

THE
AMERICAN
DREAM
BOOK TOUR
(& PROTEST)

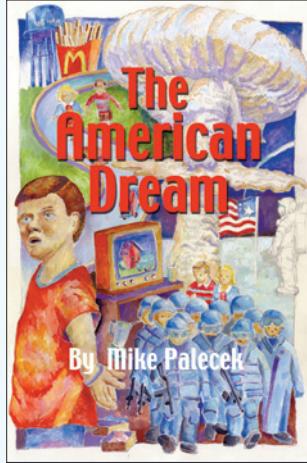
PART 2



MIKE PALECEK

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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PART SIXTEEN

May 2, 2007

Wheeling through a Wow-Town

"I opened up my eyes, took a look around. I saw it written across the sky. The Revolution Starts Now."

– Steve Earle

SWALESVILLE, PA – "I don't like today's world. There's going to be two kinds of people rich people and poor people."

I was sitting in the Joseph-Beth bookstore in Pittsburgh on Tuesday, scanning through John Updike's book "The Terrorist," cozied up in a soft chair, kind of listening to these three older people. Older than me? I'd sure like to think so.

I then went and put some more quarters into the meter so the Pittsburgh police don't hide my car.

Then I walk over and sit next to the fountain out in the little plaza outside The Cheesecake Factory in this square on Cinema Drive. I watch

some kids get wet and then walk over to Claddagh Irish pub.

It's not like the Irish pub in Kansas City, more like the one in Cleveland, trendy, lots of shiny wood, brass. I'd rather be in the K.C. bar, which was a dive, maybe the ultimate dive bar. You could picture Irish revolutionaries, fighters, drinking in that bar. Not here.

That's just me.

At Claddagh's I meet with Dave and John and Halley.

Dave is from Boston. He says caah and baah. I have never heard anyone say caah and baah in person. I have never been anywhere. I think it is pretty cool. I try to get him to say more things.

What's in the sky at night?

Peanut butter comes in a ...?

He tires of my game.

Halley drove One Hundred Miles to see me. I shake her hand, maybe three or four times before the night is over. She is a carpenter. She has Band Aids on at least four of her fingers, robins-egg blue maybe.

Dave and John talk about politics, presidential candidates.

Dave went to CMU, Carnegie Melon

University, studied engineering. He admits to being a geek.

They – we – talk about the various Democratic candidates. I don't have much to offer. The subject doesn't excite me.

I would be for any candidate who would get us out of Iraq yesterday, initiate a brand new investigation of 9-11, and investigate the present administration as regards to possible war crimes: lying to start a war, torture, secret prisons.

Investigate the death of Paul Wellstone.

Point me toward the candidate who will do that.

Otherwise, the whole thing is pretty boring, more interesting to watch the Cubs and Pirates on the TV above the expensive bar counter. 5-2, Cubs.

Hey.

On the way to Pittsburgh from Indianapolis, I came through Wheeling, West Virginia.

Tell me if you know – wasn't Wheeling the hometown of Chris Stevens of Chris in the Morning on KBHR radio of Cicily, Alaska on "Northern Exposure."

Well, there was a detour on I-70 that took us right through downtown.

Wheeling is a Wow-Town, at least for me – the old buildings, the trees, the hills, the history that I can only imagine quickly in my mind as I try to keep up with the maroon car that I think knows where we are going.

It reminds me of Lead and Deadwood, South Dakota, built into the hills.

Well, I did make it to Pittsburgh and that is another Wow-Town.

Maybe it's because I just haven't been anywhere, but I think you would also agree, that coming out of the Fortt Pitt Tunnel and then boom! there is a big bridge, a big river and boom! the skyline of Pittsburgh, all right there. Like plowing into an I-Max Theatre.

You want to come back and do it again and again, just to see that view, but you can't, there are one million maroon cars behind you that don't care about your Iowa license to drive slow. You have to keep going.

Or die.

And so I keep going and, of course, I miss my MapQuest directions by one turn, but that is enough to put me smack-dab into rush hour traffic, then try to find a place to turn around in Monroeville [the shocks?], then I go past the immigrants' rights rally, and then I pass it again

and again ... and again, and I am starting to get to know these people ... and finally pull over and ask this British guy and this Hispanic-looking woman for help who are very intent on finding a parking place and get to the rally, but they do find time to tell me where to go.

I find Hot Metal Street.

Turn right, miss my next turn, and I go up and up and up.

Pittsburgh is hilly. Did you know that? And the streets where I am are very tight.

I am panicking, as I do when I think I am lost in rush hour in a big city that I have never been in and I might die soon because I cannot find a fancy Irish bar.

My brakes feel squishy. Does that mean my brakes are going out? My clutch? Pittsburgh is the end of the line. I am dead. Oh, geezuz-god, my brakes are squishy. I will die.

I am again in the black neighborhood. In almost every city I visit I either miss my turn and go to the black neighborhood, or my reading is in the black neighborhood.

I like it here. I calm down. I wish I had some excuse to walk up to someone and listen to them talk about their day.

I ask directions once, from a guy walking

down a hill.

... I almost make it.

I seek directions again, from a woman in front of what I would guess is a project. She is very kind, she turns and points, tells me to go to Josephine Street, then to 26th, down the hill, "you can't miss ..."

No, no, don't say that!

"... It."

I later try to ask directions from a white young man walking intently down the narrow sidewalk.

"Fuck you."

From the truck turning the corner: "Wake up, buddy!"

Dude. I'm doing the best I ... fuck you, too!

I find the rich Irish bar and a parking spot and put in dozens of quarters even though the police don't check meters this late in the day. If I don't put dozens of quarters in, I will die.

And so now I can relax. I know where I need to be. I have time. I go to the bookstore to look around, relax, find a restroom. Rest.

There are escalators in Joseph-Beth, just like in the Rochester, Minnesota Barnes & Noble, very cool.

I look around. I can't really afford any of the

books, but I look.

