

"Fortunately, it is very simple to be happy. Unfortunately, it is very hard to be simple." ~ Shunryu Suzuki Roshi

Planet of fools



Planet AAR-Pril

At almost 82, I finally got old! I woke up about three months ago with inexplicable lower limb pain! My breakfast now consists of 70 pills, a shot of prune juice, a gummy, two Extra-Strength Tylenol and a side of Ex-Lax.

I'm also losing my eyesight to Macular Degeneration, which means every month it gets harfer to tpe out The Plenat.

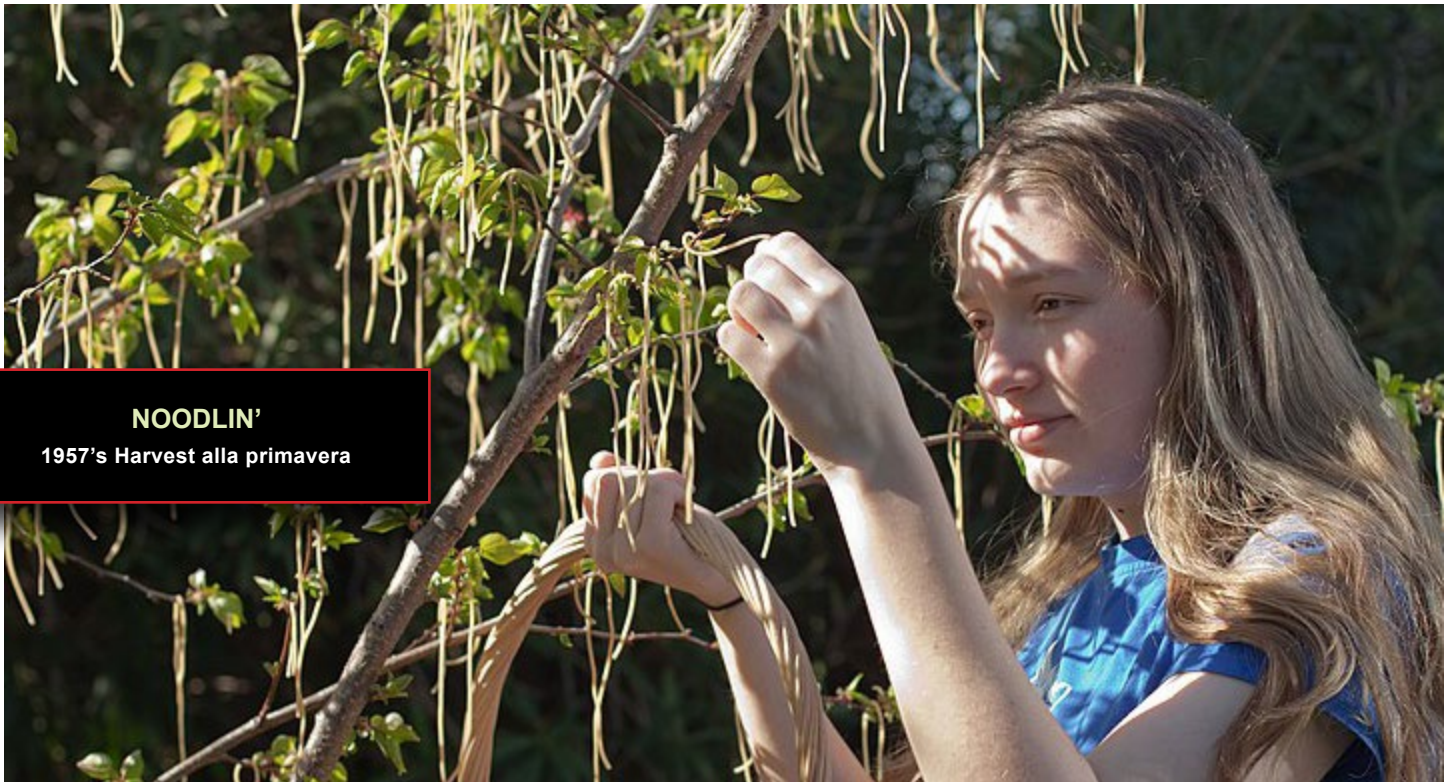
But at least I'm dancing to my own tune every day because I have Tinnitus.

