his wife happy – while the world burns.

By accident, M rams his moped into the war memorial in city park and breaks the World War II monument. He is whisked away by helicopter to the local concentration camp and called a terrorist. He is dubbed The Big Evil One.

And other stuff happens. I'll tell you more later, if you want.

My thanks to Holly Hart in Iowa City for organizing the event at the public library. Thanks to Marta Carson for the place to stay. It's this refurbished old church out in Amish country outside of Iowa City. Remember that old Arlo Guthrie song, *Alice's Restaurant*? Isn't there a church in there somewhere? And Marta was playing an Arlo Guthrie song in the morning. Far out.

Thanks to Jeff Sarmstrom and his family for coming to Magers & Quinn last night. They really made my day.

I'm staying these couple of days with Ed & Carol Felien in south Minneapolis. Carol teaches women's studies at a local college and Ed runs an alternative Twin Cities newspaper,

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The Pulse. He has a Che Guevara mousepad. Now, why couldn't I find a paper like that to work for when I was running around in a fever to be a real reporter?

Ed doesn't know me, but when I emailed him to ask him for a place to stay, he said yes. Last night after my reading he had wine and cheese and crackers ready and the three of us watched Amy Goodman interview Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn – on the TV. Howard Zinn talking sense on the television. That is something I have never-ever before seen in my life. I am from Norfolk.

I had lunch up in The Pulse offices today with Ed and his staff: wonderful, rebellious, talented journalists. Put these people on the TV, on the Minneapolis Star-Tribune, the Washington Post, and we won't have to put up with the likes of George W. Bush and Karl Rove. [My dislike for Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings seems to have not yet found bottom.]

And somebody – some great, wonderful body – gave me a hug after one of my talks.

The sun is out, there are kids running around this shop. It smells like exotic coffee that I do not yet know how to order. There are

two guys next to me playing their daily card game, loving every minute of it.

And now it's time to try to find Magus Books.

You take care. Enjoy the day.
Seeya.



PART EIGHT

April 18, 2007

Talking, sitting, listening

WATCHING THE TWINS GAME FROM THE DULUTH HOLIDAY INN

– I could not find a quart of beer on a Wednesday night in Duluth. Oh, well. Coors Light bottles will do in a pinch.

I look out the window and I see this old port city, with these humongous buildings, board of trade, hotels, that you just know used to hold millions of sailors every night, drinking and shit. Quart bottles, no doubt. It makes you wish you could go out right this minute and find a boat to go down to the bottom of Lake Superior, and have Gordon Lightfoot feel really bad about it.

Or not.

Hey.

Wow. What a night.

I visited the Duluth Catholic Worker, Loaves & Fishes. And I am on a Dorothy Day high.

What a group. That was fun.

Michele Naar-Obed was one of those sitting around the living room. She told how hard it had been for her to be away from her family while she served eighteen months in a federal prison in Florida for pounding on a nuclear submarine. Her husband, Greg Boertje-Obed, is due to be released soon from Sandstone prison for pounding on a missile silo in North Dakota.

And there were lots of other interesting people there. I always just sit and listen after I finish my thing. There are always lots smarter people than me around who know lots of stuff. My mission is to shut the eff up and maybe learn something.

And this afternoon I read at the College of St. Scholastica, also in Duluth.

You should have seen the spread they put out there. Beer on ice, wine on ice, cheese on ice, crackers and broccoli and carrots on ice. And I couldn't touch any of it, because I am the honored guest.

So it goes.

Are you like me and everything reminds you of prison or county jail?

Does the play area at McDonald's freak you out because it's hard plastic like county jail chairs and it feels like you're locked in and

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those workers behind the counter look like county jail guards? And they're laughing and pointing at you ... and.

Really? You, too?

And does the College of St. Scholastica reminds you of a prison, that stone wall, and how tall it is, and the cut, the outline of the top?

You, too?

Dude.

It's got this front wall, and it reminds me of Stillwater state prison. I was never inside, except as a reporter, but, oh, well.

Yes. I can talk about something else.

I was walking around the campus before my talk, and I checked out the chapel, which was awesome. I could sit in there and think about shit for a long time if I had to, but I was nervous before my talk, so I just peeked inside.

Then I walked by a sign that said "St. Scholastica Monastery."

I once considered the monastery, in Oregon. I'm not sure they considered me. They would not let me keep my dog, so I left.

I think it would be great to pray about a million hours every day. And I don't know that I would miss the world too much, except for

sex, and Twins baseball, and beer.

Hey.

You should have seen the lineup card I picked up at Magers & Quinn books in Minneapolis.

Upcoming Events: Mike Farrell, Mike Palecek, Ralph Nader. The events manager told me he had about 175 people for Mike Farrell, had to knock out a wall to fit everyone in. There were four people at my event and one of them was a little girl with her parents. I'm still calling it four.

Hey. The next night over in Dinky Town, near the U of M, I did a signing at Magus Books. It was like being in Diagon Alley. They had bumper stickers about brooms and witches and stars and being abducted by Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin.

I saw a plaque for "Best Astrology Store." They had crystals, and books on Wiccans and UFOs and the customers were ordering "oils." Yeah, sure, that probably means, oh, well, it could just be oils. What do you do with oils? Write me if you know.

The owner was a Brit. He called Bush a "plunker." I smiled as if I knew what that meant because I was the honored guest author.

I think that means retard-war-criminal. I might need a ruling on that. Write me.

On the way up to Duluth from Minneapolis this morning I passed Sandstone. I remember driving up there in the 1980s from Omaha with Rich Koeppen to visit Kevin McGuire in prison.

And later Marylyn Felien and I would drive up to Duluth from Omaha on a mission to help Rich.

See ... there was this thing about how three resisters from Omaha, in prison for protests at Offutt Air Force Base, were being held too long, past their sentences.

So, we came up with the idea to “Get Rich Quick.”

Meaning we would drive up to Duluth and hold signs outside the prison, where Rich Koeppen was being held, to try to force the federal government to release him.

It didn't work. Then we drove to Chicago where Kevin was being held at Metropolitan Correctional Center, the federal prison in downtown Chicago, to try to help him, too.

In the meantime, the feds had released Frank Cordaro from Marion, before we even got there. Maybe we scared them with our clever slogan.