And it seems like they don't mind, so I grab "The Terrorist," and go find a nice place to rest for just awhile. There is a restroom up the escalator. I'm good.

I know it's just me, and I'm not well-read enough, but I don't see what is so special about Updike's book.

And I read one called "Absurdistan" somewhere else and on the back cover they have blurbs from the Washington Post Book World and ten other newspapers that I could not get to look at my books if I included a staah in a jaah.

"The Terrorist" is okay, but it's not one of my books.

Sorry. I really believe that.

My books should be in these places.

They are just as good, better.

Why they aren't here, I can only say has to do with the structure of the book industry, which I probably don't fully understand.

I'm as good as Updike, as anyone, but no agent or major publishing company would give me directions out of town.

Of course I would say that, right? What it really has to do with is story and characters

and pacing and lots of stuff, right?

Okay, if it does, fine. But I really don't get it. Maybe smart guys get it. I do not.

Okay, I don't die.

I park. I live. I put hundreds of quarters into the meter.

And I go talk to the Democrats.

They are gracious. They have allowed me to meet with them.

Of course I am grateful.

But I don't see any hope in the Democratic Party.

I ran for Congress in Iowa in 2000 as a Democrat. I won the primary and received 67,000 votes in the general election on an anti-military, anti-prison, pro-Hispanic immigration, in a very conservative district.

But that's not what Democrats generally do.

Usually they stick their finger into the air, judge the wind, and run thataway.

Rather than looking into their hearts and then walking confidently out the front door, no matter which way the wind is blowing.

And then they die.



PART SEVENTEEN

May 2, 2007

A model for democracy? No!

“There are things we don’t or can’t understand. A reasonable man, a healthy man ... a sane man ... when he encounters the inexplicable ... forgets about it.”

– Maurice Minnifield, Northern Exposure

BUFFALO UNIVERSITY, BUFFALO, NEW YORK –

Nancy Pelosi is hot.

I have noticed I am surging toward old-guy status. Women who used to be the principal or someone’s nice grandmother on the porch in the blue flower dress down to her ankles now kind of get me going.

Oh, God.

Nancy is on C-Span right now, talking about stuff.

So was the woman running for president in France just a minute ago. Lots of stuff.

You should have seen this debate between

the two candidates for president of France or whatever they call it, premier, general secretary, bunga-bunga-something-something.

They were really going at it, discussing, arguing. It was not controlled. There were no microphones in their ears or packs on their backs where smarter people told them what to say.

They say America is a model for democracy for the world.

Not.

I used to think Hillary was hot.

I don’t anymore. I don’t know why. Things just kind of cooled.

Nancy has just said we need to rebuild our military.

She still looks pretty good to me.

Hey.

Dude.

I am staying in this effing guest house on the campus of the University of Buffalo, The Center For Inquiry, in Buffa-effing-lo.

Not bad for a guy who graduated 283 out of 289 from Norfolk High School in 1973.

Well, it’s not a chauffeur and caviar on Ritz crackers, but definitely I’ll take it.

I drove this morning [Wednesday] from

Pittsburgh. I am from Norfolk and I have not travelled all that much, so please excuse me.

THERE WERE TREES AND HILLS AND A BIG-EFFING LAKE AND IT WAS WAAAY COOL.

I don't know, it's just exciting to see some things.

I was traveling today on the Blue Star Memorial Highway.

"Dedicated to those who fought for ... blah, blah, blah" ...

Oh, God, did I fall asleep for a moment there?

How many of these effing things do we have around?

A whole effing-bunch.

Methinks we protest too much.

"Anyone STUPID enough to join the military ... ought to be able to."

– Bill Hicks

I think we know the military is bunch of hired thugs, paid killers, that do not protect us, but rob and rape and kill in order to secure markets for American business, and we build all these

memorials – like someone who has just committed some crime just keeps on talking and talking, because he knows as soon as he shuts up, he is going to be found out.

I don't know. Or else they are effing heroes for killing millions of people and making sure that we are able to gamble in the casino of our choice.

Well, for those who didn't know – everybody but me – western Pennsylvania is hilly and there are vineyards and shit.

And Niagara Falls billboards.

I am on Interstate 90, which goes all the way back to Sioux Falls, which is near my home. When I was in prison in Texas in 1986 I used to look out over the prison yard at night and see the full moon and reassure myself by thinking that Ruth was seeing the same moon, even though it seemed we were not even inhabiting the same world, we were so far apart.

Well, Interstate 90 runs all the way back home and so maybe I'm not so far away.

"Correctional Facility. Don't Pick Up Hitchhikers."

I pass that sign somewhere headed toward Buffalo and I cross myself.

I used to cross myself when I passed a

Catholic Church. My mother did that and so I did it.

But it was pretty stupid.

However, crossing yourself when you pass a prison makes a little more sense.

There is so much evil and suffering inside a prison that it makes more sense than doing it when you pass in front of Sacred Heart Church.

The prison is more holy. Not because of it being a prison. But because of the suffering.

I find my way into Buffalo, Main Street, Talking Leaves Books. I shake hands with Jonathon, the owner, with whom I have exchanged emails for the past one hundred years trying to set this up.

I read and then go over to Buffalo University.

David Mussella directs me to The Center For Inquiry.

He parks at the edge of the lot.

Why?

If they bomb us, at least I'll be able to get to my car.

Bomb? Who? Why? While I'm here? Big bombs?

Maybe little, teeny-weeny bombs?

David says the center is about secular humanism, which pisses some people off.

I don't really know what secular humanism is, but I don't mention it, because I have heard they have this private guest house I get to stay in.

And there's more to it than that, but I kind of lose interest.

David shows me inside and introduces me to Joe Nickell.

Joe takes me to his office as I listen for bombs.

He immediately begins to tell me that he is a paranormal investigator.

"I'm not a believer," he says.

In what?

His small office is packed with green blow-up alien dolls, voodoo figure things with things sticking into them, bigfoot foot plaster casts, leprechaun posters.

There are caps from "Unsolved Mysteries."

