

Planet Buon Viaggio

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Another Italian Experience

My darling wife, **Melinda Peterson**, will be away for most of the month of September to participate as an actor in a writers' workshop in Italy, while I stay home to take care of the cats.

The Italian Experience is an ensemble-based artistic intensive led by directors **Low Palter** and **Craig Belknap** (pictured, left and right). Writers and actors, like Melinda, will participate in a rigorous and intense rehearsal process to shape the new work at a venue right outside the ancient city of Spoleto, about two hours equidistant from Florence and Rome in Umbria, a region of Italy known as *il cuor verde* (the green heart) not far from Perugia and Assisi.

The company will live and work at a 700-year-old stone

monastery that every summer is host to the *La Mama International Theatre Symposium*. La Mama, Ellen Stewart, purchased the monastery, outbuildings, and surrounding forested hills (pictured above and below) after winning a MacArthur Genius Grant and participants

will reside in comfortable rooms, eat extraordinary meals prepared by a renowned chef, and have time for quiet reflection in a pastoral environment. Along with rehearsals, they'll have the opportunity to take classes such as improvisation, singing, dance, stage combat, and dialect work.

Melinda will later visit our friend **Paul 'Dimitri' Magid** at his 600-year-

old farmhouse in Dragonena near Bologna before returning home from Rome.

Abbia divertimento, la mia ragazza cara!





DONKEYHOTIEY

The secret to why Giant Pandas live so long is because they are lazy, move slowly and have small brains. (Sound familiar?) ~ **Phil's Phunny Phacts**

TRUMP'S TROOPERS

As reported by **Kathleen Hennessey** in the *LA Times*, GOP guru **Frank Luntz**, recently assembled 29 Trump supporters in Washington, DC, to examine "the Mack truck that has jackknifed his party."

The 17 local Republican women and 12 men were mostly white, middle-aged, and educated and agreed with Luntz that they were "mad as hell and not going to take it anymore." Predictably, the participants believe that our President does not love his country, and many still doubt his citizenship. They also don't trust Congress or politicians in general and "were nearly as fed up with their own party as with the Democrats" -- much of this echoing complaints of Tea Party conservatives and the talking points of rightwing radio.

"Nothing getting better," one complained, "everything, across the board, getting worse... as a power, Putin slaps us around like we're Tahiti."

The group agreed that The Donald "tells it like it is" and doesn't take any crap. "He may not be polished or politically correct, but he makes me feel like someone is finally saying what I've been thinking," another explained. And The Trumpeter isn't a boastful egomaniac in their

eyes, he's just proud of being a success. "I like the confidence," one woman added. "It makes me feel confident." Trump isn't a clown; he's just an entertainer, and the majority affirmed they'd also vote for him if he became an independent.

"There's, like," Luntz observed, "an alternative universe." To which I might add a slight variation on the eternal **Firesign** question, "What is Realty?"

"Politicians and diapers must be changed often, and for the same reason." ~ **Mark Twain**

IN YOUR FACEBOOK

For those of our older generation who do not really comprehend why **Facebook** exists: and for those Millennials who wonder why some Boomers, like me, question why it exists, I offer this social experiment:

Presently, I am trying to make friends outside of Facebook while applying the same principles. So every day I go down on the street and tell total strangers what I've eaten, how I feel, what I did the night before and what I'll do tomorrow. Then I show them pictures of my family, my dog, and me gardening and hanging out in my pool. I also listen to their feedback and tell them I love them -- and it works!

I already have three persons following me -- two policemen and a psychiatrist.

■ **CONTINUED**

Common sense is a flower that does not grow in everyone's garden. ~ Phil's Phunny Phacts

FOUND IN TRANSLATION

Each of us was someone's fan, and maybe betrayed and still. Each of us, due to the fact that he was young, or just sympathy – in love. No matter guy or girl, in singer or actress. Not important. Most importantly, that you're committed to that person and is willing to protect him, knowing that he has no idea that you exist. But for you he became a part of your life. Yes, in any case, love the fan does not fade with the years.

"And so I have. I am your loyal fan for several years now. Looking for all about you - articles, interviews, videos. Love your creativity. It gives me confidence and hope for a brighter future. I hope you'll be a long time to please us. It is a pity that in my country is not so easy to find something about you. I want your autograph!"