Anyway, Kevin wasn't waiting for us. He was on a hunger strike inside MCC in Chicago, saying they needed to release him or he would not eat.

He was in the doctor's office in MCC, with the hack doctor shoving an IV up his arm to force-feed him, when the order came to cut him loose. They let him out the side door.

You ever hear of anyone forcing the Bureau of Prisons – by a prisoner in custody – to release him?

I have. Kevin McGuire. He beat them. Unheard of. Awesome. Kevin is Irish. Somebody needs to write an Irish drinking song about the bloody British and the lads and McGuire forcing the bloody, fooking BOP to cut him loose.

So. We had a party.

Hey.

Before my thing at St. Scholastica. Did I tell you they had my name on the marquee out in front of the school? They did.

No. I don't think it's that. I don't think I'm a big deal and I get off on seeing my name. Oh, I love to see my name. Dude. It's just that I know how small of a deal I am, and when I see something like that it knocks my socks off, and

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I have to smile. What if Ruth could see this.
We'd get a chuckle out of it. Maybe go have a
beer somewhere.

Well, then I went and parked, put my bags
inside the hall and went to explore, made notes
about the college looking like a prison, shit like
that, then went behind the monastery and
walked up to the trees.

I could imagine going into the woods and
never coming out.

I really would. And never come out except
for sex, or to drink a lot of beer, or to go to a
Twins game. I swear I would.

Hey.

See you tomorrow night in Winnipeg.

Canada.

Mondragon Books, 7:30 pm.

I have no idea where it is.



PART NINE

April 19, 2007

Hello – and goodbye – Canada

*“Kid, have you rehabilitated yourself?”
I went over to the sargeant, said, “Sargeant, you
got a lot a damn gall to ask me if I’ve rehabilitated
myself, I mean, I mean, I’m sittin’ here on the
bench, I mean I’m sittin here on the Group W
bench ‘cause you want to know if I’m moral
enough join the army, burn women, kids, houses
and villages after bein’ a litterbug.”
– Arlo Guthrie, Alice’s Restaurant*

PEMBINA PORT OF ENTRY – Oh, Canada. I’m
back. Did you even notice I was gone?

I was in Canada from about 3:30 p.m. to
about 5:15 p.m. this afternoon.

I was trying to get into Canada to go to my
book reading in Winnipeg tonight at
Mondragon Books.

They asked me at the window who I was,
what I was doing, where I was going, what kind

of books did I write, what I was thinking.

Umm, political fiction. Why?

Then they sent me inside. Park under the
ramp.

Talk to the customs people, no, go over there
instead, to the immigration folks.

I can do that. How you doing, eh? How
about that Red Green Show, huh? I mean, eh?
You know him? I love that show. I want to
move to Canada sometime. You folks seem like
nice people. You count your votes, here, right?
How do you feel about anthrax?

Do you have a passport?

Umm, no, I didn’t think you had ... I thought
that was next yea ...

Birth certificate? How do I know you are
really an American citizen if all you have is an
Iowa driver’s license.

Hey. How about those Maple Leafs, huh?
You skate? I can’t skate. I wish I could skate ...

Have you ever been arrested?

... But I never learned.

... Yeah, I guess. Hey, lots of ducks around
here, eh? I used to hunt. I don’t hunt anymore.
Bet it gets cold up here.

Sit down. There.

Here?

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Well, I guess you guys are stuck with me now. I always thought Canada was kind of an option. You know, go up there and sit in the park, feed bread crumbs to the moose.

But now it looks like this is kind of it.

Canada kicked me out because I have been to prison for protesting against the United States military at Offutt Air Force Base.

I thought they would appreciate something like that. I thought Canadians were different.

Hmmm.

Well, the young woman immigration officer, agent, takes my papers, Iowa driver's license, back to some room down the immigration hall and disappears for about half an hour, while Mom & Pop Back To Winnipeg From The Winter In Miama get high-fives from the immigration and customs staff, and I'm sitting over in the corner on the Group W bench.

The young woman Canadian person came back and told me to come through the swinging doors with her and please step into the second open door on the right.

One, two.

We sit down and she explains that I can pay \$200 to make an application to get considered to enter Canada. Then the application will be

studied and a determination will be made as to whether I have been "rehabilitated" enough to sit in a borrowed rowboat and drink Moosehead Beer.

Then I am escorted out of the building – young immigration woman keeps my dissolute Iowa driver's license in her hand and tells me where I need to turn around to head back to wherever the hell I came from.

She will only hand me back my license as I pass by her on the sidewalk.

I then drive back the quarter mile or so to the United States immigration complex, a crew whose acquaintance I cannot wait to make.

The American immigration window woman asks me why Canada won't take me.

She directs me to Garage Number Two, where I wait until the door opens and American immigration man motions me inside.

He asks me why Canada won't take me.

Mrs. American Immigration Woman stands close by. They both have on fresh protective gloves, kind of a robins-egg-blue.

He asks what air force base I protested at that got me sent to prison. I tell him.

He asks if I have ever been to Fort Benning, the School of the Americas.

I say no, but I would like to go there sometime. Mr. American immigration man, young fat blond boy with crewcut, does not smile.

He is fingering, smelling, the money in my billfold.

He directs me to “the waiting room.” I know that’s what it is because it says “The Waiting Room” on the door. I can see the chairs inside.

I go sit down in one of the chairs and look toward where Mr. & Mrs. American Immigration Persons are ruffling through my undies and political fiction books.

I can’t see them.

Because of the one-way window.

You can’t watch them as they search your vehicle.

I can hear slamming and clanking and something like dirty socks being sniffed by a drug-smelling Mrs. Immigration American Woman, and I try not to imagine her walking into The Waiting Room with a smile on her face holding a bag of marijuana.

And then they have me. They can put me in Leavenworth or Butterworth or whatever new below-ground federal prison they have these days, and they never have to hear me talking

about how Bush did 9-11 and killed Wellstone, ever again.

The door opens.

Mr. New Immigration Man, the other one must have gone home for the day, says that I’m set to go.

Turn right and head back to wherever the hell you came from.

Can I have the paper from The Country Of Canada that says why I can’t come in?

No, we keep that.

I turn right, head back to Grand Forks.