"We have a laboratory."

There it is.

Joe tells me right off that he does not believe in ghosts because, "where does the brain go?"

I'm like, I dunno.

He says that Hilary Swank is starring in a new movie based on his work.

"It's a terrible movie, though," he says.

I tell Joe that I've probably seen him on TV.
He says that could very well be true – and he
has written twenty-one books.

There they are.

On the desk is a magazine: Fatima
Mysteries.

What about Roswell? I ask.

Military balloons.

No alien bodies. Hoax.

He also implies that those who believe the
Bush people were involved in 9-11 are also quite
delusional.

I shift my feet, stand up straight.

That makes me feel a bit unsettled. I don't
want to be wrong, a fool.

I believe in Bigfoot, UFOs. I believe Bush did
it.

But ... you know ... it's not about that, is it?

What it is, it is.

I really believe that.

The truth is what is important.

It is not important that certain beliefs be
sustained, regardless.

The truth.

In debates, UFOs, Bigfoot, starting wars.

I am in favor. I vote yes.

Show me where it shows that Dick Cheney

did not kill all those people in the Twin Towers
and I'm heading home this morning, back to
Iowa, to sit on the patio and pet my cat and sip
beer from a quart bottle staring at my lovely
wife mowing the lawn.

That night [Wednesday] I was part of the
Literary Cafe at the University of Buffalo. It's a
regular thing where people get together to read
their poems and stuff.

Mostly it's writers reading to each other is
what I figure.

It is damn hard to get anyone else to listen.

But still, it's good. For one thing, it's good to
know these people are out there, writing their
poems. They are like the monks in a monastery,
praying, and having that praying somehow help
us all.

I really enjoy the chance to read. There are
about twenty people there. I have developed
the habit of counting people so that I can
report to Ruth how many were there. I'll find
myself in a men's restroom on the Interstate
thinking, one, two, three-four, five-six-seven –
this would make a pretty good crowd.

The podium has a lamp on it. There is [are?]
cheese and crackers in the hall.

Before I read I was nervous because there

were so many people and Joe Nickell, the debunker guy – who is also a good poet – was in the audience and practically everything I talk about is about ghosts and spirits and little green leprechauns flying big white planes into buildings.

But just before I walk up there I realize, I like this shit.

I like doing this. I still get nervous. I am still maybe not real great at it, but I think I have good material and maybe I'm learning how to deliver it.

I think we have a history of being lied to by our government. I think we have too many war memorial highways for no good-goddamn reason.

And I can't make myself forget about it.



PART EIGHTEEN

May 5, 2007

The debacle on the Lower East Side

“I don’t care if it rains or freezes, long as I got my plastic Jesus, ridin’ on the dashboard of my car.”

– Cool Hand Luke

NEW YORK CITY – If I can make it here. I’ll make it anywhere.

I got skunked Friday night at Bluestockings Books in New York City.

Oh, well.

Right now I’m sitting in Everything Goes Books & Cafe in Staten Island. It’s Saturday afternoon. A beautiful day.

Did I tell you?

I was in Rochester, New York on Thursday, then drove down to NYC for my evening debacle on the Lower East Side.

I don’t think I told you.

I crossed myself about a hundred times and then drove into New York City in the brown

Honda yesterday afternoon. That car, if it were a person, deserves most of the credit for me getting this far on this trip. What heart that old soul has, seven thousand miles already, 170,000-plus all told.

Actually drove into the city, through the city, down the Palisades Parkway, the FDR, across the Williamsburg Bridge, into Brooklyn. I was going under the train, on the street.

It reminded me of some movies, maybe “Finding Nemo,” maybe “The French Connection.”

And I think about Jimmy Breslin, going all-effing around these freaking neighborhoods, with his tie loose, his shirttail out, his hair stickin’ out every-friggin’-way, a pad in one hand, pen in the other, walking fast, headed to his desk to punch out literature with two fingers, on deadline.

I got lost and stopped to ask for directions, twice.

The people were extra nice. I kind of knew they would be. Ruth and Sam and Emily and I had been to New York over New Year’s. We saw “Hairspray” and walked around Times Square for four days. The people in the city were nice. The cab driver talked to us about Queens and

Harlem and the bridges we passed as we stared out the windows trying to take it all in.

And the New York drivers were not the eleven-headed monsters the folks in Rochester had told me about.

I made it to Jim Fleming's place in Brooklyn. Jim lives there with his partner Lewanne Jones in an old warehouse building. It's huge. It used to be a publishing house, back in the 1800s. I think he said McLaughlin House. They published children's books, then moved to board games when that became more profitable. One of their games was a puzzle called "Chopped Up Niggers."

Then they either moved somewhere else or they got real jobs, I dunno.

Anyway, Jim and Lewanne moved in about twenty-five years ago and live in this huge loft with walls made out of books and a view of Manhattan, the Brooklyn Bridge, the Hudson River.

For about the first hour when you walk into this place you just say "Wow" about one million times.

Jim is a small press publisher, Autonomedia. He is originally from Clear Lake, Iowa, not so far east of where I live now in Sheldon, Iowa.

Lewanne does research work for documentary films. She worked on the PBS Eyes on the Prize series, and also Fahrenheit 911. Her name is on the credits. She is working now on something about the life of George H.W. Bush.

On 9-11-01 Jim watched the burning buildings out his living room window. Their son was in a school about a block from the burning buildings.

You know the first time you drive into anywhere it's like, I LOVE this effing place. And then after you meet some people, do some things, maybe you change your mind. Maybe you don't and you stay twenty-five years.

Well, me driving into Brooklyn on this sunny day in May, it's like, "It's A Beautiful Day In The Neighborhood!" There are Hasidic Jewish people all over, and I can see that some of them live in these huge high-rise buildings, and there is the neighborhood grocery store, and there is a Mom with her kids and the grandpa. And I'm pumping my brake, down-shifting, looking here and there, searching for Big Bird and Elmo.

