

Spoiled fun has become a way of life

By Marsha V. Morgan

I like to think I spend some time on the cutting edge, but being a trend setter in the crime-victim department never has been high on my list. Until recently.

How could anything made of Day-Glo plastic be dangerous—except to the environment—I wondered when I first read about the super squirt guns. You know, the ones that look like rocket launchers and have a huge water capacity.

My first clue came when I read about a murder police attributed to a squabble over one of these guns. But water guns don't kill people, do they? People kill people.

Recently, however, I experienced one of those polarizing events that turn radicals into insurance salesmen.

On a bright warm day I was a passenger on a packed bus caught in a traffic jam. As I edged my way to the back of the bus, a small group of passengers engaged in friendly chatter. A young woman moved over and helped me stow my suitcase out of the aisle. She was talking with two young men who were carrying leather-bound Bibles.

As I turned to look out to the park, a red Mustang moved under the open window. The young lad in the back seat nearest me gave me a big smile. As I smiled back he aimed his super squirt gun at me and shot me in the face. I turned away as he continued to pump streams through the open windows of the bus. My face felt very warm.

Several people were hit. Suddenly, the happy atmosphere shifted to confusion. One of the Bible students cried out, "Bleach. It's bleach." I wiped my face and my glasses on my blouse and looked back at the car, which was beginning to move ahead. I wrote down the license plate number. Other passengers contributed: Red Mustang, Illinois plates. Four males. Late teens, early 20s.

I asked the driver to report the incident and gave him the information I'd jotted on the back of a paperback. He picked up the phone but said he couldn't guarantee the report would get to the police.

When I got home I washed my face and put drops in my sore right eye. Then I dialed 911. Minutes later a police officer appeared at my door. I invited him in and I told him about the incident. He told me that I was battery victim.

He expressed his concern and asked me whether I wanted to go to the emergency room. Then he called in the license number. (Police eventually did find the shooters and their gun, but found only water, no bleach, in it. One of the young men will face a judge in court.)

Later, after watching the Chicago Bulls take the NBA championship, I saw the joyous crowd remain in the stadium until the team came out for an intense love-in. I continued to watch as the special news reports moved to the streets. A drunken crowd on Division Street rolled a taxi through the plate glass window of an ice cream store. Young girls ran through the night with armloads of plastic-covered dresses trailing after them like wedding veils. I switched it off.

I thought about the mindless mobs and the youth with the water gun. I wondered about the policeman and hoped he had not been called back to the streets. Then I recalled something he had said: "I'm no longer surprised by much of anything. If there is a way to abuse something, someone will find a way." Even a plastic toy. Even victory. ■

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Behind The Times

by Michael Burgess

There have been, in the forging of my personal realpolitik, two seminal events. The first was Kent State, when enquiring minds learned that yes, the National Guard would fire on unarmed students. The second was the Gulf War, when the politically new in town discovered (along with the aging Left) that the forces of truth, justice, and/or the American way could bomb the oldest city on the planet to rubble and murder 100,000 humans before the sane could mobilize and stop it. No more Vietnams, was the way George put it.

Since Operation Desert Carnage, I haven't watched a minute of television news, either local or national. I find CNN upsetting and, more importantly, counterproductive. If you watch madness long enough, it starts looking normal. This is, to my way of thinking, the only way the psychotics at the control panel can win.

I read the newspapers now, and tend my own garden, nurturing the sanity of family, friendships, and work. Strengthening, as Dylan put it, the things that remain. I cannot keep greedmongers from stealing, or hatemongers from killing, but I can teach the children around me not to hit or take something that's not theirs. I can, by practicing compassion and love, encourage compassion and love. As I get older I realize this is the only magic that works. I have, in a way much more profound than the Sixties, dropped out again. This time for good.

So it was only by accident that I watched an hour of the Republican National Convention on PBS. Running badly overtime, the network kept broadcasting this message at the bottom of the screen: "The Civil War will be seen in its entirety immediately after the convention."