I look at the sheet on my passenger seat that Miss Immigration Canadian Person Woman gave me.

It’s a list of Canadian Consulates in the United States.

That is where I need to send the \$200 to get them to study me to see if I am rehabilitated enough to fish in a decent lake.

I wonder how they would make their determination.

Are you glad you broke the law? Yes.

Do you support the United States. No, not really. We suck. Our military is a bunch of thugs, paid killers. No money should go to them. In fact, I sent in a crossed-out tax form to

the IRS in Kansas City before I left home on this book tour.

Well, son, looks like you will never see Thunder Bay – ever, in your lifetime. I think we are through here. We'll take those flapjacks with us, and the flannel shirt, the cedar logs.

I told the woman with a smile that I was not rehabilitated, while we were sitting inside the second open door on the right. I thought, being Canadian and all, she would understand what I meant. I wouldn't even try that line down the road with the Americans.

They'd be like, what? Go Packers.

I really thought Canada would be different.

You know, like another country.

Go Maple Leafs.



PART TEN

April 21, 2007

A dream in three layers

What you do is of little significance, but it is very important that you do it. – Ghandi

UNDISCLOSED LOCATION BETWEEN THE INTER-STATE & THE WOODS – I made it into Wisconsin this afternoon. Slipped across the border in between a Fed Ex van and a white Ford pickup.

Shhh. I think there might be Canadians in the hall.

If I am captured in Wisconsin I suspect I will be sent back to Minnesota – just as I was sent packing from Canada yesterday and deported to North Dakota – then no doubt, back to Iowa, where I will be tortured, without a doubt, by endless hours of being exposed to coffee chatter, country music, nine hours of Rush Limbaugh every day, and no minimum speed limit.

I can't go back to Iowa. I won't.

I won't be taken alive.

Shhhh.

The next time I go back to Iowa, it's for life.

I can't do that kind of time.

Shhh!

Somewhere around two o'clock this afternoon, driving south on Highway 53 out of Duluth, headed for Eau Claire, I saw a bald eagle in the ditch, sitting on a deer carcass.

I hate road kill. That's one of the worst things about driving so much, seeing all the dead animals.

In Kansas I saw a couple of coyotes.

In Nebraska I saw deer waiting on the shoulder for cars and trucks to jump in front of, just to get it over with. In Iowa, I saw raccoons getting nudged by cars driven by elderly couples and staring down the white hairs with angry scowls.

Here's something I was not aware of.

Everyone in Wisconsin works on a dairy farm. Not the same farm, of course.

And because dairy farms never-ever shut down – milk does not take a holiday – that means that nobody in Wisconsin ever has a day off. And so anyone you see working any other job, mowing lawns, putting out fires, waiting

tables, running the friendly bank, comes from somewhere else, an immigrant. A day without a Minnesotan, they couldn't do it here. It would spell disaster.

Hey.

I was passing through Park Rapids, Minnesota earlier today and I was stopped at a light and looked to my left and saw this very impressive two-story brick firehouse with two equally impressive big, red fire trucks inside, and guys inside walking fast with their heads down.

Okay.

We take fires very seriously. Why couldn't we also have a big, brick building in every town and big, shiny trucks, and when somebody is lonely, or has to make a choice between working for an asshole boss or facing an angry wife, these guys put on their big, red helmets and slick yellow coats and leap into the truck.

How about if somebody wants to work and has little kids and a wife and is walking to Wisconsin from about a million miles away, just to try to get a little house for the wife and the kids on a school bus route.

Hey.

Here's a little more about my book, *The*

American Dream – the reason I am sitting here in a safe house in Wisconsin, surrounded by resistance fighters smoking thin brown cigarettes, wearing black berets, and sporting Tommy guns over their shoulders, on the lookout for white-haired couples trying to return me to Iowa.

Okay, listen up – there are kind of three layers to why it's called *The American Dream*.

One: our history is fake: Gulf of Tonkin, John Kennedy assassination, Robert Kennedy assassination, Martin Luther King Jr. assassination, stolen elections, 9-11, propaganda distributed daily by our mainstream press organizations, etc. etc.

Two: the obscenity of pursuing the American Dream while people all over the world struggle to get enough to eat each day.

Three: the futility of pursuing the American Dream – we work two, three, twelve jobs in order to give our children a “good” life – get up at 5 a.m. to take the kids to daycare, then 4 a.m., then 3:30, and people like the Bush family, and other very, very wealthy people keep moving the carrot further and further out of our reach. We can never reach it. The game is rigged.

Hey.

I remember sitting in The Waiting Room of the vehicle search garage thing at the Pembina Port of Entry yesterday. The sign on the wall said “Homeland Security – Making the United States and Canada Safer.”

Really?

You really think so?

George W. Bush and Karl Rove and Dick Cheney and nine other guys did 9-11.

Immigration Persons – what you need to do is go set up your blockade and sensors and computers and stuff in Karl Rove’s driveway. Stand there with your bulletproof vests and handguns. Don’t let him into the country.

Putting up a fence across Mexico or Canada to keep poor people out, or people wanting to go read books in Canada is kind of ... well ... stupid. Let the poor people in, send fire trucks down there to the Arizona border to get them up here as fast as possible so they can get their kids into school and don’t make them walk all the way and have to hide from dumb guys to do it.

And let people read books wherever they want. I don’t think that’s the problem.

The problem is that George W. Bush, Karl Rove, Dick Cheney and Don Rumsfeld carried

out 9-11 themselves and murdered Senator Paul Wellstone in order to start a war and get rich.

Mr. Immigration Man in the big garage thing. Come over here. Yep. Stand right there. No. Little bit left. Stop.

Open the hood and take a look inside. There’s your leak, and those guys didn’t sneak in here inside the hubcap of an old Honda Accord. They were driven in by limousine.

See, there’s your problem. Right there. Yep.

American Goober, c’mere. Canadian Goober, c’mere.

See? Right thar. Yyyepp ...

Hey.

Did I ever tell you about the time I woke up a whole Wisconsin state park because I thought there was a bear eating our Doritos in our campsite, and it was really a raccoon? People came running from all over the campground carrying torches and axes and shit. And I had to say, oops, I guess it was a raccoon. Really? I thought I told you about that.

