



Although I write a lot, many readers are complaining it isn't enough. They are checking my site three times a day and are disappointed there isn't something new everyday. To be honest, I wrote so much last year I got a bit burned out. Also, responding to an endless line of fake events gets old. So I have been pacing myself since the first of the year, to be sure I don't burn out altogether. I have hit these slow spots before and I always come back full steam, so I wouldn't worry too much if I were you.

Some have recommended that my writings don't always have to be earth-shattering: I can just spill whatever happens to be in my head at the time. So I thought I would try that today. I am not sure it is going to work, since I don't want to start boring people—that will just tarnish my legacy. But I will give it a shot.

The two little sister kittens I found on the side of the road last summer are now having kittens of their own. The first one, Clover, has already had her litter, though I haven't seen it yet. She hid them under a pile of boxes and isn't ready to show them to me. But I can hear them peeping in there. They are about a week old now. I am guessing there are just two or three, since she wasn't huge. Her sister Pushkin is HUGE. She may give us the full count of six. Pushkin is so named because I thought she was a male for a long time. She is larger than Clover, with big male paws. She is a gorgeous long-haired black and white, with a black spot on her nose. Clover is a dainty short-haired black and white tabby, more average looking, but very sweet. They had a brother who was a Siamese, but he didn't live. He was already sick when I found them. It's amazing, isn't it, that a cat can give birth to such a mix of kittens. Tabbies, long-haired plush cats, and Siamese all in the same litter! It would be like you giving birth to a white baby, an Asian baby, and an Inuit baby. No matter what your heritage is, I don't see that happening.

I have also been very busy working on bicycles for the past couple of months. People are dumping old Eroica bikes on Ebay and I have been snapping them up at steep discounts. Eroica means steel frames from the 60s-80s, usually limited to top-end racing bikes. I couldn't afford these bikes back in the day, but I can now that they are 75% off. Plus, I know how to restore them, adding even more value. My big find was an 84 Ciocc frameset, which I got for its opening bid.



Nobody else was interested because it didn't look too good. The black paint appeared to be weathered or otherwise damaged, which would normally require a complete repaint and re-decal. That is expensive and I can't afford such things. But I had a feeling I was just looking at a film that would come off. I was right, since when it got here I gave it a turpentine bath and the film came right off. The frame looks new now. The previous owner had clearly left it out in his shop uncovered while he worked on other projects, and it got damaged that way. But being a painter I knew this is why they clear-coat bicycle frames. Same reason we varnish paintings: to protect the paint layer underneath. Back in the day it was to protect the painting from candle, fire, or tobacco smoke. After years of that, you could remove it with the top layer of varnish, with nothing but turpentine and a rag. It is the same with clear-coat on a bicycle, since in this case only the clear-coat had been filmed. The paint underneath hadn't been affected. I didn't even have to remove the clear-coat. The turpentine lifted the film right off the top of the clear-coat, leaving it alone. Anyone else would have tried mineral spirits, but that would melt the clear-coat, making a mess and requiring a re-application. But turp melted the film without melting the clear-coat, so the cleaning was like a miracle. The guy I bought it from was a bit angry, since he knew he could have gotten three times what I paid for it. Knowledge is money.

I also just picked up a 1979 Guerciotti frameset from Ebay France, which I got for the opening bid of 90 euros.



A ridiculous price for a vintage Italian racer, so I couldn't let it pass. My brother has been riding a vintage Guerciotti for decades, but his is from about 1990. He just had it restored and it cost a fortune. I got this one so cheap because the chrome was in awful shape. But again, I know how to restore it without spending money. Anyone else would have rechromed it, but I just sanded it and polished it, mostly by hand but using a bench grinder/polisher for the last step. Most people don't even know you can sand chrome, but you can. You can sand it just like aluminum, though it is much harder. You start out with 100 grit, then go to 400, 1000, 2000, and 7000. It isn't shiny new chrome now, but it looks a million times better than it did. It is passable. I spent the rest of the day retouching the paint and decals.

I have done the same kind of restoration recently on a lot of other parts that I got on the cheap. Campagnolo seatposts are ridiculously expensive, for instance, but not if they are heavily scratched. So I buy the scratched ones and sand them down and polish them. It is quite a bit of work and no one else wants to do it, but they look fantastic when you finish, shining like a mirror. In the same way, I bought a Campy rear derailleur that the seller was selling for parts. It would normally go for \$100 or more, but the guy thought it was sprung and unusable. No else would bid on it and he told me afterwards people were writing him and scolding him for pushing junk. I got it for \$20 and fixed it in about 30 seconds. The cage had gone past the stop, making the spring lose its tension. So I just loosened the main bolt, turned the cage once counter-clockwise, and re-tightened. The part was back to new.