That's just me. I like Sesame Street. I like the Barney show. You know why? Because I remember watching those shows with Sam and Emily when they were young. They've

outgrown them. Doesn't appear that I have.

That was pretty cool. I was so worried about driving into New York City and then it was fine.

Jim accompanied me to my reading over on Allen Street. He and Lewanne moved into their neighborhood when it was much more dangerous than it is now. Now it is dangerous because they are being forced out by a raise in rents.

On one of the pillars in the kitchen there are height marks for their kids Ryder and Bronwyn, up, up, up. Now those kids are in college.

Jim moved here from Iowa to be with this wonderful woman and it worked.

Well, down at Bluestockings they set up all these effing chairs and I want to say, no, maybe don't do that.

I talk to Jacob because he has read my T-shirt: No Seriously, Why Did We Invade Iraq? He is a young man with a blond mohawk. He shows me the anarchist "A" he has etched permanently into his left forearm. I ask him if he is glad he did it. He says, yes. His eyes say, I dunno.

That time leading up to a reading is always tense, especially when it really looks like

nobody is going to show up. There's nothing you can do about it, though. I'm a writer, not a magician or a harmonica player or a rodeo clown. It's a novel, not a new brand of beer, or movie, or car.

Anyway, I decide it's time to fold it up. We go over to another part of town, the Brecht Forum, where one million people are sitting and listening to Grace Lee Boggs.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace_Lee_Boggs]

It was a boring talk.

Sorry.

I had never heard of her. Probably my own fault.

These people should have been over at Bluestockings listening to me.

She was talking about Malcolm and Martin Luther King Jr. and a million years ago and how to build nurturing relationships and ... zzz ... zzz. It's naptime in the neighborhood.

There was nobody to hear me talk about stopping the war, impeaching George Bush, putting George Bush in Terre Haute Penitentiary and finding out how Dick Cheney planned and carried out 9-11.

I'm supposed to be a gracious loser, say that I understand this. I am nobody, and Grace Lee

Boggs is an icon and zzz ... zzz.

They had wine and cheese and crackers, and thanks for that, but, well, I don't remember much else. I must have blacked out.

In Rochester on Thursday, after drinking with the Democrats at Monty's Korner I got pulled over by a giant Rochester police man. I was not drunk, had two beers during five of the longest hours of my life, so the reason I failed to stay in my own lane was because I was so tired and bored with Democrats, not the two glasses of Guinness.

Sir. [He shines his giant cop flashlight into my eyes.] Have you been talking to Democrats?

Yeah, I mumble.

Would you step out of the car, sir.

Please place your index finger, sir, next to your lips, run it up and down and go "bbb-bbb-bbb."

Scared the shit out of me. Couldn't find my registration, anything. Why are you here? Book tour. What kind of a book tour? There are kinds? How long have you owned this car? I would have to ask Ruth. Where are you going? Some Democrat's house.

Oh, well, now I am on/in Staten Island. My reading is in one hour and then I am going to

find my shorts and some beer and go sit by the water like an old man should.

I am staying at something called the Ganas Community, on Scribner Street in/on Staten Island. The owners of the bookstore are members here. I guess Ganas is Spanish for having the will to do something, In other words, the balls, the cajones.

I'm here for one night for twenty-five dollars and laundry is free and food, too. They have businesses owned in-common on the island and they have a bunch of houses and kids running around and everyone greets you and smiles and a garden and shit. And already I need to get away from here.

I guess they started about twenty-five years ago when some people from San Francisco wanted to live together, moved to New York City, then over to Staten Island where the housing was easier to come by.

Aviva just showed me around. She is having her fifty-first birthday tomorrow and the community is having a picnic down by the water. She is from Argentina and Israel, has been here three years.

Later I meet someone working on the house who has been here since 1991. Geezuz-god.

Then I talk to Robert, who has just moved into the community. He drives a rickshaw in Manhattan, charges people twenty-five dollars a ride. Some are tourists, some really need to get places.

I'm not going to ask if I can bring in the rest of my twenty-four pack of Coors that's heating in the backseat of my car. Better to apologize than ask permission. Didn't Geronimo say that?

Oh, well.

Did you know that Staten Island is pretty large and at least the part that I am on is extremely hilly? The Honda is parked on Scribner Street and looks like an old car on the launch pad ready for lift-off. It wants to go, is ready for the journey, willing.

May we all have the ganas to do what we really want to do.

It is a beautiful day on the island.

Aloha.



PART NINETEEN

May 8, 2007

On the outside, not looking in

STATEN ISLAND, NY – “He’s been compared to Kurt Vonnegut in his writing.”

That’s Steve of ETG Books & Cafe in/on Staten Island trying to entice a woman and her daughter to sit the eff down and listen to me talk.

I am up on the stage, planting my butt on the bar stool, figuring out how to put my papers on the podium, messing with the microphone, wondering which way is home.

The woman smiles and heads back out the door to the sidewalk.

There is just no denying it, this book tour is a loser.

There have been some great moments, and I always-always meet great people everywhere, by one’s and by two’s.

But there are many times when nobody shows up. On a great day, on a bad day, would

you go out of your way to listen to somebody talk about a book? It would have to be Kurt Vonnegut, right?

And, well, now you might as well stay home.

Well, I sit up on the stage and give my talk. I speak loud into the microphone, hoping my words: Impeach George Bush; Investigate the Bush administration’s involvement in 9-11, get out onto the street where there are lots of people.

Afterward, I sit down on the edge of the stage and mingle with the crowd: co-manager Steve, Dennis, while other co-manager Katie goes to do some work.

We talk. Dennis asks about my sanctuary thing with the bishop and the cathedral and the federal government in Omaha in the 1980s.

Dennis is tallish, thin, wearing a black ballcap with a red “L”, dark sunglasses to the middle of his nose. He used to be a teacher in New York City. He’s wearing a big class ring from somewhere. His jeans are worn. He wears tennis shoes with no socks.

Steve wonders whether it would be more productive to be “for peace” rather than “against war.”