And due to "slow nerves" (peripheral neuropathy to you), I presently suffer from constant and unpredictable leg pains and have begun to use a cane for my balance and to fend off fanatical fans.

But – thanks God, my mind is still as sharp as a...paper cut!

(Have you read this already...?)

"People like us who believe in physics that the distinction between past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion." ~ Albert Einstein



NOODLIN'

1957's Harvest alla primavera

You think you so smart?

THE ACTUAL ORIGINS OF APRIL FOOL'S DAY are still uncertain, but in 1592, in France, the date for the new year beginning on April 1 (in both the Julian and Hindu calendars) was officially changed to January 1 (in the Gregorian calendar). Those who were slow to get the news and still celebrated the "New Year" in April, were deemed "April fools."

Ancient Rome also had its day of "Hilaria" (Latin for "joyful"), when people dressed up in disguise as a fellow citizen or even a magistrate, "fooling" those who believed they were authentic. And, in 18th Century Scotland, people were sent on phony errands on April 1 called "hunting the gowk," a cuckoo bird, and a symbol of a fool. It was followed by Tailie Day, which involved pranks played on people's derrieres, such as pinning fake tails or "kick me" signs on them.

These included having paper fish placed on their backs and being referred to as *poisson d'avril* (April fish), said to symbolize a young, easily caught fish and a gullible person.

There's also speculation that April Fools' Day was tied to the vernal equinox, or first day of spring in the Northern Hemisphere, when Mother Nature fooled people with unpredictable weather.

Newspapers, radio and TV stations and websites have participated in the April Fools tradition of reporting

outrageous fictional claims that have fooled their audiences.

In 1957, the **BBC** reported that Swiss farmers were experiencing a record spaghetti crop and showed footage of people harvesting noodles from trees. Numerous viewers were fooled.

In 1970, as an April's Fool joke, **John Lennon** and **Yoko Ono** issued a statement that they were having dual sex change operations, and in 1985, **Sports Illustrated** tricked many of its readers when it ran a made-up article about a rookie pitcher named Sidd Finch who could throw a fastball over 168 miles per hour.

Then, in 1996, **Taco Bell**, the fast-food restaurant chain, duped people when it announced it had agreed to purchase Philadelphia's Liberty Bell and to rename it the Taco Liberty Bell. And not to be left out, in 1998, after Burger King advertised a "Left-Handed Whopper," scores of clueless customers requested the fake sandwich.

"All war is based on deception." ~ **Sun Tzu**

Planet Netflix

ATTENTION, PLANETEERS! DUE TO A DROP in subscribers, like **Netflix** I find it necessary to interrupt your present Planet with commercials. Bear with me:

■ **CONTINUED**

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

"Having trouble remembering your boss's wife's name? Your own wife's birthday? The pin for your ATM? Well, forget about it! Here at Brainduster's Memory School, we'll teach you a hundred fool-proof tricks to enhance your powers of recall. All classes are held downtown at 336 –no, that's 4366 Bingham – wait – Barnum Boulevard at the intersection of ... Aw shucks, you can't miss it! It's the big grey building on the corner with a sidewalk. To enroll call 433-213-6 – uh – Heck, just come on down! Walk-ins are welcome at Drainbuster's Melody School. Read on...