Nah, forget it.

Hey.

See you in Madison, Milwaukee, Chicago.



PART ELEVEN

April 23, 2007

Stood up in Milwaukee

THE GRANDVIEW INN – The Boston Red Sox hit four home runs in one inning tonight against the New York Yankees.

Ho hum.

George Bush Sr. was involved in the murder of John F. Kennedy, the Iran-Contra scandal, stealing two elections for his son, planning the attacks of 9-11, and on, and on.

[<http://www.jfkmurdersolved.com/bush.htm/>
http://demopedia.democraticunderground.com/index.php/George_H.W._Bush_JFK_assassination_letter]

Ho hum.

I guess it just all depends.

Well, I'm sitting in the GrandView Inn somewhere on I-94 with my car headed toward Chicago. The sign says I am in Racine. I think they mean "racing".

All I see is The Ramada, Holiday Inn, a truck

parking lot and well, cars, roads, gas pumps, big signs, people trying with all their heart and soul to get from wherever they are to somewhere else.

I got stood up tonight in Milwaukee.

I had a date at the Cream City Collective, supposed to read there, and nobody, not even somebody to open the door, shows up.

Being a big-shot author, well, it's not that. I mean, I'm this anti-war novelist author guy and here is this anti-war bookstore, with a vegetarian co-op food natural grind, pick and haul your own beans with your own donkey coffee thing across the street, and still I can't get somebody to come open the door.

I drove over here from Madison this afternoon.

I read in Madison yesterday afternoon at a bookstore near the University of Wisconsin.

Beforehand, I was lost, of course, and as an absolute last resort decided to ask for directions. I pulled into this big lot and drove up to this guy wearing an orange vest.

"Mulch?" he asked.

No, no effing mulch.

Where in the eff is Gilman Street?

He gave me directions, expertly, politely, as

only a Madison resident could do.

After my reading, no, before, I go out walking around the “Designated Funk Area.”

And it’s EarthFest Day Thing, of course.

Every day is earth day in Madison.

There is a band up on this stage and, well, they all look like me, like they’ve been standing up there a long time.

I walk around and there are tables set up for fair trade coffee.

“You like solar energy?” someone asks.

Love it, just love it.

Fair trade coffee, sustainable agriculture, homemade shit of every phylum and fauna, and breasts. Every-effing-where.

The whole thing was put on, evidently, by WISPIRG. I know what that is, do you?

And, I’m walking around and people are laughing at me, gut laughs, some smiles.

It’s my all-time best T-shirt ever that Bartcop.com sent to me for this tour.

It has an image of a scowling George W. Bush: Worst President Ever.

It is the best T-shirt ever. I can tell that. I know what is a winner and what isn’t. This T-shirt is a winner.

Well, I read to eight people. That’s not a bad

crowd for me. I thought I was going to get skunked because at 2 p.m., when it was supposed to start, there were a bunch of chairs, but nobody to sit in them.

The way my “events” go is that I do my thing, my speech, which lasts about thirty minutes, then somebody asks me a question and I don’t know the answer, so the people start discussing among themselves, which is fine with me. The people who come to hear me, even though there are not millions of them, are very smart. I’ve noticed that.

And after I speak, they often want the author to be The Author.

They might ask me, where do you think our country is, as far as on the path toward fascism?

And I laugh silently to myself because I know that I have no effing idea, and then I try to get them to talk about it amongst themselves, because I also know that’s what they really want to do anyway.

See, if they came to see a real smart guy author man person like Ralph Nader, well, he would have shit to say, about every-effing-thing, and they could sit there and just listen.

With me, at my “author events,” after I give

my prepared speech, that's kind of it, show's over, anywhere a guy can find a quart of Old Style around here?

I'm okay with that.

I know what I know, and I know there is a definite limit to that, and so I stand in front of the group and let them talk about paradigms and para nickles and para pennies as much as they want, and I pay attention as long as I can, until my mind starts wandering, wondering if that was a Kwik Trip I saw over on Einstein Circle.

After my talk at Rainbow Books in Madison at 2:10 pm., I got directions from Allen Ruff, the events coordinator, raced to find a place to stay, made four [four] trips to the ice machine to cool down the remainder of my twelve pack from Grand Forks in the sink, rode the exercise bike, took a shower, then got directions from the person at the front desk who said she loved my T-shirt [Dude, I told you], back to the university area, cursed the low sun, and sweated myself into finding a parking garage with some room, then walked with my head down and my chunky legs just a churnin' over to hear William Rodriguez in the Humanities Building.

Rodriguez was a janitor in the World Trade Center when 9-11 happened. He was pulled from the effing rubble.

He is a very good speaker. And he admits that he looks and sounds like Ricky Ricardo, which he does.

He helped to save a bunch of people and he says he heard explosions in the basement before the planes hit, saw the vending machine guy walking out of that area with his skin hanging off his arms from the explosions – before the plans hit.

He conjectures that the planners didn't quite coordinate everything – the charges planted in the buildings and the planes hitting – exactly together.

He recently visited Venezuela, and was approached by an FBI agent in the hotel. The Venezuelan government then assigned five men to protect Rodriguez because they thought it just might be possible that the USA would kill Rodriguez in order to silence him, while in the meantime blaming it on Venezuela and giving the land of the free an excuse to invade and silence Chavez, who thinks Bush is the devil, which he is.

Anyway, Rodriguez had no visible protection

in Madison on Saturday. He was headed to Peoria for another talk on Sunday. We owe him a lot. It is possible that the future of our democracy rides on his shoulders. No, not on his. He is doing what he needs to do. It depends on our response.

He is a hero. He is putting his life on the line by rolling his eyes when he hears the Bush government's conspiracy theory about what happened on 9-11.

As I was driving around trying to find a parking spot I saw all these people wearing red T-shirts.

I thought maybe it had to do with the Rodriguez event.

As I got closer I saw that they were University of Wisconsin T-shirts.

There was some kind of sporting event in some kind of humongous building, where most of the people on the sidewalk were headed. Oh, I thought, dumb guys. Not great T-shirts either.

It just depends.