And this is why I take the time to answer every request. I love my fans. They keep me cool.

"We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are." ~ Anais Nin

SAYINGS OF CHAIRMAN DANGERFIELD

My wife is such a bad cook, in my house we pray after the meal. My wife only has sex with me for a purpose. Last night she used me to time an egg. It's tough to stay married. My wife likes to talk to me during sex; last night she called me from a hotel. But tonight, my wife met me at the front door. She was wearing a sexy negligee. The only trouble was, she was coming home. The other day I came home early and a guy was jogging, naked. I asked him, 'Why?' He said, 'Because you came home early.' My wife made me join a bridge club. I jump off next Tuesday.

I know I'm not sexy. When I put my underwear on I can hear the Fruit-of-the-Loom guys giggling. If it weren't for pickpockets, I'd have no sex life at all. I was such an ugly kid! When I played in the sandbox, the cat kept covering me up. When I was born, the doctor came into the waiting room and said to my father, "I'm sorry, we did everything we could, but he pulled through anyway." I was such an ugly baby that

my mother never breastfed me. She told me that she only liked me as a *friend*. I'm so ugly my mother had morning sickness *after* I was born. I'm so ugly my father carried around a picture of the kid that came with his wallet. I could tell my parents hated me: My bath toys were a toaster and a radio.

My family was so poor that if I hadn't been born a boy, I wouldn't have had anything to play with. I remember the time that I was kidnapped and they sent a piece of my finger to my father. He said he wanted more *proof*. Once when I was lost, I saw a policeman and asked him to help me find my parents. I said to him, "Do you think we'll ever find them?" He said, "I don't know, kid; there's so many places they can hide."

ALL DUE RESPECT
Wisecracking wisdom from
Rodney Dangerfield.

It's been a rough day. I got up this morning and put a shirt on and a button fell off. I picked up my briefcase, and the handle came off. Now I'm afraid to go to the bathroom. I went to see my doctor. "Doctor, every morning when I get up and I look in the mirror I feel like throwing up. What's wrong with me?" He said, "Nothing, your eyesight is perfect." I went to the doctor because I'd swallowed a bottle of sleeping pills. My doctor told me to have a few drinks and get some rest.

Some dog I got. We call him Egypt because in every room, he leaves a pyramid. His favorite bone is in my arm. Last night he went on the paper four times – three of those times I was reading it.

My uncle's dying wish was to have me sitting in his lap; he was in the electric chair.

■ **CONTINUED**

"I love stand-up. I'm totally addicted to it. It's free speech. It's all that's left." ~ **Roseanne Barr**

YOU REALLY TEE ME OFF

Planeteer **H. Lee Kagan** sent me another variation on the golf joke from the last orbit, which goes something like this: Christ, Moses and God are out golfing. Christ and Moses each tee off decent shots down the fairway.

Then God tees off and the shot is way off to the left heading into a creek, but just as the ball is about to splash in, a trout jumps up and flips its body against the ball sending it back onto the fairway where a squirrel grabs it but is snatched up by a hawk, and the hawk drops the squirrel onto the green where the ball rolls **STRAIGHT INTO THE HOLE!**

Moses throws down his club, turns to God and says, "Look -- You wanna play golf, or do You just want to fuck around?"

"Golf is like a love affair. If you don't take it seriously, it's no fun - but if you do, it breaks your heart."
~ **Louise Suggs**, **LPGA** co-founder

FOLLOW THE FIRESIGN

Due to my birthday last month and **Phil Austin's** untimely passing, I've been receiving a lot of personal notes recently, and I'd like to share a few with you:

Rob Lee wrote, "Although he may not remember me by face, there are plenty of things I identify with. As to his group, the **Firesign Theatre**, we would show up at performances with rubber clown noses way before they sold them. Also, we gave out hundreds of 'Hi I'm (fill in the blank)' stickers to wear, but we filled them in with funny names.

"I also went to the **Golden Dragon** the night the Chinese gang shot up the place. I fell out of my wheelchair and pretended to be dead till it cleared. Many years later, while teaching at **Cogswell Polytechnical College**, I showed the infamous "Everything You Know is Wrong" film (I'm related to **Sam Adams**) to over 2000 students. So Phil, a big happy birthday to youse!"