*"The whale is descended from the deer."
~ Phil's Phunny (not Phoney) Phacts*

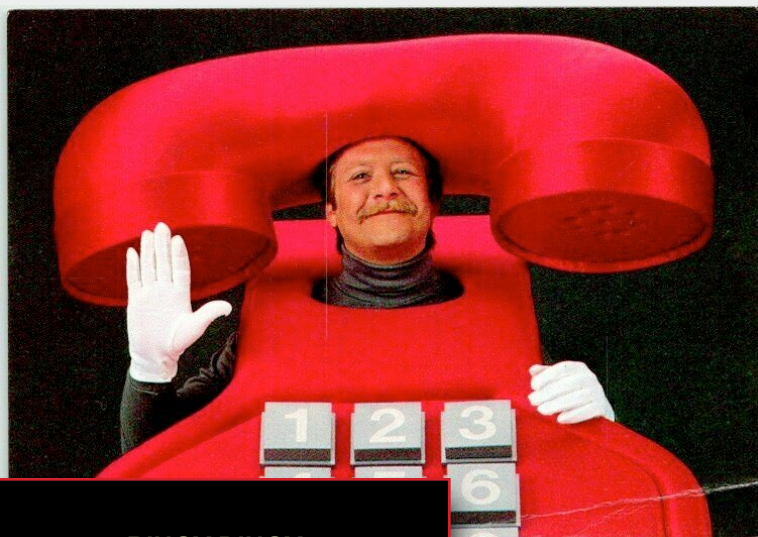
number, and your mother's maiden name. If you have post-traumatic stress disorder, slowly and carefully press 000. If you have bipolar disorder, please leave a message after the beep or before the beep. Or after the beep. Please wait for the beep.

If you have low self-esteem, please hang up. All our operators are too busy to talk to you. If you have short-term memory loss, press 9. If you have short-term memory loss, press 9. If you have short-term memory loss, press 9. If you have short-term memory loss, press 9...

"You know, you laugh, and you laugh, and you laugh, until you cry..." ~ Grant Gilder

I'll call you

"HELLO, AND WELCOME TO THE MENTAL health hotline. If you are obsessive-compulsive, press 1 repeatedly. If you are co-dependent, please ask someone to press 2 for you. If you have multiple personalities, press 3, 4, 5, and 6. If you are paranoid, we know who you are and what you want. Stay on the line so we can trace your call. If you are delusional, press 7 and your call will be transferred to the mother ship.



RINGY DINGY

Martin Mull on a 1980s Advertising Postcard for NETWORK I Metromedia Long Distance

If you are schizophrenic, listen carefully and a small voice will tell you which number to

press. If you are manic-depressive, it doesn't matter which number you press, no one will answer. If you are dyslexic, press 969696969696969. If you have a nervous disorder, please fidget with the dash key until a representative comes on the line.

If you have amnesia, press 8 and state your name, address, phone number, date of birth, social security

Our fleeting Fifties

*Long ago and far away, In a land that time forgot,
Before the days of Dylan, or the dawn of Camelot,
There lived a race of innocents, and they were you and me.*

For Ike was in the White house in that land where we were born,

*Where Navels were oranges, and Peyton Place was Porn.
We learned to gut a muffler, we washed our hair at dawn,
We spread our crinolines to dry in circles on the lawn.*

*We longed for love and romance and waited for our Prince,
And Eddie Fisher married Liz ,and no one's seen him since.*

*We danced to "Little Darlin'" and sang to "Stagger Lee"
And cried for Buddy Holly in the Land That made Me – Me.
Only girls wore earrings then, and three was one to many,
And only boys wore flat-top cuts, except for Jean McKinney,*

*And only in our wildest dreams did we expect to see
A boy named George with Lipstick, in the Land That Made Me – Me.*

*We fell for Frankie Avalon, Annette was oh,so nice,
And when they made a movie, they never made it twice.
We didn't have a Star Trek Five, or Psycho Two or Three,
Or Rocky-Rambo Twenty in the Land That Made Me-Me.
Miss Kitty had a heart of gold, and Chester had a limp,
And Reagan was a Democrat whose co-star was a chimp.
We had a Mr. Wizard but not a Mr.T ,
And Oprah couldn't talk yet, in the Land That Made Me-Me.
We had our share of heroes, we never though they'd go,
At least not Bobby Darin, or Marilyn Monroe.
For youth was still eternal, and life was yet to be,
And Elvis was forever in the Land That Made Me-Me.*

*We'd never seen the rock band that was grateful to be Dead,
And Airplanes weren't named Jefferson, and Zeppelins were not Led,*