Is it just me, or is it all looking like a Kurt Vonnegut novel again?

So there they were, thousands of the self important and self righteous, fueled by the sort of zeal only money can buy, groping each other's check books and chanting, "Four More Years". Had it been shot in grainy black and white, it could have been any beer hall in 1932 Munich. If King George and the Idiot Prince had locked arms Tammy Faye Baker and sung New Order Uber Alles, it'd just have been frosting on the cake.

At least the rabid, God threatening right has framed the issues, or issue, clearly. One is now either Republican or Godless. Those who are not with what the party of Abraham Lincoln has become are not the distinguished opposition, they are the spawn of the devil, or "Demoncrats", as Pat Buchanan dubbed them playfully. Once God has picked a side, politics becomes what it has always been for the powerful: a religion.

This is, says a born again Republican Party, not just an election. It's a war between cultures. Imagine our surprise. And our eagerness for them to trot it out.

The Gulf War wasn't Vietnam and this isn't the Sixties. The Emperor's been naked now for 30 years. For the last 12, we've watched the rich load our money into trucks, watched a war on drugs fuel a police state making war on the Bill of Rights, watched the growth of a global corporate military government willing and able to pattern bomb the competition and sell the video for \$49.95. We've watched asylums close and prisons open, watched homeless children sell their bodies, watched their parents bury dreams, watched rapes rise and abortions fall, watched crosses burning again and our fellow citizens beaten for the color of their skin or who they choose to love.

We're out here, George---the people our parents warned us about together with those who can only be fooled for so long.

We're your worst nightmare, George. We've seen your New World Order and we're warning everyone about you.

Save Scenic 101

Halt O.D.O.T. Arrogance
Preserve Scenic Resources

FREE BUMPERSTICKER

Would you like to help preserve what remains of Clatsop County's open farmlands, flower fields, marshlands and other vibrant wildlife habitats? Your help is needed to redirect ODOT (Oregon Dept of Transportation).

ODOT's attitude is one of arrogance toward nature. ODOT is wedded to the fiscally irresponsible, environmentally outdated view that "bigger is better." ODOT plans to replace US 101 at Sunset Beach Road in Clatsop County with 8 lanes of asphalt that will destroy everything in its path. This includes a 4-lane freeway -- not just another 4-lane highway like that to the north and south, but a full-fledged freeway, free of flowerstands, fruitstands, grange halls, and private driveways -- plus 4 lanes of feeder roads linking into a vast farm-destroying, multi-acre, sprawling octopus of an interchange, at a cost that has mushroomed to \$20 million.

All this is being done when the existing highway could be improved for less than \$10 million, without infringing on the adjacent ecosystem of farmlands and associated marshlands and woodlands that are the habitat of over 30 species of mammals, 50 species of birds, a dozen amphibians and reptiles, innumerable invertebrates, and humans -- all enjoying the Oregon Coast's slower paced but sustainable quality of life.

What's our personal angle? We live here. We're familiar with the land and the permanent damage caused by such a needlessly massive freeway project -- damage to orchards, daffodil fields, and the quiet marshy ditches where wild ducks nest and raise their young (and we know that "wetland mitigation" is ODOT's way of saying they'll take all the wetlands they want and pacify the public - us - with man-made "wetlands." We know the trails the elk herd follows at night, right into the path of ODOT's planned freeway. And yes, we do have a flower stand, where people stop and talk to us. Tourists and natives returning home find the Oregon Coast Highway in northern Clatsop County decidedly less scenic each time they come back -- a far cry from what they remember from even the recent past. They, and we, especially loathe the idea of a freeway system here that itself destroys the aesthetic attributes and ecosystem they come here to enjoy.

Help awaken others to ODOT's arrogant wastefulness. Call or write us to receive a free bumpersticker. At your request we will also send you ongoing notification of ODOT's little publicized public meetings concerning this construction project. Call or write:

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