

"A day without sunshine is like, you know, night." ~ Steve Martin

Planet Plague: Covering COVID

As to COVID-19, **Melinda** and I are pretty much hiding at home here in Benedict Canyon, although we can easily drive to markets, pharmacies and even go out for a pleasant walk on the Beverly Hills Park paths with a minimum of exposure to others.

We are so lucky to have our pensions and healthcare plans with our performance unions, as well as our "Social Insecurity," although we have had to cancel many acting jobs in various parts of the country, and our potential participation in the run of **William Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life*** with our beloved Glendale-based Antaeus company, is pending (at this time of our life); and of course we cancelled our theater trip to NYC to see Yale Dramatist **Austin Pendleton** in a Broadway play by **Tracy Letts**.

CONTINUED ■

RADIO FREE VIRUS
Masking tape.



So – we are in it for the long haul if need be; but it's comforting to know that my daughter, **Kristin** and her hubby and their two kids are five minutes away, even if we can't visit them at the moment. And they have extra toilet paper!

To keep me connected, I am participating in a new podcast for RadioPictures called "Phil & Ted's Sexy Boomer Show." interviewing such jesters as **Phil Hendrie**, **Harry Shearer**, **John Goodman** and my partner **David Ossman** of Firesign Theatre fame!

So, hang in there, mates! We are now all a part of history, and God willing, love will see us through...

*Love is a feeling, marriage is a contract,
and relationships are work."
~ Lori Gordon, marriage therapist*



SEVAN AMD SIXTY
Memorial Day 2016, Proctor and Minasian toast
six decades of friendship in San Francisco.

Going Viral

*Smiling is infectious,
You catch it like the flu,
When someone smiled at me today
I started smiling too.*

*I passed around the corner
And someone saw my grin.
When he smiled I realized
I'd passed it on to him.*

*I thought about that smile,
Then I realized its worth;
A single smile, just like mine,
Could travel 'round the earth!*

*So, if you feel a smile begin,
Don't leave it undetected,
Let's start an epidemic, quick
And get the world infected!*

*From the Goony Spike Milligan
and the Seriously Silly Jim Meskimen*

*"Tragedy is easy enough,
but comedy is serious business."
~ David Garrick*

A Dieu

SEVAN MINASIAN, MY BELOVED LONGTIME friend and Riverdale alumnus, wrote this after the passing of one of our classmates, recalling the loss years ago of our mutual friend, **Steven Raphael**:

"I do not mourn my own death, miss this 'best of all possible worlds' as I might; but I am deeply troubled by the

memory of the ones who have gone before me.

"Perhaps a little because they have taken my youth with them into the grave, but surely because of the great pity of it; the loss of so much nobility and beauty.

*Adieu old Friend, go now, carouse with Stars,
Performed you well, and we our lives rehearsed,
On stages, New York streets, and endless bars,
But now reach out and touch the Universe.
Adieu to moments dancing in the light,
And to another of our band we bid good night."*

*"First the doctor told me the good news:
I was going to have a disease named after me!"
~ George Burns*

Enough already

WELL, I FINALLY LOST IT! I JUST SAW A GUY in CVS whose cart was FULL to the brim with hand sanitizers, baby wipes, soaps and TP – everything that people need!!

I called him a selfish @\$\$hole, and gave him a lowdown about the elderly, moms, and people who really need these types of things and told him he should be freaking ashamed of himself!

"Are you done?" he said. "Because I really need to get back to restocking the shelves."

*"An artist is someone who's ahead of his time
and behind on his rent" ~ Frank Zappa*

"It's amazing that the amount of news that happens in the world every day always just exactly fits the newspaper."
 ~ Jerry Seinfeld

Like father

DON JR. AND ERIC TRUMP RAILED AGAINST Hunter Biden for the crime of trading on his father's name. "I wish my name was Hunter Biden," the elder Trump boy whined to Sean Hannity. I could go abroad, make millions off of my father's presidency – I'd be a really rich guy. It would be incredible."

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

And stopping by for a chat with Fox News's Jeanine Pirro the same month, son Eric sniveled, "If I was doing the same thing that that family was doing, I'd be in jail! Why is it that every family goes into politics and enriches themselves?"