Except that it was also filthy. No one knows how to clean anything anymore, it seems. When I sell stuff on Ebay I clean it up first, but most people don't. They just throw it up there as-is. Once I cleaned and lubricated this derailleur, it looked like a completely different part. I could now get \$100

for it in a heartbeat. People don't even know how to polish their shoes anymore. Someone could make a living just buying stuff on Ebay, cleaning it up, and reselling it for four times as much. I actually do a little bit of that, just with stuff I like to work with, like bikes, shoes, books, things you can quickly add value to if you know how to do it. But that is now considered to be old-world. It isn't to be thought of in our disposable society. If your \$300 shoes get dirty, don't clean them, just throw them up on Ebay for \$49.

My grandfather would be proud of me, maybe, but everyone else thinks I am insane. Everyone else is too important to clean anything, polish their shoes, or restore an old item. Which is kind of funny, everything considered. Why? Well because according to many of the self-styled gurus on the internet who have never met me, I am supposed to be an egomaniac. So I just ask you this: do egomaniacs commonly buy cheap used stuff on Ebay and spend hours restoring it by hand? Do they buy other people's shoes and polish them? No. Even some of my readers don't like to see me do it. When I talk about things like this they shake their heads, saying my time is too precious to waste on old shoes and bike parts. They offer to send me more money if I will quit doing it. One of them said it is like watching Isaac Newton cleaning other people's toilets for a living. Funny, but that is overstating the case by miles. I answer that if they want to buy me a maid service, I will quit doing the dishes and things like that. I can live without that.

Some guys understand it, since it is a guy thing. Restoring an old bike is far more fun than buying a new one, because you can see the fruits of your work. You take something that no one wanted and with just your hands and a few common tools you turn it into a work of art. It is no longer just *a* bike, it is *your* bike. Not because you bought it, but because you *made* it. It is a creation.

Some readers answer, "But isn't a painting even more satisfying than a bike or a pair of shoes? And you can sell the painting for far more. So why waste your time on piddly stuff?" It's hard to explain, but sometimes I want to make a painting and sometimes I want to make something else. It isn't a matter of what is more important or what will sell for more, it is a matter of what I feel like doing that day. I think I was a cobbler in a past life, so I guess that urge just still comes over me. Maybe I was a book restorer in yet another life. Plus, my art supplies are all in storage and I can't paint until after my next move. Which is fine because I need to feel very good to paint and I haven't felt like that since I got here. Art requires an inspiration that these other things doesn't. I don't have to feel good to work on a bike.

And the draw of these bicycles isn't hard to explain, since I am not the only one who feels it. Eroica bikes are just beautiful, and most people can see that. Plus, I got into cycling in those years, so this is nostalgic for me. It takes me back to those decades, when I was blissfully ignorant of all the things I know now. Just a jug-head boy on a bike.

Which reminds me of a funny story. I don't really have a jug-head, and I think that is the first time I have called myself that. No one has ever called me that. But you may remember the story of me dating Allison as a college freshman and sneaking into her dorm in Loyola dressed as a girl. Well, this story comes out of that year. After years of straightening my hair, I finally gave up and let it go curly the second semester of my senior year in highschool. That was 1981. I remember one guy coming up to me in the hall and saying he liked it better straight. Some people thought it was a perm, of course. I don't remember one person saying it looked great, but it didn't really bother me because I KNEW it didn't look great. If I thought it looked great I wouldn't have straightened it for four years, would I? What I really wanted was long thick straight hair, like a Viking or something, but do we get all our wishes. No, but it was so much easier and it was what it was, so best learn to live with it. A few years

later I learned it looked better long, since the extra weight helped pull it down, and being in Austin helped since the humidity was high: at least it wasn't frizzy. My hair doesn't get frizzy in humidity, it gets frizzy when it is very dry. The right conditioner helped immensely as well. But in 1981 I had mainly gone from one Napoleon Dynamite style to the other. At least I had ditched my spectacles.