PART TWELVE

April 25, 2007

Looking for my first girlfriend

“So fuck the FCC. Fuck the FBI. Fuck the CIA. I’m livin’ in the motherfucking U.S.A.” – Steve Earle, “The Revolution Starts Now”

HILLSDALE, MICHIGAN, U.S.A – “I was either going to fucking move or fucking change this town.”

That is Richard Wunsch, the owner of Volume One Books of Hillsdale, Michigan.

“And I haven’t done either.”

But he keeps trying.

Geezuz, that means ... everything.

Wunsch has been a first and second grade teacher in Chicago. He has been a block layer, factory worker. He is a radical, a member of the intelligentsia of the United States. There definitely is such a thing. I am finding that out.

Wunsch is wearing a union jacket while he sits in his bookstore and visits with me and

Aimee England – who “runs everything” at the store – as well as visitors strolling in and out of the busy place in downtown Hillsdale, in southern Michigan.

Wunsch talks Steven into sticking around and hearing the rest of my talk. Steven is a young comic, musician, writer. He works at a grocery store right now. He is an “Army brat”, raised in Hawaii, Germany, etc. He has a wife. He is concerned about the world, aware. He bought a book.

And there was this young man over in Chicago, who stopped by to listen to me at Revolution Books. He is from Florida, graduated from high school eight months ago, came to Chicago, by himself, to be an actor. He asked me what I think about global warming.

These guys have guts, creativity, heart. I’m not shitting you, it is my absolute pleasure to be able to meet people like this. Wow.

I have met a lot of people like this in the month I have been on the road.

Anthony Rayson, also in Chicago, Lou Downey, Michael Stanek, and on and on. “Chicago Jim” from Bartcop.com stopped by at Barbara’s Books and gave me a care package for my journey. How great was that? That gesture

is going to take me about four states just on its own. I probably won't even use any gas.

Many folks are concerned about what is going on in this country. Sometimes they are in the city, some are in the smaller towns.

They are smart, passionate, good people.

And when this war ends, when George W. Bush, Dick Cheney and Karl Rove are run out of the White House with a switch, it will be these people who will have done a good share of the workload. Most of us won't never-ever know them, but they are there, they dare, and they care.

I spent Monday and Tuesday in Chicago with Mike & Audrey Stanek. Mike took me out bike riding around town. I have not been on a bicycle since, well ... a long time. We took the Blue Line downtown, too.

Mike accompanied me at my readings at New World Resource Center, the Unitarian Church in Park Forest, Revolution Books, Barbara's Books. Thank you, Mike.

When Mike and I were walking around downtown I could not help but look for Gwen. She lives in Chicago, I think. She was my first girlfriend in ninth grade in Norfolk. We would walk home together and talk and really, the rest

of the world did not exist. And now you don't even know where the other one is. How does that happen?

Oh, well,

That's kind of how it goes.

Kind of how it's supposed to go.

I understand.

Of course I love my wife – Ruth. She is my life.

But still I think it is not extraordinary to walk around and wonder where Gwen from 1968 is, and how she is doing.

If that's wrong, I'm sorry. No I'm not.

After the reading Tuesday night at Barbara's, Mike and a friend of his, Carey, from the housing co-op, went for beers and fries and Gouda [it's cheese!] at the Handlebar on North Avenue, an extremist biker bar.

Carey used to work for Greenpeace.

Get this, once during a Chicago peace rally, he was watching a local television station reporter, well, reporting, on the peace protest. Behind the reporter were some "drunk obnoxious protesters." After the shot, the reporter turned to "the protesters" and said, "thanks, guys." And the "protesters" walked away, drunk no longer.

THE AMERICAN DREAM BOOK TOUR (& PROTEST)

Welcome to America, let me try to explain.

Carey has met Julia Hill Butterfly person woman and also Bonnie Raitt, and that's pretty much hugetime in my book.

He had a great suggestion when the inevitable "well what do we do then" question came up at Barbara's.

Carey said we should write to Rep. John Conyers and demand that these thugs – Bush, Cheney, Rove – be prosecuted before the clock runs out. These men should be in the super-max prisons we have prepared so judiciously.

Most of the people we have in those tombs do not belong there, because this country is insane – but Bush, Cheney and Rove ... well, it was for these boys that thumb screws were ever even think of.

They are murderers.

Mike Stanek, who once spent six months at Indiana's hideous Terre Haute prison for protesting against the U.S. military, also let me download about two hundred new songs onto my iPod and sent me on my way with a brown bag full of Czech beer, from the home country.

What's the word for awesome in Czech?

Nope, I don't know either.

"Piss and moan about the immigrants, but don't say nothing 'bout the president. But democracy don't work that way. I can say anything I want to say." – Steve Earle, "The Revolution Starts Now"

CHIGAGO – As we all sat inside Chicago's Revolution Books waiting to get started, someone came in and said that local law enforcement had just conducted a raid in the heart of the Hispanic community, and that local residents had responded immediately with a march in protest.

A front-page photo appeared the next morning in the Sun-Times.

And so I guess that tells us a little about why and how.

Why don't people get too excited about the war in Iraq?

And how do we mobilize people, get them in the streets, bring about a non-violent revolution, as someone in Madison, Wisconsin suggested.

I think it happens when we feel it affects us. When the city council tries to make us put in a sidewalk in front of our house, then we attend the meeting that night.

The folks in Chicago came out, into the street, immediately, without a mailing list, no matter what was on TV, no matter what plans they had for the evening.

Because the robo cops with the machine guns and the face shields were coming after them.

They had to fight. They did not have a choice to make as to whether their time was better spent going out to eat or working in the garden, or whether to fight the brown shirts on their doorstep.

There was no decision to make.

From what I have seen I think that's the only way it happens.

Hey.

I just saw that Rosie O'Donnell is off The View.

Wow. That tell you anything? It tells me that George W. Bush and Dick Cheney attacked their own country in order to start the war in Iraq and steal the oil.

Dick Gregory once said in Omaha, somewhere in the mid-1980s, that if you challenge them, "they will bring tanks on your ass."

When I first heard that, in about 1984, I

didn't really understand what he was saying, or believe it was that bad in the United States.

It is that bad. In fact, it's probably worse.

Hey. You ever try to find a public restroom in Chicago while you are trying to get out of the city to make it to a book reading in Michigan, and you really, really have to go?