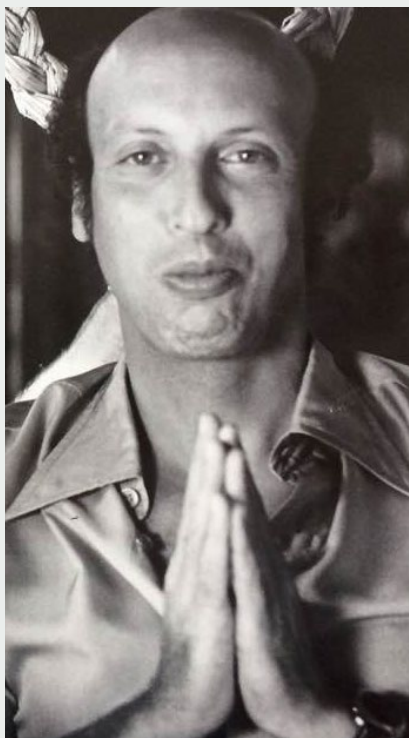
"We stopped doing deals when my father became [president]... Guess what? All of these kids, they started doing deals when their families went into politics, and it's sickening."

Ironic, ain't it?

"How many legs does a dog have if you call the tail a leg? Four. Calling a tail a leg doesn't make it a leg."
 ~ Abraham Lincoln

Who am us anyway?

PLANETEER BILL Brinkmoeller writes: Eight years ago, Peter Bergman died...one of four members of the Firesign Theatre, "a comedy group...like no other comedy group that has ever existed. The albums they released over the course of 40+ years were mostly long, highly produced studio pieces where Bergman, Phil Austin (now also deceased), David Ossman, and Philip Proctor performed all, or nearly all, of the voices. These are deeply layered



PIRRO-ETTES
 The sycophant and the selfie-made man

compositions, where repeated listenings yield hilarious new treasures deep in the mix...

But in addition to writing and performing these long, complicated, clever, and FUNNY plays, they could also improvise brilliantly...demonstrated in several radio programs they did in the late '60s and early '70s. I know of no other comedy group that has that ability. For their radio shows, they would sit around a round table with four microphones.

Sometimes they would do short scripted bits, but most of the time they just worked off each other, which they did beautifully...

They also had a talent for using their voices almost like musical instruments.

My friend David Dugle has called Firesign's

longer pieces "word symphonies," and that's a pretty good way to look at their material.

The thing that has always mystified me is that they were never able to break into the public consciousness. Something you probably don't know is that huge numbers of famous people are big Firesign fans. Almost everyone who works in comedy, of course, knows, loves, and respects



RESPECTFULLY
 Bill Brinkmoeller, above, pays tribute to the Firesigns on the eight anniversary of the passing of co-Founder Peter Bergman, left.

them, as well as many, many actors and musicians. **John Goodman** has financially backed several Firesign projects. **Robin Williams** was a huge fan. Firesign and **Steve Martin** go back to the beginning of his career in comedy.

After several years of working separately, the “4 or 5 Crazy Guys” (as Firesign sometimes referred to themselves) reunited in the late ‘90s and produced three albums [for **Rhino Records**] that showed that they could still create alternate realities with great facility. **Give Me Immortality or Give Me Death**, **Boom Dot Bust**, and **Bride of Firesign** comprised their “millennium trilogy,” that introduced a whole bunch of new characters, once again told fascinating and funny stories, and even brought back some old characters for good measure.

If you don’t know about them, you owe it to yourself to dip a toe in and see what you think. For that, the **Dear Friends** album has lots of shorter bits from their radio series of the same title. I think you’ll find yourself laughing.

“If I were two-faced, would I be wearing this one?”
~ **Abraham Lincoln**



RADIO ROBERTS
Author Sam, left, with
Leonard Lopate of WBAI
in New York

There’s no business

A QUOTE BY LYCEUM THEATER EMPRESARIO Charles Frohman, from a book called *A History of New York in 27 Buildings* by **Sam Roberts**:

If in casting a play you find an actor who looks the part you have in mind for him, be thankful; and if you can find an actor who acts the part, be very thankful: and if you can find an actor who can look and act the part, get down on your knees and thank God!