Somehow we start talking about 9-11.

Dennis says he was watching it all from Skyline Park in Staten Island. His wife was on a plane from Newark, and at the time he was not sure if hers was one of the planes that had hit the towers.

Dennis and Steve doubt the government's story about 9-11. Dennis talks about how the buildings came down, that if the heat truly melted the steel it would have come down twisting and irregular, like hot taffy, not straight down.

They say that New Yorkers are divided in their views on what the truth is about 9-11.

Then they talk about the honey bees. Where did the honey bees go and did I hear about that?

No.

Maybe something about Monsanto products and killing the bees and now lots of stuff doesn't get pollinated and grow, and where did the honey bees go?

I really don't know.

Dennis says it has to do with lack of truth and love in human thought.

I go for a walk after my talk, carrying a plain bagel with humus [wtf?] and cream cheese, made by Steve, over toward the Staten Island

Ferry.

I find a mailbox to send a letter to Ruth. I kiss the envelope before dropping it in, seems appropriate, but I still look around to see if anyone saw me.

Somebody at a light leans over to the open passenger window.

"Where'd you get that shirt?"

It says, "No, Seriously, Why Did We Invade Iraq?"

I say, "Online."

The black man smiles, nods, gives me the thumbs-up.

"Nice shirt."

I smile wide inside.

This T-shirt is a winner.

Then I go find a bench to eat my bagel, drink the rest of my warm Diet Mountain Dew and listen to a black family next to me argue, then laugh, banter, play. I look out at the water and Manhattan, and barges.

Then I go buy some rice at a "Spanish Restaurant."

Loser. Quixotic. Long Shot.

You know, when I ran for Congress in 2000 as a Democrat I asked a good friend to help me with the campaign. I thought it would be fun,

and was a hell of a good opportunity to say something strong to the Democrats and Republicans. The friend said, no, it sounded like a quixotic venture.

What?

I thought that was kind of the point.

Going to prison to stop the United States military is kind of quixotic, too. But we still did it, because it's good and right and just and strong.

And it's worthwhile. Even if your whole life is "just a good try," that is still pretty good. I think.

I'd like to be a winner. Who wouldn't?

You would not choose to be a loser, but really, that's where the interesting people are.

But you kind of have to be forced to meet them, to have those experiences. It's like when you take a wrong turn, or run out of gas, or have a flat tire, and later, it's not so bad, you met so and so, did this and that.

If it were up to you, to me, the only folks you would meet would be on the first tee, the first row at the ballpark, the front row of the theater.

When it's the people selling the popcorn you really need to get to know.

A loser doesn't mean not worthwhile. Losers are not worthless, they just don't win very often.

They still play, right? They still come to the ballpark.

They sit on the park bench, likely alone, wondering where the honey bees have gone.

And sometimes, sometimes, they turn out to be the rejected stone that becomes the cornerstone.

So, tomorrow I go to Rhode Island.

*FYI: About my books, from a Jason Miller interview on Tom Paine's Corner. He asked me which book of mine I liked the best.

I like KGB because it tells the story of prisoners and conspiracy theorists and people slaughtered by Bush Sr. in Panama and women and children in jail visiting rooms and other stuff.

I like Joe Coffee because it tells the truth about the Democratic Party and about farmer revolutionaries and farm kitchen tables.

I like Twins because it talks about a prison burning and about the Twin Cities, which I love, and about robbing Twin Cities banks to

give the money to the poor on Hennepin Ave.

I like Outlaw because it talks about a reporter in a small town doing what a reporter in a small town should do, pay attention to the commas and oppose the construction of the prison near town.

I like The Truth because it was written in the run-up to the current war and was written in a rage against pre-war stupidity in Iowa.

I like Bigfoot because I think there is a Bigfoot and I think Bush did 9/11 and I think the CIA killed the Kennedy's, and I like baseball, a lot.

I like Terror Nation because I think it would be cool to be a small town sports reporter who was put into the local mental institution for writing anti-Bush letters to the editor. And a dream of mine would be to cover Iowa sports or coach baseball and have that be good enough.

I like The American Dream because it's like punching America in the nose, it's like punching George W. Bush in the nose and Karl Rove in the nose. And I think those two pussies need to be punched in the nose.



PART TWENTY

May 7, 2007

Wanted man in Rhode Island

*“I ain’t got no home. I’m just a ramblin’ round,
I go from town to town.”*

– Woody Guthrie

NOT IN PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND – These perfect towns of Connecticut make me want to puke.

Yesterday I was heading toward Providence on I-95. I started to shake, sweat, and pulled the Honda off onto the exit for Madison, Conn.

After waiting for one hundred traffic lights I saw to my right a big yard, maybe a park. I pulled around, down the lane, hurried out and got on one knee and dry-heaved on the front lawn of the First Congregational Church of Madison.

You would think the yard would be filled with folks leaning out their windows, beside their cars, on both knees, hurling – to see this

sight. This humongous white church: six pillars on the front porch that two strong men could not reach around and touch pinky fingers.

And behind the pillars, blowing in the breeze. Of course, a gigantic American flag.

This is turning into the I Hate America Tour. I thought I hated America because of it’s being a killer. Turns out there are more specific reasons.

Indiana. Democrats. Connecticut.

And I can’t get into Canada because I am not rehabilitated from my jail terms in the 1980s. I sent in a crossed-out tax form before I left to protest against Bush & Cheney & Rove killing all those Americans on 9-11. I will soon be wanted in New York State for not paying a stay in your own lane buddy ticket. I did not pay my parking ticket in Iowa City a few weeks ago. And now I am wanted in Rhode Island for failure to appear.

Well, I didn’t make it to Providence because I was too sick to drive. Too many cans of Coors in the New Haven Days Inn. No joke. Poisoning myself. How stupid is that?

And therefore, I think that this is an excellent time for us to talk about the rotten churches we have in this country.