Do you know what happens, eventually?

No, I don't want to talk about it. Would you? If you were a big-time anti-war novelist on a nationwide book tour?

Well, what should we do?

Piss our pants or piss all over the floorboard in fear of the thugs in the police uniforms and government offices?

Or get out in the streets with our signs and our fists in the air?

I know what Lou Downey, Aimee England, Anthony Rayson, Chicago Jim, and Richard Wunsch would do, are doing.



PART THIRTEEN

April 25, 2007

Having a bad time in Indianapolis

“Indiana wants me. Lord, I can’t go back there.”
— Jesus

SWEETWATERS COFFEE SHOP THING, ANN ARBOR, MI – Indiana license plates have American flags and “In God We Trust.”

Indiana also has more war memorials per square foot than any other state in the union.

There is also Purple Heart Highway and Pearl Harbor Memorial Highway and probably twelve other war highways.

In downtown Indianapolis there is this huge statue memorial: The Soldiers & Sailors Statue in The Circle.

I know because I was there, driving nine times around the circle trying to find my way north on West Street to find Spencer’s Bar to meet with the Indianapolis Drinking Liberally group.

Meridian - Right

Right on South

Left on West

McCarty to Delaware, left

Left on East

Right on Washington.

You can’t miss it.

I always miss it.

Some Indianans most likely believe that their license plats and the war memorials and church on Sunday and Jesus are somehow connected. Just like some folks believe we landed on the moon and Osama bin Laden made money on put options prior to 9-11, like the guy in Spencer’s who gave me directions back to my hotel.

After leaving Spencer’s and heading straight on McCarty I stopped at a red light and could see the construction zone for the new stadium for the Indianapolis Colts. There were lights all over and cranes and partial walls. It looked like a set from Waterworld.

It’s supposed to bring a lot of business to Spencer’s after its completed.

Well, I have been to Indianapolis and Saginaw, now waiting to go over to The Planet bookstore on North Main Street in Ann Arbor,

then it's over to Detroit [Oakland County] for another round of Drinking Liberally.

Ruth called me just as I arrived in Indianapolis, worried after hearing about an accident near South Bend that killed eight people.

“You're not mad about the Days Inn?”

No.

I've been spending a lot of money on motels and gas. About half my stash is already gone.

Anyway. I had a bad time in Indianapolis. My own fault. I drank almost all of Mike Stanek's Czech dark beer gift in one night in Hillsdale, Michigan.

I don't really need to go back to Indianapolis again. Not in this lifetime. Is there a next lifetime? Sometimes I wonder. You wonder about that?

The sun is out. It's been rainy lately.

I peed forty-nine times yesterday. Ruth thinks maybe there's something wrong. You think?

But not once in the car. It was a good day.

In fact yesterday was a great day. I found Saginaw, found The Dawn of a New Day coffee shop and met Ellen, Dawn and Clif.

Clif pulled his Michigan map out of his

pocket and showed me exactly where I was, where Bay City is, Ann Arbor and the UP. He showed me where Traverse City is, where he went looking for Bigfoot in the 1970s and found a print.

I also talked about Bigfoot with someone at my signing that evening at Barnes & Noble. I must be getting close to my people.

I really got to sit near the front door of a B&N, at a table, with my books, and a poster saying the author was in the store signing copies of *The American Dream*.

I was sitting there for a while when this little girl walks right up to me, looks me in the eyes and says, “I'm a published author, too.”

Awesome. What is your name?

“Delaney.”

What is your book about?

“My cat.”

Are you writing another book?

“Yes, about my other cat.”

Very cool person this Delaney.

After that I read at the 303 Collective, a progressive visual and performing arts space in Old Town, Saginaw.

I walked in and it was kind of dark, candles every-effing-where, and somebody up on stage

reading poetry – and there were people in the seats.

Afterward I met lots of great people, some fellow 9-11 Truthers, lots of young people. They shook my hand and smiled and that means a lot, just like meeting Delaney.

The 303 Collective – and particularly this talented guy named Marc Beaudin – is a bunch of people doing original, creative, timely art. It is great. Marc says there are groups doing this kind of work in Minneapolis and elsewhere, but I'm just really impressed. I guess the main thing is that it is original; these people really are putting themselves into this work, shaping their lives around their art, trying to make a difference, and actually doing it.

Check out Marc's novel: *A Handful of Dust*.
<http://www.authorsbookshop.com/ahandfulof dust/>

Hey. Did you hear that the Catholic Church took back Limbo. I guess it's a "never mind."

I'm starting to wonder if there isn't a whole lot about the Catholic Church, about all organized religion that might turn out to be a "never mind."

And E. Howard Hunt says it was Lyndon Johnson and J. Edgar Hoover who organized

the murder of John F. Kennedy.

This whole "land of the free" with killer jets flying over the stadium and everyone standing there with their hands over their hearts, tears in their eyes?

Never mind.

I stayed last night at the Jeannine Coallier Catholic Worker in Saginaw. Thanks to Ellen Garrett for organizing my stay. I met Tao this morning at the breakfast table. He took a break from watching his new robots movie to have some "crunch" toast. Another bright-eyed wonderful little kid.

Last night we had beers at Ewoldt's, a block from the 303. Marc showed me the table where he sits and writes poetry. He's good. Must be a great spot.

The back of Ellen's black Saturn is plastered with bumper stickers: War Is Not The Answer, Save The Farmland – No Wal-Mart, Thou Shall Not Kill, Bob Marley. A few of them were recently keyed by someone, perhaps a disgruntled Wal-Mart greeter.

The Jeannine house has chickens in the yard.

Dawn of Dawn's coffee shop let us spend the afternoon drinking free coffee and peeing. She had to leave about five to go to a community

event. She said she opened the coffee shop a couple of years ago, in an area of Saginaw not popular for businesses, “because of crime.”

She came down here because ...?

“To save the world.”

She checked her bank account before going out, fifty dollars.

“Next week I’ll make money. I think, someday it will come back to me. Which it will.”

The sun is out.

George W. Bush is on the run, hiding from the truth, headed for a debacle that will put him in his historical prison cell for the rest of eternity.

You gotta love that.

It is indeed the dawn of a new day.

PTTPRO.