■ CONTINUED

*Beatles lived in gardens then, and Monkeys lived in trees,
Madonna was a virgin in the Land That Made Me-Me.
We hadn't seen enough of jets to talk about the lag,
And microchips were what was left at the bottom of the bag.
Hardware was a box of nails, and bytes came from a flea,
Rocket Ships still fiction in the Land That Made Me-Me.*



*Buicks came with portholes,
and side shows came with
freaks,
Bathing suits came big enough
to cover both your cheeks,
Coke came just in bottles, and
skirts below the knee,
And Castro came to Power in*

*the Land That made Me-Me,
We had no Crest with Fluoride, we had no Hill Street Blues,
We had no patterned pantyhose or Lipton herbal tea.
There were no golden arches, no Perrier to chill,
And fish were not called Wanda, and cats were not called
Bill.
Middle age was 35 and old was 43,
And accidents were our parents, in the land That Made
Me -Me.*

*But all things have a season or so we've heard them say,
And now instead of Maybeline we swear by Retin-A.
They send us invitations to join AARP,
We've come a long way, baby, from the Land That Made
Me-Me.
So, please tell our children's children of the way it used
to be...
Our memories of a time long past – of The Land That
Made Me, Me!*

*"The length of a film should be directly related
to the endurance of the human bladder."
~ Alfred Hitchcock*

And now, this!

COMING SOON TO A DOWNLOAD NEAR YOU:
Sherlock Holmes solves the Great Luggage Heist
of 1891 in "**The Case of the Missing Case**" –
starring **Sir Reginal Corn** as the fabled detective with
Mel Brooks as Dr. Watson Bakerstreet and **Will Smith** as
Holmes' nemesis, Professor Immaturity – from Paranoid
Pictures +, the studio that brought you the Gimme-Award-
winning animated feature, **DOGGIES!** "If cute could kill,
they will." Now streaming at a hydrant near you!

*"The problem with political jokes is they get elected."
~ Henry Cate, VII*



All-righty, then

EVER WONDERED WHERE THE TERM "OK"
comes from? In 1839 — 183 years ago — the
initials "O.K." were first published in *The Boston
Morning Post* (above) It was meant as an abbreviation for
"oil correct," a popular slang misspelling of "all correct"
at the time. The term "OK" steadily made its way into the
everyday speech of Americans.

During the late 1830s, it was a favorite practice among
younger, educated circles to misspell words intentionally,
then abbreviate them and use them as slang when
talking to one another. Just as teenagers today have
their own slang based on distortions of common words,
people in the 1830s had a whole host of slang terms they
abbreviated.

Of all the abbreviations used during that time, OK was
propelled into the limelight following the *Boston Morning
Post* joke printing. Its popularity exploded when it was
picked up by contemporary politicians.

When the incumbent president, **Martin Van Buren**, was
up for reelection, his Democratic supporters organized a
band of thugs to influence voters. This group was formally
called the "O.K. Club," which referred both to Van Buren's
nickname "Old Kinderhook" (based on his hometown of
Kinderhook, New York), and to the term recently made
popular in the papers.

At the same time, the opposing Whig Party made use of
"OK" to denigrate Van Buren's political mentor **Andrew
Jackson**. According to the Whigs, Jackson invented the
abbreviation "OK" to cover up his own misspelling of "all
correct."

The man responsible for unraveling the mystery behind
"OK" was an American linguist named **Allen Walker
Read**.

An English professor at Columbia University, Read dispelled a host of erroneous theories on the origins of "OK," ranging from the name of a popular Army biscuit (**Orrin Kendall**) to the name of a Haitian port famed for its rum (**Aux Cayes**) to the signature of a Choctaw chief named **Old Keokuk**.

Whatever its origins, "OK" has become one of the most ubiquitous terms in the world, and certainly one of America's greatest lingual exports. Thanks **History.com**

"Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities." ~ Voltaire

A standup guy

WHEN I AND PETER WERE TOURING EAST Coast clubs in the mid-70s, a Philadelphia writer named **Keith Mason** attempted an interview. He managed to bungle it with a faulty tape recorder, embarrassed that this happened in front of two master tape manipulators.