From The American Dream:

“A woman pastor from Franklin: We Christians will bomb and rape and steal and lie. We might as well call ourselves tree trimmers as Christians. We have turned it into a nonsense word. ... We will sit there and listen to the pastor. He dares say nothing about the poor or poverty or our own riches and home, our ultimate concern for our own undisturbed routines – nothing about building bombs to kill rather than bread to feed, and Oh, God, we do not remind him.

... He will never mention Thou Shall Not Kill or the true spirit of Christianity and this will be repeated week after week in thousands of churches around the country and we shall never be bothered with the real you, Jesus, who would rather see these crystal crappers laid down brick upon brick and our own phony hearts torn from our chests, because we are scoundrels, Lord.”

This morning I am at the Econo Lodge inn Groton, Conn., the home of a humongous United States submarine base. Last night as I was searching for the ball game on the television I came across The Pentagon Channel. The woman announcer had on a military uniform.

At least she was honest. I would think Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw and Peter Jennings could have been as truthful in their on-camera attire.

Well, last night I had the Yankees-Mariners game on TV with no sound as I watched a documentary on my laptop about the John Kennedy murder.

Put out by the History Channel, it is probably twenty-five years old by now, but a lot of it is the same as what has recently appeared regarding Lyndon Baines Johnson’s involvement in killing his boss.

[http://www.kget.com/entertainment/weirdnews/story.aspx?content_id=69c22563-45ff-46f7-9bcc-99aa5804cffd

<http://video.google.ca/videoplay?docid=1929769365635576415&q=mistress%20LBJ>

http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/story/13893143/the_last_confessions_of_e_howard_hunt

The actor Bruce Willis has recently said that he believes some of those involved in the Kennedy murder are still in the United States government.

I agree.

I remember when I was a kid in Norfolk, Nebraska in the 1960s when all this was happening. Back then we were certain Oswald

did it. The Norfolk Daily News told us so, the network news told us so, hometown hero Johnny Carson told us so, and Sacred Heart Catholic Church told us so.

Dan Rather saw the Zapruder film and assured us the shots came from behind. And then they hid the film for a hundred years.

It would have been considered insane to even consider that any of the shots came from the grassy knoll area.

And now we learn that it was Lyndon-effing-Johnson who did it? And that he met the night before, in Texas, with a bunch of oil tycoons, J. Edgar Hoover, Richard Nixon and who knows who else?

And when he came out of the meeting he told his mistress, “those s.o.b.’s will never embarrass me again.”

Maybe from Vermont I will tell you about the letter I received from Johnny Carson when I asked him about his television interview with Jim Garrison.

Can you imagine what secrets about the current government wait to be revealed? Some that perhaps connect the killings of the 1960s with today’s headlines?

“May you live in exciting times.” – Big Bird

And that is why I need to go to Brattleboro today and keep plugging away on this tour.

Remember what Joe Wilson told Ron from Detroit?

“There are no tinfoil hats. These people are capable of anything.”

When we really discover the truth about the death of Paul Wellstone, 9-11, the anthrax, the murders of the Kennedy brothers, Martin Luther King Jr., the presidential elections of 2000, 2004 – the front lawns of all the churches in America will be running with puke.



PART TWENTY ONE

May 14, 2007

Naked outside, empty inside

SHELDON, IOWA – You want to go where everybody knows your name.

Well. I was in Boston last week. I made my way through traffic, found a parking spot, found the Lucy Parsons Center, on Columbus Avenue. Then I went out walking around for about seven hours. Part of the time I just sat on a bench at a park, watched the people and the pigeons.

And then I walked over to Lucy Parsons, came up to the front desk, tired, sweating, lugging my books and stuff.

“I’m Mike.

“Mike ... Palecek.

“I’m supposed to speak tonight.”

“Oh, was that tonight?”

It’s kind of been like that on this book tour.

In Brattleboro, Vermont there were naked people outside the bookstore.

But nobody inside at my reading.

This isn’t Hull, Iowa. I work in Hull, at a group home. It’s very conservative. It’s what drove me to write “The American Dream,” how these people live during this time of war.

I don’t think the naked people were Dutch Reformed. Maybe they just weren’t big readers.

And so now I’m back home in Iowa writing this last column from my daughter’s computer. Mine crashed somewhere in Connecticut.

I started to plan this tour back in October. Then I left home in March. Now I’m back home in May.

It’s been like that.

I thought that if I got out there and bit the bullet, spoke in front of crowds, I could get people to notice the books I have written.

There must be another way. Maybe I just haven’t found it. Maybe it’s right there in front of me, but not clearly marked, or marked at all, or hidden behind a FREAKING LILAC BUSH, like the sign for the road out of Brockton, Massachusetts.

I did meet great people. I feel bad, for myself, that I won’t be able to meet the ones on the rest of the trip.

But the trip was a loser. There just is no way

to deny that. A good attitude only gets you as far as Boston.

Thank you to the folks in Lawrence, Kansas; Don Kaufman in Newton, Kansas; Laura Loughran in Omaha for calling out the relatives; Kent Blaser at Wayne State College; Jill at Hill Avenue Book Store; Holly Hart and the Iowa City Greens; the Southeast Minnesota Peacemakers in Rochester; Mike Stanek in Chicago; the Duluth Catholic Worker; Rainbow Books; Anthony Rayson and the Unitarian Church of Park Forest, Illinois; the 303 Collective in Saginaw; the Drinking Liberally groups in Oakland County Michigan and Kansas City and Cleveland; David Musella at the Center for Inquiry in Buffalo; and all those folks who tried to make it work in lots of other places.

I also want to thank Tony at Cold Type Magazine for putting together such a cool collection of my columns, and also to all the other websites that published them.

I'm not really sure what the answer is.

It could be that people don't read novels.

But who really knows about that. It could be that they just don't read mine, or that readings are just too boring. I have never been to a

reading, other than my own. It does sound like maybe the most boring thing you can think of, if someone asked you to think of five boring things, or ten, and it was against the rules to make the Democratic Party all ten.