Then, from my friend **Rich Demaio**, "I was watching this show on Spike called "Fast & Loud," where they restore



**TO WATCH EPISODE
CLICK IMAGE AT LEFT**

Nick Danger and Firesign Theatre
reference is 3 mins. 40 secs. in

old cars to their original beauty. They bought a car with a license plate that said **NK DANGER** or something like it. The woman was saying that all the time her dad had the car (a Pantera) she never knew why people called him **Nick Danger**. The host explains it quickly and pays homage to **Firesign Theatre**. It was a surprise! Maybe you can find the show on **Hulu**. That's where I saw it. Really cool, I thought!!" [Watch on **YOUTUBE**; reference at 3:40]

*"Man, 50 to 55: He is warm and friendly.
Interacts well with his wife. He is full of life.
Must be able to operate a skillet."* ~ **Casting specs**

PC ISN'T EZ

This was a topic of a **Boomers** episode by me and **Jamie Alcroft**, commenting on **Jerry Seinfeld's** refusal to play college campuses because of their strict interpretations of political correctness, so I found **THIS ARTICLE** in **The Atlantic** on the subject enlightening:

"Rather than trying to protect students from words and ideas that they will inevitably encounter, colleges should do all they can to equip students to thrive in a world full of words and ideas that they cannot control. One of the great truths taught by Buddhism (and Stoicism, Hinduism, and many other traditions) is that you can never achieve happiness by making the world conform to your desires..."

"For millennia, philosophers have understood that we don't see life as it is; we see a version distorted by our hopes,

THROUGHOUT
THE 'PLANET,' CLICKING
DARK RED TYPE
OPENS A RELATED
INTERNET LINK.

■ **CONTINUED**

fears, and other attachments.

The Buddha said, Our life is the creation of our mind. **Marcus Aurelius** said, Life itself is but what you deem it.

“And **Thomas Jefferson**, upon founding the University of Virginia, said: ‘This institution will be based on the illimitable freedom of the human mind. For here we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate any error so long as reason is left free to combat it.’

“We believe that this is still—and will always be—the best attitude for American universities.” (Damn Commies...)

“Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle,
and the life of the candle will not be shortened.
Happiness never decreases by being shared.”
~ **The Teaching of Buddha**

PASS IT ALONG

It is a slow day in a little Greek village. The rain is beating down and the streets are deserted. Times are tough, everybody is in debt, and everybody lives on credit. On this particular day a rich German tourist is driving through the village, stops at the local hotel and lays a €100 note on the desk, telling the hotel owner he wants to inspect the rooms upstairs in order to pick one to spend the night.

The owner gives him some keys and, as soon as the visitor has walked upstairs, the hotelier grabs the €100 note and runs next door to pay his debt to the butcher. The butcher takes the €100 note and runs down the street to repay his debt to the pig farmer. The pig farmer takes the €100 note and heads off to pay his bill at the supplier of feed and fuel. The guy at the Farmers’ Co-op takes the €100 note and runs to pay his drinks bill at the taverna.

The publican slips the money along to the local prostitute drinking at the bar who has also been facing hard times and has had to offer him “services” on credit. The hooker then rushes to the hotel and pays off her room bill to the hotel owner with the €100 note. The hotel proprietor then places the €100 note back on the counter so the rich

traveler will not suspect anything.

At that moment the traveler comes down the stairs, picks up the €100 note, states that the rooms are not satisfactory, pockets the money, and leaves town.

No one produced anything. No one earned anything. However, the whole village is now out of debt and looking to the future with a lot more optimism.

And that is how the bailout package works!

“Most of American life is driving somewhere and then driving back wondering why the hell you went.”
~ **John Updike**

YOU SO CRAZY!

Are you nuts? After yet another public murder by a mentally disturbed person, here’s a little list from **Robert L. Leahy, Stephen J. F. Holland, and Lata K. McGinn’s** *Treatment Plans and Interventions for Depression and Anxiety Disorders*:

Mind reading: “He thinks I’m a loser.” You assume that you know what people think without having sufficient evidence of their thoughts. **Fortune telling**: “I’ll fail that exam,” or “I won’t get the job.” You predict the future negatively: things will get worse, or there is danger ahead. **Catastrophizing**: “It would be terrible if I failed.” You believe that what will happen will be so awful and unbearable that you won’t be able to stand it.