Anyway, when I got to Loyola, I found that Allison's roommate had been jokingly referring to me as the "Connecticut bighead". She had seen a picture of me with Allison with my blond mini-fro, and that is what she came up with. I was at Haverford, which is in Pennsylvania not Connecticut, but this girl wasn't too bright and this is what popped into her head. I laughed along since it *was* kind of funny. I had just lost my virginity a few months earlier, so I was laughing along with everything. I didn't care. On one of those days in Allison's dormroom we had sex four times, which is still a record for me. So those girls could call me whatever they wanted, I was fine with it.

OK, back to the present. I took my bi-weekly trek to the market today to buy cases of cat food and other sundries, and happened to see a young woman that looked very much like one of my ex-girlfriends. So much so I nearly asked her if she was a relative. I didn't because I didn't want to be a creeper, but it was uncanny. She was wearing sandals and even her feet matched. The only difference is she was about three inches taller and 25 years younger. She could be my friend's daughter, but I guess we will never know.

The interesting story to go along with that is that I dated this girl very briefly when I was about 40 and she was 22. It was just before I went to Europe—when I first became aware that my youthful looks were a curse in disguise. Yes, though youthful looks were what allowed me to date this girl in the first place, which may look like a blessing, but it didn't work out that way. At first she thought I was another student, maybe a grad student, but once she saw my apartment she began to get suspicious. It wasn't the apartment of a grad student, since I had way too much interesting stuff. It wasn't a matter of wealth, since I had none, it was a matter of all the paintings and books and so on. No one could have painted all those paintings by age 25. So she did the addition and began to ask questions. She asked how old I was. I said how old do you think I look. She said 25, maybe 27. I said, well, that is good enough for me. I had been guessed at 23 that month by a girl at the pizza parlor. I didn't want to tell my friend my age because I knew it was a problem. I saw it coming. After we had slept together a few times, she thought to go online and do some digging. She came back and said "I know you are 40. I can't date a 40-year-old. What if I married you? You would get old long before I did!" So she went back to her 25-year-old previous boyfriend. I ran into her after that and told her he would get old before I did. She looked at me like I was crazy. Or a vampire or something. How could he get old before I did? But I predicted it for several reasons. One, I looked better than he did right then, which should have been her first clue. That is why she had been dating me. She wasn't dating me for my brains, she was dating me for my pretty face. Sad but true, and of course I knew it. It doesn't only happen to women, you know. Two, he didn't look like the kind of guy who took care of himself. He already had lines around his eyes, from drinking or drugs, probably.

And guess what? I ran into her 15 years later in another town way across the country, strictly by accident, or fortune. So I was 55, she was 37, and he was 40. **She admitted I had been right.** She was no longer with him, but she was in touch and knew what he looked like. She said he looked about 50. I still looked 15 years younger, so I finally looked 40. So, did she want to date me? No, but it wasn't because of how I looked or the fear I would hit the wall before her. By then I was a "dangerous man", and was scary to her for that reason. Plus, I had very little desire to date her anyway. She didn't look so great, but more importantly I had lost all respect for her. Not only for the previous ditch, but for her looking at me sideways then for being a "conspiracy theorist". She may have learned something about

age, but she still had bad judgment. So she had nothing to offer me.

What I wanted to say to her and many of the others, but never did, is that maybe she should have stayed with me the first time and made nice. Not only would I have taught her my secrets of youth, so she would look better at 37 and every other age, I would have taught her how to think, so that she wasn't still an idiot at 37, looking down her nose at people that were much smarter than her. She could have learned what was really going on around her, and through that how to protect her sanity and health, instead of remaining a dupe of the monsters.

I know that sounds harsh and a bit too self-revelatory, but let it stand. It is the truth. I will even continue. I am still getting used to the idea people actually *want* to hear what I have to say, since it hasn't been my experience in real life. In social situations I am generally shut down, ignored, or talked over, and always have been. Women have never been eager to pick my brain, as the saying goes. Sometimes they say they are, but they never get around to it. I would say they are surprised I have a brain, then disappointed that I do. They have less than no interest in learning anything from me, and why would they since they are taught they are complete beings of perfect intuition and that men are only in need of a good lecturing. Men are lucky to be tolerated, given all they have done in the past and all they are conspiring to do in their borderline-criminal little minds. This is the woman's time, after all, whether she has earned it or not, and it is her time to speak, though she has nothing to say, and her time to shine, though she be as dull as dishwater. The woman is given every benefit of the doubt while the man is given all possible demerits from hello, which—with great and constant effort—he may be able to erase given enough decades. He certainly will not erase them by asserting himself or expecting to be heard.