The brown 1990 Honda was great. Nine thousand, eight hundred seventy-six miles. No problem. I saw other brown Hondas on the road and all had the same rust in the rear wheel wells. Do-do, do-do, do-do.

Whatever.

I think the answer is don't quit.

Really.

I'm writing another novel.

This one is going to bring George W. Bush to his knees. I guarantee it

Maybe I'll take it on the road, finish out the rest of the tour. I'm looking for local organizers. Get your name in now.

Just fyi, I've included the text of my book tour talk (it begins on the next page)

Get naked, join the Dutch Reformed Church, and read . . .

Mike Palecek



MIKE'S SPEECH

Promoting books, fighting Bush

HELLO. Thank you.

Two questions I often get asked about my writing are who are you, and why are you doing this?

Each time I tell my wife, let me try to explain.

The American Dream. It's an anti-war novel.

It's also about the lies we live on, like junk food.

It's propaganda, like in the USSR. We thought it couldn't happen here. Maybe it's not happening in exactly the same way, but it is happening here.

We have fake history, fake news, which leads to brainwashing that results in our being fascinated by celebrity, by money, by power, by sports, by American Idol, by violence, by war.

We are not fascinated by searching for truth, real religion, honest government – with trying to find a way for poor people to enter our

country and make a life for their children.

Michael M. is the focal character in my book.

He wants nothing more than to get on “The Home Helper Show” to get his little house fixed up and make his wife and children happy – while the world burns.

By accident, M rams his moped into the war memorial in Homeland's city park, and breaks World War II.

He is taken away in a helicopter to the local concentration camp, branded a terrorist, and dubbed The Big Evil One.

On this tour across the country, I am asking us to shake ourselves awake from the American Dream, because the world desperately needs us right now.

I am here to promote my books.

I am also here to fight the Bush government, to ask that the Bush government's involvement in 9-11 be investigated, that George W. Bush be impeached, and that George Bush, Dick Cheney, Karl Rove and Donald Rumsfeld be prosecuted for crimes against humanity.

[Read pg. 16]

“There are things we don't or can't understand.

A reasonable man, a healthy man ... a sane man ... when he encounters the inexplicable ... forgets about it."

– Maurice Minnifield, Northern Exposure

I think we have a history of being lied to by our government and I can't make myself forget about it.

The Northwoods Plan was put forth by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to President Kennedy, a plan in which Americans would be killed by the United States military, making it look as though it was done by Cuba, as a pretext for the invasion of Cuba.

This is William Pepper, author and attorney for the King family:

"When you see these things there is nothing you should put past the capability of government to do. Whatever it has to do to maintain power, it does. We were so naive back in the old days. We had to learn, I'm afraid, the hard way."

During the Bush years we have received:

Lies about WMD

Fallujah – what types of weapons were used there? Do we know?

War profiteering.

Slaughter of children.

Secret prisons

The approval – the approval – of torture.

The suspension of habeas corpus.

To take out a key political opponent would be small potatoes for these guys.

They do it in other countries, why not here?

Surely not because they are the good guys.

Only because they cannot get away with it.

What they can get away with, they will do.

At a meeting of war veterans in Wilmar, Minnesota, days before his death, Senator Paul Wellstone told attendees that vice-president Dick Cheney had told him, "If you vote against the war in Iraq, the Bush administration will do whatever is necessary to get you. There will be severe ramifications for you and the state of Minnesota."

Welcome to America. Let me try to explain.

The American Dream. It's time to wake up.

You are not sleeping. It is daytime. You look out your window: robins, squirrels, wiener dog poop. Fair to partly cloudy. It's all a fairy tale.

You are a character in someone else's made-up book.

In the dedication to *The American Dream* I talk about my parents, Milosh and Isabel. Dad was

first generation Czech. Isabel was second generation Irish/Norwegian. They were true believers in the American Dream, working hard. They settled in Norfolk, Nebraska, where dad got a job as an engineer for the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad.

As far as I know, nobody in Norfolk, Nebraska in 1963 or 1968 had a clue about the truth regarding the assassinations that were happening.

Johnny Carson didn't tell us, didn't mention it, everything was cool. Lee Harvey Oswald did it. Sirhan Sirhan did it. James Earl Ray did it. If they say it on TV, it must be true.

How did we come to this?

We have fake history.

Our junior high and high school history books should be in italics – handed out by the teacher on the first day with a wink – Remember The Maine, Pearl Harbor, Gulf of Tonkin, Waco, Oklahoma City bombing, moon landings, stolen elections.

And even so ... to talk about conspiracy, or government lying, in the United States ... it's like being a person who has spent the day alone upstairs writing poetry, and he steps out onto the street corner to hand those poems out

to passersby.

Because we accepted the Warren Commission we got the “911, What Controlled Demolition Commission?,” and our children will get the “XYZ Non-investigation By Rich People Covering Up For Other Rich People.”

And with Wellstone ... well, reporters never ask the questions you want them to ask. You say, c'mon, c'mon, ask it. They do not. And, Waco, well there was a trial. But it was not the FBI on trial. It was the Branch Davidians, and it was their children who were burned alive.

Once upon a time, I decided to ask.

When we bought our paper in Minnesota in the early '90s I thought as a publisher I had a new inside track to the truth. I wrote to Ted Kennedy asking him about the murders of his brothers. I guess I thought I was going to crack the case. I received a letter from Kennedy's office saying they did not wish to discuss the matter.

Then I wrote to a fellow Nebraska, from my own hometown. Somebody I had watched on TV with my parents. I thought, I'll bet Johnny knows what's going on. I'll ask him.

[Read Carson letter]

March 2, 2001

Johnny Carson
c/o Carson Productions Group
3110 Main St.
Santa Monica, CA 90405

Mr. Carson:
Hello.

I am originally from Norfolk, Nebraska, graduated from NHS in 1973.

Recently I had a chance to listen to the tape of your interview with attorney Jim Garrison. I don't recall watching the live interview, but very well could have, as watching your show before bed was our regular routine, as it was for many others.