PART FOURTEEN

April 29, 2007

Having a bad time in Indianapolis

CLEVELAND, OHIO – KGB.

It's a novel.

Saturday I spoke to a group at The Planet bookstore in Ann Arbor.

Glenn came up to me, started touching all my books neatly arranged on the table, and asked me, where's KGB? I said I had written it a long time ago. It was my first book.

The letters stand for Killing George Bush.

I've got one copy in the car, but that's it.

Oh. I thought that was what this was all about, he said.

Glenn said that Rush Limbaugh had said there was this guy on a book tour around the country, saying we should kill George Bush.

"I thought, this must be the guy!" he said.

Oh. Well. In the first place, I kind of doubt that Limbaugh would even know who I am.

But, yeah, I guess that could be me.

I'm not looking to kill George Bush, but I did write a novel back around the turn of the century that does have that scenario as a premise.

KGB is set in the Woodbury County jail in Sioux City Iowa. The prisoners are the main characters. I wrote it about the time that Augusto Pinochet was being held somewhere for being a war criminal.

And I figured that we certainly have our own war criminals in the United States, and that if the truth were known about them, they would also be arrested and put on trial.

One of those is George Bush Sr.

In the novel, the inmates in the jail read about Pinochet in the one newspaper that is passed around to all the cell blocks, and they decide that Bush is also a war criminal. They figure out that they have been hurt, attacked by Bush, and if not them personally, then at least persons on their side of the class struggle, warfare.

We really don't know what George Bush Sr. has done to us during his lifetime.

Some say he was involved in the murder of John F. Kennedy.

He says he was in Tyler, Texas that day, but

others say he was registered at the Sheraton Hotel in Dallas. He says he was not a member of the CIA during that time. Others point to evidence that says he was. There is also a photo that some say is Bush standing in front of the Texas School Book Depository after the assassination, on Nov. 22, 1963.

He says he was not involved in Iran-Contra. Others say he was intensely involved.

He was a part of the movement of this country toward the boom in prison construction and incarceration, which put multitudes of non-violent offenders in prison for long, long prison terms, destroying families, under the guise of security, but really to further the political careers of people like George Bush Sr.

He ordered the invasion of Panama, which killed thousands, and what was the real reason for that? Will we ever know?

Do you remember the television shot of the Bush family before the Florida vote came in during the 2000 election? They were sitting around, smirking, scowling, knowing the fix was in, knowing, just knowing that they controlled this country, not the people.

And they were right.

And we can only speculate, imagine that George Bush Sr. was also involved in the planning and carrying out of 9-11.

Will we ever know? Not unless the Democratic Party decides it wants to do its job.

We need a Truth Commission in this country. We need investigations, questions, questions, questions, prosecutions – perhaps prison sentences handed down.

And then maybe some of these so-called conspiracy theories will be rebuked.

But first, we need to find out who we really are.

We need to have real history taught in our schools. Tell the truth to our children. Tell them the truth about the Gulf of Tonkin, Pearl Harbor, 9-11, the Kennedy assassinations, the King murder, the death of Paul Wellstone, CIA drug running in the United States, etc. etc.

Did we really walk on the moon? Yep, it sounds fantastic to doubt it. But the reason it sounds unbelievable to some folks is because they do not think the United States is capable of something like that. Once you start to understand that we are capable of anything, then those sorts of questions don't seem quite so far-out.

At least – at least ask the questions, give the options, let the children know, let the adults know, that things might not be as we think they are.

If we could only air some of these things out, we might find out. We need to find out. We need to not be afraid of the answers.

Why? Why? Why was the Bush administration so afraid of investigating 9-11?

Why did they have to be forced to investigate, and why was the investigation that did result so weak and orchestrated – designed to not get at the real truth. What are they afraid of?

Really.

Let us just have the truth.

We can't handle the lies any longer.

One of the first things George Bush Jr. did after 9-11 was to shut off access to presidential records of previous administrations, including his father's. Why was that necessary at that time? It was not. It was to cover-up, deceive.

And so I think it is plausible to explore in a novel why and how an assassination might be attempted, because the justice system is so lacking – an attempt to bring about justice, perhaps in the only way possible for certain

individuals.

It's a novel, asking questions, questions that should have already been asked elsewhere, making statements that should have already been made elsewhere.

It's not about my wanting to kill George Bush Sr., or wishing he would be killed.

It is wrong to kill.

I wish to God that George Bush Sr. knew that.

My novel KGB is a creative endeavor that tries to ask the question – why is the killing of poor people taken so lightly and the idea that they might some day seek revenge considered so extraordinary?



PART FIFTEEN

April 30, 2007

Happiness: a rusty brown Honda

“Is it too much to ask?

*I want a comfortable bed that won’t hurt my
back.*

Food to fill me up.

And warm clothes and all that stuff.

Shouldn’t I have this?

Shouldn’t I have this?”

— Mary-Chapin Carpenter

SUPER 8, INDIANA, USA — KGB.

A fantasy football team.

Killer Giant Ballerinas.

I am in Indiana, drove today from Cleveland to Bloomington’s Boxcar Books, now headed toward Pittsburgh.

Yesterday I was a guest of the Cleveland Drinking Liberally group at Sullivan’s Irish Pub on Madison Avenue.

I met Frederica and Dan, parents of

Leonardo, eleven months old today [Monday]. Leonardo was born in Italy and has been in this country for two weeks. She is a doctor, he a “computer geek.”

As we slowly make our way out of the bar, on the fancy wood flooring, past the cheering staff of Sullivan’s Pub, Frederica and Dan point out to me things about Italy and the United States and democracy and stuff that make me think.

How do I find I-70? Is that east? That west? Is this my nose? My ass?

Yeah-yeah, says Dan.

I love that yeah-yeah. I started hearing it out this way. I’m going to keep listening for it.

The day before, I met with a Drinking Liberally group in a very northern suburb of Detroit, Ortonville.

I stayed with Ron and Nancy Wasczenski.

Well, I pulled up, into the long drive, the woods, the very nice house, with equestrian barn things around, affluence.

I did not feel like this was my place. Remember, my comfort zone is sitting on the sofa with a yellow and red afghan pulled over my head.

Well, I got settled and the guests filtered in,

sampling the horse douvers.