The year before, Phil saw an article Mason wrote for a Philly-based magazine, *Concert*, called "A History of Hip Comedy," and sent a nice letter commending it to have been the best analysis on the topic he'd ever seen. Phil threw in a joke about the odd Mid-Atlantic breakfast meat called scrapple, which deserves being made fun of.

Mason and Proctor now meet again: the writer's latest work, his first book, is out now, **Please Stand Up**. It's the true story of how in 2016 he found the father he'd never known, on a YouTube

of a 1961 episode of the TV quiz show "**To Tell the Truth**." (Plus, a grandfather/newsman killed by a Texas sheriff in 1949, eight new siblings and lots more.)

Trying once again to make an impression on Phil, he sent him a copy, and as Planet readers know, Phil enjoys passing along great wisdom and the value of a good time. In that spirit, here's what he said about Keith's book:

"In this extraordinary, shockingly personal, historically mind-expanding true-life adventure, he establishes himself as a major player in the ranks of America's greatest storytellers. Enjoy the ride!"

In that no one can accuse Phil of grandiose insincerity, let's assume he meant every word of his recommendation for "Please Stand Up." Mason sends his kind regards to

Phil and all his Planet readers, and a note that the book (with Phil's comments on the back cover) is available at fine bookish online retailers. To purchase on line, click-a-link: **AMAZON** or **B&N**

*"Man is free the moment he wishes to be."
~ Voltaire*

A blast from the – future?

From my friend, Spider Robinson, who writes great science fiction ...

"THE MOVIE **THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER** is on American Movie Channel this morning. I had not seen it in many years, probably because I saw it so many times when it first came out, so it took me by surprise this time.

"The first death that occurs in that story is when Red October's Lithuanian Captain Ramius kills the Soviet officer who is the KGB fink so he can carry out his plan to defect without opposition. Of course, he does the same thing in the movie. (To which I added Russian and American voices)

"And I almost dropped my cards when I heard the name of the KGB fink, the worst enemy of democracy aboard that submarine. I had not remembered it, and if you've forgotten too, his name was **Putin, Ivan Putin!**

"No wonder he's been acting like such a brain-dead assbat, lately. He's been dead since October 1, 1984, when **Tom Clancy's** book was published – 38 years ago."

"Illusion is the first of man's pleasures." ~ Voltaire

And we'll be right back

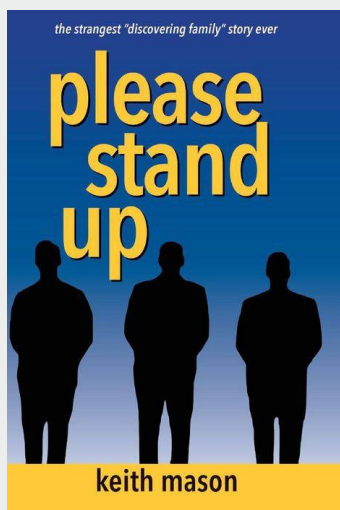
... **AFTER THIS IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT FROM C.E.C.I.-- the Campaign to Eliminate Commercial Interruptions**. If you, like me, are sick and tired of breaks right in the middle of an exciting story, just dial CE1-2345 to contribute to our cause. I'm just a media fan like you, and I approve this message – because the MEDIA IS THE MESSAGE! So, give what you can. (No bitcoins accepted) THANK\$."

"It is not the man who has too little, but the man who craves more, that is poor." ~ Seneca

Why we're all Cra-Cra

ACCORDING TO AN ARTICLE IN **THE ATLANTIC**, the pandemic loosened ties between people: Kids stopped going to school; their parents

■ **CONTINUED**



stopped going to work; parishioners stopped going to church; people stopped gathering, in general. Sociologists think all of this shifted the way we behave because, "We're more likely to break rules when our bonds to society are weakened."

Robert Sampson, a Harvard sociologist who studies social disorder, told me, "When we become untethered, we tend to prioritize our own private interests over those of others or the public." The turn-of-the-20th-Century scholar **Émile Durkheim** called this *state anomie*, or a lack of social norms that leads to lawlessness.