As a fellow Norfolkian, I am curious as to why you treated Garrison as you did. I probably will not get the chance to contact you twice, so I will be frank right away. You sounded as if you were acting as a spokesman for someone else. Were you protecting the real killers of Kennedy?

Of course, you were. What else can I say, but that it is obvious now with almost forty years of perspective. The Warren Commission was a joke and Garrison was on to something. Something frightening to be sure. But why did you have so

much allegiance to the plotters and none to your dead president? Because he could not pay you from the grave?

Is it as simple as that?

Thanks in part to you we have been forced to live in Disneyland since 1963, where everything is unreal, everything entertainment and illusion.

Please tell me, as I will never know myself. Is wealth and power worth the sublimation of the truth?

Thank you for your time.

Mike Palecek
702 6th Ave.
Sheldon, Iowa 51201

[Read Carson response]

March 9, 2001

Dear Mr. Palecek:

I'm sending you a copy of a letter I have recently received to make you aware that some ignorant asshole is sending out letters over your signature. You should look into this.

Sincerely,
Johnny Carson

[pause]

George H. W. Bush is one of the few people who says he does not know where he was on Nov. 22, 1963. He recently spoke at Gerald Ford's funeral.

He said: "After a deluded gunman assassinated President Kennedy, our nation turned to Gerald Ford and a select handful of others to make sense of that madness, and conspiracy theorists can say what they will, but the Warren Commission report will always have the final definitive say on that matter. Why? Because Gerald Ford put his name on it and Gerald Ford's word was always good."

Of course, George Bush Sr. was lying, just as Gerald Ford was lying when he put his name on the Warren Commission report.

[pause]

I believe the media is one reason we are brainwashed in this country. Another is the churches that we have.

[tell about Catholic upbringing, seminary, letter to bishop Sheehan regarding Offutt AFB, deterrence vs. gospel/my picketing of churches:

The Omaha Catholic Church Supports SAC – Why?

picketing of bishop in front of congregation during his Easter Homily
hunger strike in jail
sanctuary – Omaha Cathedral]

[Read about church people in Homeland/TAD/page 108]

[pause]

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

Alexander Solzhenitsyn said: For a country to have a great writer is like having a second government. That is why no regime has ever loved great writers, only minor ones.

Any writer has to believe he or she is doing great things in order to have a chance to do great things. You have to employ a willing suspension of disbelief, just in order to keep going – to have a chance to write that anti-war novel that will stop glaciers.

You also have to believe in yourself to stand in front of the national guard tank, to hold a

sign on the street corner as the long, black limousines with the tiny American flags go by, to carry a peace flag in the Fourth of July parade, or to sit in the congressman's office and refuse to leave until he understands that killing children for a profit is wrong.

You have to believe in yourself to dream big in America.

Because we are really up against it these days in the land of the free and the brave.

The price of liberty is eternal vigilance – somebody said that.

We have not been vigilant, we have been watching TV.

We think the country runs on cruise control, the heavy lifting having been done earlier in the morning by those who gave us the eight-hour day, the minimum wage, ended war. THEY suffered, THEY struggled, THEY died, that we might be free.

That is where our thanks should go and where our examples lie.

Not in the military.

On this tour I'm trying to do my part. Before leaving home I dropped a letter in the mailbox.

March 27, 2001

*Internal Revenue Service
Kansas City, MO*

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

[pause]

I believe 9-11 was an inside job. They got the new Pearl Harbor they wanted to invade Iraq and take the oil.

The troops are not protecting us. That is someone's spin on the day's news, somebody's advertising slogan, someone else's sermon.

The troops serve the empire.

Killing and war and using money for killing is contrary to God's law.

This is not a democracy. It is something other, based on wealth and power and prestige and celebrity. Those in power are not really concerned with the truth. They are really concerned with remaining in power and anything they do is based upon that.

The poor are ridiculed, persecuted, hunted down in America. The chase sounded by barking pigs on the radio.

That is contrary to the teachings of Jesus.

American is not inherently benign.

They don't say that in most American high schools and colleges.

[Read/TAD/pg 58]

This last passage is John. He is an ex-protester, has been to prison. John lives next to the city

park and the war memorial. The town people call him "John the Baptist" because they have caught him peeing in the war memorial flowers after dark. John looks out at life through his basement window. He likes to call that being "underground."

[pause]

Most Americans are ignorant of their own history.

I say this with profound expertise. I was perhaps the most ignorant of all. I am only now beginning to learn. I have definitely served my time as poster boy for "Stupid." In the graduating class of 1973 at Norfolk High School I was 283 out of 289.

The Vietnam War ended just before I was supposed to sign up for the draft. I don't remember one conversation with my high school buddies about the war. I would have signed up and gone, maybe died, maybe killed. I didn't know any better, my own fault. But also the fault of my parents, teachers, coaches, priests. Maybe they didn't know any better, either.

I think they did.

If by some fat chance you do find out the truth, the next question hangs in the air.

What the hell are you going to do now?

So what do we do?

We don't ask questions. We assume Rather, Brokaw, Jennings, Koppel, Couric are telling us the truth, acting in our best interests. They are not. They are acting in the best interests of their own bank account, their favorite lunch spot, their employers, their handlers.

We let the Bush government get away without investigating 9-11 until over a year later, then putting through a whitewash and calling that good enough. And so we may be about to attack Iran, in the service of rich men and women seeking to become richer – not in the service of single mothers working three jobs and taking their kids to daycare at five a.m., or in the service of desperate young people seeking out the military for some perverted kind of hope in life.

We need to ask questions.

Hold signs, sit in Congressional offices, pound on missile silos, refuse to pay taxes ... write, or it will never stop.

They did not stop the war in Vietnam because it was the right thing to do – only

because they were forced to by good, hard-working people ... who believed in themselves ... who gave themselves a chance to succeed by walking out the front door, down to the corner, handing out their poems, holding up their sign.

Thank you.

I appreciate it.

Mike Palecek

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