

COUNTER CULTURE

Sandy Rea

About two weeks ago I had the opportunity to experience two vastly different perspectives of a single situation. I have found myself grateful for this quiet lesson ever since then.

A dear friend who subscribes to the theory that cats, indeed, walk on water, extended an invitation to attend a Big Deal cat show in Portland with him. I was flattered, in that he deemed me worthy of such an invite, and that he was willing to spring for lunch at a Chinese restaurant where the aisles were crammed with carts full of God-know-what, and the clientele was overwhelmingly Asian. (An aside: As a Taurus, I have been known to do almost anything, go almost anywhere -- happily -- for food). We chose mysterious things to eat, drank decent jasmine tea, and afterward set off for the Rose Garden complex to see an expensive passle of fuzzy guys.

We ended up in an underground section approximately the size of a SAC base, that was filled on one side with tables full of row upon row of cages containing one or more of the required species. Now, we are not talking REGULAR old cages -- these things were set up with no less detail than stages at the Metropolitan Opera, with satin and sequined drapes pulled back to expose Le Kitty in all his/her somnambulant grandeur. That overwhelming feeling of being a 24-karat hick began to set in as I stared, mouth agape, at breeds that looked like they originated on Star Trek. Example: The Cornish Red. It appears to be a perfectly normal cat that has been starved nearly to death, then given a bad perm. There were exotic Siamese whose faces were so elongated that they could pass for reincarnations of Lauren Bacall. I was duly impressed with the array of Abyssinians, Vans, Persians, Ocicats and Tonkinese. They were at their best, winning bouquets of ribbons, and garnering (if possible) even more adulation from their owners as the afternoon wore on.

My bum knee began to suggest sitting for a while, so I up residence in a folding chair in front of the snack bar in mid-mall (where one could discover that a small coke is (!) \$2.00). The ceiling drew attention, by virtue of its heavy-duty construction: It appeared capable of supporting a small lead mine. Its lines were interesting enough to hold my interest for quite a while, and, in gazing back and forth at the girders in the windowless space, I saw something unexpected -- a little gray and brown bird flitting literally from pillar to post. 300 cats on one side of the hall and one VERY brave sparrow on the other. How Vonnegut! I began to consider the cat show from that point of view, and eventually came up with the low, long-in-erupting snicker that is intrinsic to thinking along the same lines as The Master.

For those who have had questions about the title of this column, it springs (as a bad pun) from the fact that I work in a small business that has a soda fountain where people gather to socialize. I adapt the freedom of its conversations to this format.

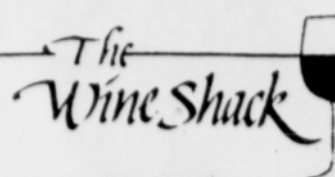


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