I have been called a misogynist for comments like that, and expect to continue to be, but I am not a misogynist. I am just reporting my experience. When women report their experience, we are supposed to bow down before it as gospel, but when a man reports his experience he is dismissed as some sort of ogre. Don't blame the victim. . . unless he is a man, in which case he can't be a victim and therefore can't be right. No man was ever mistreated, and no woman was ever not mistreated. The man who claims he was mistreated by a woman is mistreating the woman simply by claiming it.

I am not a misogynist, because as my readers know I don't ultimately blame women for this sad state of affairs—though they could have refused their own miseducation. Woman's natural state is not like this: they are made to be supportive and nurturing, like the mama cat with her kittens. Man's nature is also supportive, and he is preconditioned to be a husband, taking care of his wife and children, like a male eagle bringing home food to the nest. The current paradigm can only have been achieved with monstrous levels of malign interference from the Phoenicians, who want us all selfish, separate, and miserable, like them, so that we spend all our disposable income to compensate. No, it is more than that, isn't it? Most people spend far *more* than their disposable income compensating, since they go into huge debt to feather the Phoenicians.

Anyway, enough of that. You wanted to know what goes through my mind and there it is. But let's leave that and get back to kittens again or something. I learned something interesting from my brother this week. He works for the water board in Texas and they were on some conference trip to Dallas. I take it he was carpooling in some van and happened to sit next to a new co-worker, a lady who had just been hired a couple of months earlier. He had seen her around but never talked to her. He is the talkative sort, so they began chatting. Somehow the conversation got around to art, and she said she used to date an artist. He said, my brother is an artist you ought to look him up online. His name is Miles Mathis. I guess you see where this is going. Her jaw hit the floor, because of course they were

talking about the same person. And it's strange, because she previously had no connection to Texas, water conservation, or geology. I did not date her in Austin. Coincidence, or something more? I am still mulling it over myself.

Well, something just happened on the kitten front while I was writing. I am having to act as midwife for Pushkin, since she has needed some help. She's not even a year old, you know. She is dropping them as I speak. I heard a bunch of squeaking coming from her box, and she had already had several and was having another one. But she was confused, wandering around outside the box with a kitten hanging out of her. I petted her and tried to calm her, but she nearly dropped the little guy in her water dish. Thank God I was there or he might have drowned. I didn't see that coming. The box isn't that near the dish and I didn't predict she would be running around with kittens coming out of her. She then just left it on the ground, like one too many. I put it in the box with her and she continued to clean it, chewing through the cord, etc. So everything is OK, I think. It is quiet from that direction for the moment except for her loud purring. Once she calms down she is very proud of them. I now think she was probably in some pain. The kitten was snagged for a moment. I think maybe he was the last one and came out with the placenta, which made it more difficult. I have seen it with calves, where you have to help pull them out. I was right on the edge of doing that but didn't have to. I didn't want to touch him unless I had to, not from squeamishness, but just because I didn't want her refusing him or something. You never know. Best not to get more involved than you have to in that regard. Plus, I didn't want to hurt her more, or accidentally squeeze him too hard. That would be awful.

While Pushkin was nursing her new kittens, I played with Clover, who feeds her invisible kittens and then leaves them in a warm pile for hours. She is not a doting mother, it seems. More like minimalist. She needs her time away from the nest. She likes to play "this little piggy" with me, having her toes pulled on while I talk sweetly to her. She seems to be fascinated by the game. As I was doing that, I realized how sad the game must be for vegetarians, whose third little piggy doesn't get roast beef. I guess he gets tofu, which isn't really the same, is it? Now we know why he cried wee wee wee all the way home.

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I am often asked if anything is real. Of course, lots of things are real, including me. But I tripped across [this old video](#) of a performance of Tchaikovsky's Dance of the Reed Pipes, from *The Nutcracker*. It is so cute it brought tears to my eyes. It is things like this that keeps the gods or aliens from wiping us out. They keep hoping we will grow into our potential. I think you could be advanced 5000 years into the future and if you heard that you would still just go WOW! Computers will never ever create anything like that, and do you know why? It is because computers are not drawing on thousands of years of sadness and happiness, grief and ecstasy. We not only have those emotions in our lives, we have them in our genes and blood and innate package. We can draw that sort of genius out of the air, as it were, tapping the charge field. But machines don't have any of that.