"We are moral beings to the extent that we are social beings," Durkheim wrote. "In the past two years, we have stopped being social, and in many cases, we have stopped being moral, too." **MORE**

"Every man is guilty of the good he did not do." ~ **Voltaire**

Morse the pity

BOBBY MORSE, BEST KNOWN FOR FILMS like *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, *The Loved One*, and *A Guide to a Married Man*, has exited laughing at 90. Morse earned his first TONY Award in 1965 in *How to Succeed ...*, and his second in 1990 for his portrayal of writer **Truman Capote** in the Broadway hit *TRU*. Younger audiences fondly remember him as 'Bertram Cooper' in "Mad Men" (2007–2015), with five EMMY nominations, and at the age of 85, he returned to Broadway to star with **Nathan Lane** in the 2016 revival of *The Front Page*. **KABC OBIT**

And then, sing a hymn for crooner **Bobby Rydell**, born Robert Ridarelli in a South Philadelphia neighborhood that would also produce teen idols **Bobby Darin**, **Fabian** and **Frankie Avalon**, who knew each other as children! — Rydell played drums with Avalon on trumpet in a group called Rocco and the Saints. But Rydell got his big break in 1959 on **Dick Clark's** "American Bandstand," which originally was broadcast from Philadelphia. His first hit, "Kissing Time," quickly followed, and the skinny 17-year-old with a pompadour haircut rocketed to stardom.

And finally, give it up for **Gilbert Gottfried**, who made

PLANETCLICK

ALL OUR FEARS

HOT WATER

THE WHEEL

SPIT

BLUB

ALWAYS WILL

420

PUPS

fearlessly inappropriate jokes and died "too soon." He was as kind, funny and intelligent off stage as he was brash, daring and bawdy in performance. Although I never got to know Gilbert personally, **The Firesign Theatre** got to appear with him on the first COMIC RELIEF fundraiser with **Robin, Whoopi** and **Billy Crystal**. His annoying voice will be sorely missed.

"Even a happy life cannot be without a measure of darkness." ~ **Carl Jung**

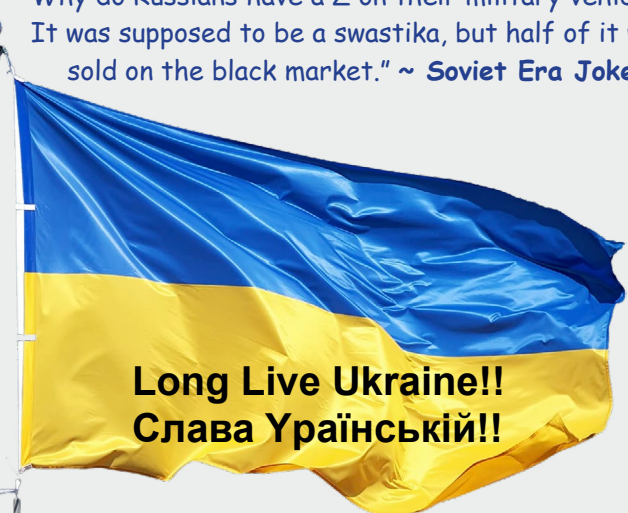
Planeteers

Michael Simmons, Kenneth Wilhite, Jr., Spider Robinson, James

Marrow, Nick Oliva, Richard Fish, Kent McCaman, Bert & Jennifer Kline, and to Paul Lazarus and Steve Rothman and John Fazarekly, for including me in readings of their exciting new plays, *The Water of the Hills* and *The Corktown Trilogy* at Antaeus in Glendale, where you can soon see *Hamlet* as the opening play of our new post-Covid season!

And **HAPPY BIRTHDAY** to my beautiful all-grown-up daughter, **Kristin Campbell**!!

"Why do Russians have a Z on their military vehicles? It was supposed to be a swastika, but half of it was sold on the black market." ~ **Soviet Era Joke**



"If everybody always lies to you, the consequence is not that you believe the lies, but rather that nobody believes anything any longer." ~ **Hannah Arendt**

"I always thought I wanted to be somebody, but now I see I should have been more specific." ~ **Lily Tomlin**

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