



HERE COMES YOUR GHOST AGAIN*

BY ROBIN SAWYER

*Quoted from 'Diamonds & Rust' by Joan Baez

Years ago I was moving an old couch for a dear friend who was many years my senior. The couch had been stored on a porch for several years and had been exposed to quite a bit of moisture. As I lifted an end of the couch I noticed a paper bag between the cushions. I picked the bag up, and began to throw it aside when my curiosity kicked in. I opened the sack and was very surprised to find the likeness of Adolf Hitler staring me in the face.

I showed the stamp collection in the bag to my friend who said, "Take it and see if you can get a couple of bucks for it." There was something strange about the tone of her voice, and I didn't question her about the stamps. It was obvious, however, that someone had collected the stamps in Nazi Germany and they had somehow ended up on Jeanne's back porch. She would have been about 25 when World War II ended.

Nearly all of the stamps were badly water damaged, but the story they told was fascinating. There were stamps commemorating Hitler's 55th birthday, and stamps meant to immortalize the assassinated second in command of the SS. Hitler and Mussolini stood looking out over a town, like shepherds of men, benevolent leaders. The symbol of the SS was glorified on another stamp. Images of Hitler and swastikas were glorified throughout the collection. As I looked through them, the strange tone I noted in Jeanne's voice didn't seem so odd.

The troubled economy in pre-Nazi Germany was partially responsible for one of the darkest times in history. The German people were looking for something to blame their troubles on, and a group of people who didn't believe that Christ was the son of God made an excellent repository for the flood of anger filling the country. Today we wonder how a nation could allow the manifestation of hell on earth. A nation of Christians (among others), we wonder how another could allow entire families to be starved, beaten, tortured, and murdered.

Thirty-odd years I've watched the log trucks roll out of Oregon's hills. The trucks have steadily become fewer, and the trees they haul have become progressively smaller. Oregon's troubled timber industry is one part of the weakening American economy. People are, rightfully, afraid that our days of prosperity are drawing to a close. The political and economic leaders who have failed us are looking for someone to blame. Unfortunately (for our failed leaders) Americans don't collectively condemn Jews these days. Instead, a new immorality must be found: a group of people different from most of us, or another species that stands in the way of progress. The politicians are looking for scapegoats to blame their failures on. Fifty years from now, will we be remembered as the people who were duped into blaming owls and homosexuals for things they had no control over? I look at myself with the

rest of you, and wonder, can we really be such fools?

All my life I've tried to understand the differences between people. After all, it's a lack of cooperation that is responsible for most of our problems. No matter how I try, I can never understand people like David Duke. How can people be so consumed with hatred and call themselves Christians? Even atheists can see the hypocrisy that so many self-proclaimed Christians are blind to. Darwin would find himself more welcome in heaven than the self-righteous hypocrites passing judgement around this country. Although I disagree with most of David Duke's philosophy, I believe he chose the right political party to affiliate himself with. David Duke seems to be part of the natural evolution of the Republican Party.

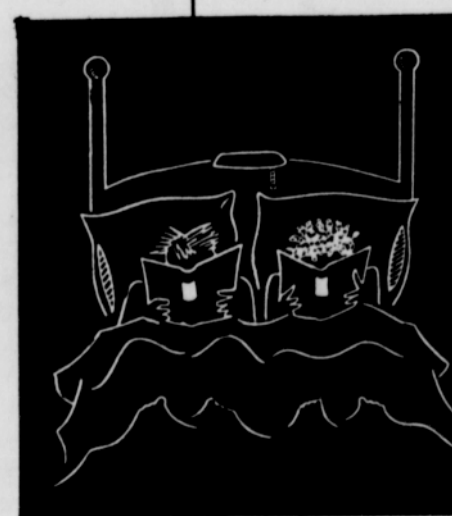
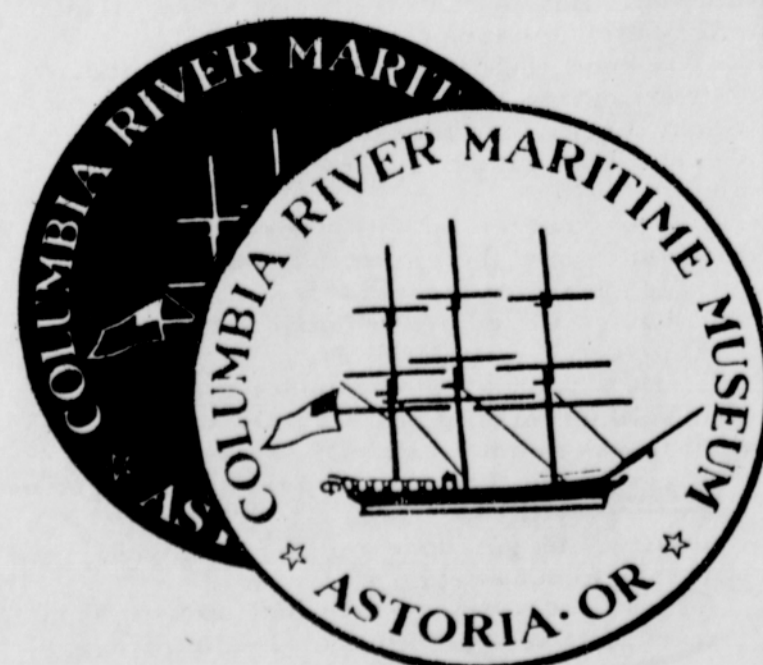
Having no power, money, or influence, I often wonder why I bother worrying about guys like Duke, Lon Mabon, and the rest of the people Gandhi said would eventually fall. Then I think of the alternative to opposing the oppression of free people. I think of the real story behind those stamps, and, suddenly, I'm very afraid, but very motivated. Those of us who have known Anne Frank and forgotten her have lost our souls with her memory.

Robin Sawyer lives in Seaside. He is a frequent contributor to the NCTE.



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