America sure is having some bad luck. It’s almost like it was built on an ancient Indian burial ground.”
~ **Phil’s Not-So-Phunny Phacts**

It’s never too soon

A GERMAN IS PULLED OVER BY THE POLICE in France, and the cop asks him, “Your name?” And he replies “Hans Klimpt.” The gendarme asks, “Your age?” And Hans replies, “30.”

And finally, the Frenchman asks the German, “Occupation?”

“No,” he replies, “just visiting.”

“It would be nice to spend billions on schools and roads, but right now that money is desperately needed for political ads.”

~ **Andy Borowitz**

A sexy text

A transcript of a man recently interviewed for a study of sexual habits:

How old are you, sir?

I just turned 46.

Do you still engage in sexual activities on a regular basis?

Oh, yes...

And do you sleep with members of the opposite sex?

You bet. I LOVE the ladies. And they love me.

And have you ever had a homosexual encounter?

Sure. Why not? I’m an equal opportunity provider!

Have you ever had interracial sex?

Are you kiddin’? Variety is the spice of life, I always say...and as Benjamin Franklin noted, “All cats are gray in the dark.”

I see.

Maybe you don’t, but that’s the point.

And do you ever watch porn?

Getting off online? Duh...

And I’m sorry, I have to ask — have you ever had sex with a different species?

Animals, you mean? Well, I was raised on a farm, so what do you think?

Right. Now, this may be superfluous, but how often do you masturbate?

Maybe three or four times a day. It’s a real tension reliever, ya know?

OK, these next questions have to do with the frequency of your encounters...

Shoot — if you’ll excuse the expression.

Excused. How often do you have sex on average during a normal day?

Gosh, that’s a hard one, if you’ll excuse my French.

I don’t speak French.

I’d say maybe four to five times a day, and sometimes more on Saturday, although I take Sundays off to

masturbate during confession.

And last question – do you still have “wet dreams”?

Oh, you bet! Every night!

Well, sir, that completes our survey. But strictly off the record, of all these, ah, activities, which would you say you enjoy the most?

Oh, that's easy. The wet dreams...

Really? Why is that?

Well, you meet a better class of people there...

“Home is where one starts from.” ~ T.S. Eliot



2. They have a lot of data but still can't think for themselves.
3. They are supposed to help you solve problems, but half the time they ARE the problem; and...
4. As soon as you commit to one, you realize that if you had waited a little longer, you could have gotten a better model.

“A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices.” ~ William James

Man/Wo/man, same thing?

A TEACHER SPLIT HIS CLASS INTO TWO groups of males and females, asking them to decide whether a computer should be considered masculine or feminine. The men's group decided that “computer” should definitely be the feminine gender, because:

1. No one but their creator understands their internal logic.
2. The native language they use to communicate with other computers is incomprehensible to everyone else
3. Even the smallest mistakes are stored in long-term memory for possible later review; and...
4. As soon as you make a commitment to one, you find yourself spending half your paycheck on accessories for it.

The women's group, however, concluded that computers should definitely be masculine because:

1. In order to do anything with them, you have to turn them on.



Friendly

Thanks to Matt Hurwitz, Robin Cook, Marc Weingarten, Betsey Brubaker, Richard Fish, Sarah Campbell, Jim Meskimen, Nick Oliva, Bill Brockmoeller, BabaMail and The Week.

And HAPPY 80th to the ever-young Sam Dawson (above) who threw the best birthday bash ever for her far-flung friends and family at a fantastic resort-hotel in Laguna, the day before we flew off to NY to record “Debs in Canton” for NPR. Sam also contributed the wonderful “Cheese mine” story that led off the last orbit and compiled wonderful stories for her book, *Broad Appeal*. It's never too late to “Celebrate Sam!”

“Facebook just sounds like a drag. In my day, seeing pictures of people's vacations was considered a punishment.” ~ Betty White

“Some people are so poor, all they have is money” ~ Bob Marley

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