Labeling: “I’m undesirable,” or “He’s a rotten person.” You assign global negative traits to yourself and others.

Discounting positives: “That’s what wives are supposed to do—so it doesn’t count when she’s nice to me,” or “Those successes were easy, so they don’t matter.” You claim that the positive things you or others do are trivial.

Negative filtering: “Look at all of the people who don’t like me.” You focus almost exclusively on the negatives.

Over-generalizing: “This generally happens to me. I seem to fail at a lot of things.” You perceive a global pattern of negatives on the basis of a single incident.

■ **CONTINUED**

MUCH ADO ABOUT SOMETHING

Jerry Seinfeld won't be corrected.

Dichotomous thinking. "I get rejected by everyone," You view events or people in all-or-nothing terms.." **Blaming:** "My parents caused all my problems." You focus on the other person as the source of your negative feelings, and you refuse to take responsibility for changing yourself.

Emotional reasoning: "I feel depressed; therefore, my marriage is not working out." You let your feelings guide your interpretation of reality. **Inability to disconfirm:** You reject any evidence that might contradict your negative thoughts. For example, when you say, "I'm unlovable," you reject as irrelevant any evidence that people like you, and consequently, your thought cannot be refuted. **What if?** You keep asking questions about "what if" something happens, and you fail to be satisfied with any of the answers.

Scored high? Don't buy a gun...

"Who the hell needs a machine gun to hunt?" ~ **Andy Parker**

GOERS

AT SEA

TRUMP

PITCH ME

WHAT'S SO FUNNY

FOOD FAILS

TELEVANDALISTS

WOOF

PEPPER HACKER

ENGRISH

AGING

JUMP

BOOMERS

make a living entirely on puzzles," adds David, and he put out several collections in book form, which is how I met him, because when I ordered one, he wrote back, "Are you Rocky Roccoco?"

Reagle started making crosswords at 6 and was first published in *The New York Times* at 16. "I was into building things, Tinker Toys, Lincoln Logs," he said. "One day I discovered you could link words together. I remember thinking, who wants to be 58 years old and look back and say, 'I made crossword puzzles my whole life?'"

But a move to LA where he wrote on the quiz shows "Couch Potatoes" and "Crosswits" convinced him, and in 1979, he began working at puzzling full time. But "Most people were not used to seeing a puzzle that was funny, not in newspapers," he told the *Hartford Courant* in 2013. "Solvers don't expect to laugh out loud when they're puzzle solving." Except us, of course.

"I always felt the English language was the best toy a boy ever had. Language is a playground that never ends." In addition to his wife, Reagle is survived by his father,

Sam, and a brother, Sam. It's somehow funny and fitting.

"If you only read the books that everyone else is reading, you can only think what everyone else is thinking." ~ **Haruki Murakami**

SIX LETTER WORD FOR 'PAL'

F-R-I-E-N-D. That's what witty, punny crossword puzzle creator **Merl Reagle** was to us, and his sudden death at 65 by pancreatitis shocked us deeply. Whenever we could, we'd hang out with Merl and his wife **Marie** here or in Tampa, and one evening at our place he let me beat him in a game of Scrabble!

According to the heartfelt *LA Times* obit by **David Colker**, "Merl liked to work in coffee shops and other public places where he could try out his puns and other wordplay on people." He was featured in the 2006 documentary, *Wordplay*, animated in **The Simpsons** and was interviewed by **Oprah** - an anagram of Harpo.

"He was one of the few people in the field who could

DOERS

Steve Bluestein, Scott Marinoff, Steven Alan Green, Kenneth Wilhite, Jr., Victor Kopcewich, Michael C. Gwynne, Magic Mike Berger, Oona Austin, Alan Sharpe, Doug Ferrari, Jamie Alcroft, Alan Meyerson

"It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all."

~ **J. K. Rowling**

"A champion is a man who gets up when he can't." ~ **Boxer Jack Dempsey**

BEARWHIZ BEER <http://www.eagletshirts.com>

FUNNY TIMES: <http://www.funnytimes.com>

FST: <http://www.FiresignTheatre.com>

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