I was nervous, wondering how this would ever work.

But when it came time for me to speak I stood in front of the hundred-foot-wide TV in the downstairs recreation room with the bar and did my thing.

I talked about how Bush did 9-11 and the troops are just serving the empire and about sending a crossed-out tax form to the IRS before I left home.

Thank you for your time. Shuffle the papers. Any questions? Comments?

Pause. Silence. Thousand one, thousand two.

“Have you seen the video Loose Change?” someone said.

I breathed.

And we were off, talking about conspiracy this and controlled demolition that and had a great time.

Whew.

Marianna, who is a native of Montreal, and used to teach at the Flint performing arts high school, and now is a liturgical music planner for a local Lutheran church, said one of her students was a brother of Osama bin Laden.

Marianna would like to be a freeway blogger, she scoots over toward me on the sofa and confides, but she is afraid of being deported.

I had mentioned during my talk my previous difficulties in getting into Canada. I wonder if I put up a sign against Bush I could get deported to Canada.

No. That’s not how it works. You are a dumbshit.

Yes. That’s true. I’m sorry.

Doug, of Marianna and Doug, used to work for GM. He is now an antique dealer and does not miss GM.

He talks about how when you close a certain foreign car door, when it gets close to being closed, the car kind of takes it from there.

With a GM product, Doug says, it’s “bam-bam-bam”, okay, that fits now.

We all laugh. Doug makes us laugh a lot. He is a good guy. These are all good people now that I don’t have to talk and can just sit and listen.

Doug knows Michael Moore, went to school with him, they were in chess club together.

Doug and Marianna have funny stories to tell about traveling in Europe, boating in

Prague, shit like that.

Doug also works each week at a soup kitchen in downtown Detroit. He mentions the meth addicts that stop by.

“At least we’re doing everything we can do.”

Before they leave for the night Marianna takes my email address and says they might be able to give it to MM in L.A. sometime.

Awesome.

The Killer Giant Ballerinas are Ron’s fantasy football league team.

KGB took the league championship last year.

Ron – Waz – is a modern renaissance man. He has a nice house, family, property. He is an accountant. Hockey referee.

He is also an artist, a liberal, maybe bordering on radical.

On his wall are original charcoal works of art: Mark Fidrych, the Big Red Machine, Bob Seger, Rod Stewart.

He is compassionate, passionate, connected.

Someone who could run for office, network with the local Democratic Party big whigs, and also hoot and holler and get home late from a Black Oak Arkansas concert.

He is a Michigan boy, played hockey,

football, eats McDonald’s by the bucket full, can drink beer with either hand. Knows all the eff about Chomsky and Zinn and whatever else liberal crap you got.

He lets me into his home to talk about my books, talk bad about George Bush, drink his beer, eat his shrimp. He cares. He’s trying. He’s doing good things. He’s going to do lots more good things.

He says that he met Joe Wilson of Valerie Plame Wilson at some function.

Joe said: “There are no tinfoil hats. These guys can do anything.”

Do-do. Do-do. Do-do. Do-do.

I am impressed, but I’m glad to be gone.

I’m always glad to be gone.

Remember my comfort zone? I always feel lucky to talk to the people I meet. I don’t know what they think about me, but I am happy to be able to say what’s on my mind.

And I’m also always very happy to get back into the rusty, brown Honda and put on the headphones and dial up the Dixie Chicks or Steve Earle to celebrate the freedom of the road, being alone, on the way, going somewhere, else.

Well, I took I-75 Sunday through the heart of

Detroit, past Comerica Stadium.

I was able to get the Twins-Tigers for a short time on my headphones.

I can't help but stare right and left at the city, at the neighborhoods.

Poverty is interesting. Affluence is boring.

I wonder about what goes on in that house, down that street, in that park. I drove around Kansas City in the black neighborhood I was going to read in, Milwaukee, Minneapolis. I just don't understand why we allow poverty. I just don't get it. Some people live in these types of neighborhoods and we all just accept it. I remember doing a story on Mexicans in Minnesota who lived in a goddamn compound, like a prison camp, for a portion of the year, just to work for one of the canning companies.

Geezuz-eff! What is wrong with us?

Look out for the big-effing truck.

And I want to write something that saves all the poor people.

Sure.

I know they don't need me.

I still want to write that novel.

A good book could bring George W. Bush to his knees.

A novel has the potential power to save the

world.

It does.

Maybe not my novel.

But maybe yours.

Think about it.

Today I drove from Cleveland to Bloomington and got skunked at Boxcar Books. I was headed to Pittsburgh this evening, stopped on the Interstate somewhere. I can only hope I'm out of Indiana.

Geezuz.

It was one million degrees in Bloomington this afternoon.

The drive from Martinsville down to Bloomington on 37 South is really pretty cool. The trees are beginning to bud. I used to rely on Ruth to tell me things like that. Now I have to notice that shit for myself.

I spotted a Big Red Liquor store. Reminded me of Nebraska.

Oh, God.

I think all the fervor spikes the temperature a bit.

There was this billboard promoting the upcoming National Day of Prayer, May something-or-other.

"Americans Unite In Prayer."

Nah. Eff that.

Unite toward what? More war? A longer wall along the Mexican border?

Big Red Boo-ya?

Instead.

Put George W. Bush in D Unit behind the walls in Terre Haute Penitentiary for lying to us about WMDs and getting 3,500 Americans killed, for murdering Paul Wellstone, and for attacking his own country on 9-11-01. And give him a fourth count for just being a dumb-eff.

Praise the Lord. Pass the red T-shirts.

I went walking around Bloomington before my sucky gig at Boxcar Books.

It was another funky area, like in Madison, Ann Arbor, Lawrence.

In all these towns I like to take a little walk if I can, because I will never-ever see any of these places again. Ruth has assured me.

And so I wore my “Worst President Ever” T-shirt over to the University of Indiana campus and walked around.

Revolutionary.

Nah, just some old guy with no job walking around where he doesn’t belong in a black T-shirt on a scorching hot day.

But, back here in the hotel zone on the

interstate, wherever I am, the woman who took my money for gas said her boyfriend would like my T-shirt and where did I get it. Then the woman who checked me into the motel said, “I like your T-shirt.”

God Bless Indiana, I think.



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