

Report from The Front: We haven't been killed yet.

Frankly, I have no idea how to estimate the number of times the exact same phrase has been used throughout human history, or even American history by combatants -- and noncombatants -- during times of war.

America's wars have been fought almost exclusively overseas, except when Americans got excited for a while by the ability of Americans to actually *own* other human beings, and to further become agitated by the assorted economic truths surrounding that *other* embarrassing truth. (Funny how that same one reared its head in the Constitution -- once steely-eyed and proudly, and nowadays stunned that it must be half-muttered, with eyes buried underground, requiring some winks and knowing glances to the knowing few.)

Well, the economic truths are all still in place, and still completely legal. Only the crimes of banks and various corporations are allowed to become larger every year. These crimes now incorporate new entertainments; such as featherweight taps on the wrist and assorted penny-ante fines, to, *you know*, help us keep the lights burning in prosecutorial offices up and down the chain of our hamstrung governmental command and dissolving protections. It's good PR, having those lights on, as it gives the impression someone's watching, and maybe even doing something.

- But, then, that's conjecture. I still believe, for example, that Ronald Reagan was misquoted, and that he actually said, threatening unending harm from behind a harmless, folksy mask, "I'm from the *GOP* [not the government] and I'm here to help." Of course, speaking of cold chills, this is America, where truth masquerades as fiction, as it is led to the slaughterhouse for ritual sacrifice. In this case, the truth is that government is the one and only entity standing between citizens and cold-blooded rape, and worse, by corporations. Good thing we no longer teach civics here as there is no time to learn from history -- not with so many good shows on, you know, and so many calls to return.

Yawn: Bread and circuses. Good thing the profits from those corporate crimes are always so much larger than the fines themselves, or the Ponzi scheme called modern business would itself collapse, and could never hope to keep shuffling its phantom playing pieces around on the playing board, around and around, forever, on the mystical, mythical money-go-round.

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Written by Alex Baer

Thursday, 11 June 2015 09:59

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Such is life: The biggest and strongest will always feed as they will, whether we speak about relatively small-beans Bush-leaguers or behemoths like Moby Dick Cheney. Feeding-frenzy etiquette seems to be the practical joke Nature most enjoys playing on its weakest members -- that, and the instilling knowledge that they have the right to have an endless stream of children on which the strongest might continually prey.

The balance is in the death toll, so that the prey always outweigh the number of predators, so that the number of predators is never challenged by predators stalking one another.

(This is Nature's theory, but Nature never counted on mergers, which is understandable. Taking Nature's side for a moment, for the heck of it, it is difficult to imagine mastodons and saber-tooth tigers merging into a new species, taking elements from both to further increase the mayhem and bloodletting among the hapless herds of humans and other slow-running protein snacks. Nowadays, of course, mergers are as commonplace as surgical waste washing up on the beaches.)

So much for warfare and evolution. Really, now, Nature shouldn't worry, as our love affair -- way beyond infatuation, obsession, lust, and mere hormonal hijinx -- with wheels and war, with guns and gasoline, goes on without missing a beat of its twisted little heart.

This is, after all, America, where this nation was stolen from its original inhabitants fair and square. This is America, where it's All Freedom, All the Time, pilgrims!

There's darn little corresponding talk about the Responsibilities that used to go with those Rights and Rewards -- but, then, there's darn little talk of evolutionary predation and all its related costs, whether considering how it is that the amount of reward always corresponds to those with considerable riches already, and how it is justice always goes along for that ride, and how it is that the strongest predator is always right, and so on.

Nature might say: *Might makes right.* □ *That's how it shakes out.* □ *Mission accomplished.*

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Sometimes, out in Nature, you can hear the *damndest* things.

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It's only later on, usually much later -- sometimes by the geologic measure of time -- that one realizes Nature has played footsie, has tap-danced and footled about with the facts. The tools in this neat enterprise are the equivalents of a stacked deck, a slick stable of dealers, plenty of free booze and distracting floozies, a player piano cranked up to *high*, and a house that always wins.

Of course, it helps to be the only game in town. The same argument is used by Life, Nature would tell you right straight out, when beings normally start wheedling and bleating about the unfairness of Death.

\* \* \* \* \*

This is all warm-up to the main event today, one that is far more personal and hands-on -- or is it hands-off? -- than it is an intangible or ethereal consideration of the application of the laws of humans and/or the laws of the jungle . It is both, probably, and is an update to a previous report.

- [See ["Fate Makes a Health & Welfare House Call," April 19, 2015, here at TVNL.](#)]

Since our barrio brethren house-renters have moved into our very modest neighborhood of owners and their much lived-in homes, located a blue-sky mile outside the city limits of a very red, red-necked small town, we've had much to contemplate.

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It's enough to make a Blue soul very blue, and want to break out the blues, in order to have a soundtrack for some serious suffering, as company, rolling along, beside one on this bumpy road of a journey --like having a friendly dog wagging along, tagging along with your footsteps, doing all it can to mosey on and keep up, in spite of having one leg shorter than the rest... and one eye not working quite right... one ear out of commission....

You know, having companionship along is a reminder of another one of Nature's rules, being that It Could Always Be Worse. (Despite some serious time spent thinking about this over the years, off and on, I still don't know why it can't, just as often, also be *automatically better*. But it never is. That's Nature for you.)

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And so, here in America, Land of Constant and Eternal Rights and No Responsibilities Whatsoever, and in Which No IQ Test is Needed for Citizenship (Whether Originally Conceived Via Foreign or Domestic Means), we here have come to discover -- to our unending amazement -- that anyone with a bale of hay can plop it down in his or her back yard, declare it a for-real shooting range, and go to town with it, so to speak (all the while staying in a prone or standing position, of course, going nowhere -- such are the vagaries of colloquial expression), spraying bullets around as long as desired, and/or as long as the money holds out, to go get more at *Wal/martianMart*

Yes, that is correct. There is **NO** permitting process, no inspection requirement by people and agencies who understand what firearms can do -- who know how far bullets travel, who know how long it takes a certain type of bullet to streak from a certain type of firearm barrel and imbed in a nearby house's wall or homeowner's temple -- and other pesky details like that.

There is no law about any of this. This makes as much sense as not having any laws banning Home Anthrax Labs or Home Nuclear Waste Disposal Sites or Home Chemical Weapons Neutralization Facility. You want a Home Weapons Range, the absence of regulations suggests, then get yourself a bale of hay -- or maybe a cardboard box, or a brown paper bag, or a gum wrapper, or something -- and you're all set! Rack 'em up!

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(There is no law about anything even randomly close, not even a noise ordinance, not any longer. We found out about all this when checking all possible options, once we discovered the complete absence of any law, or hint, or vague suggestion, concerning home firearm ranges.)

**How we began:** We got started down this path last Saturday night, June 6th, at 11:20 p.m., when I heard a stray pop, over by our new neighbors, while they were having a very big, very loud party for an incredible number of their closest friends. The pop was innocuous, not really loud, just a stray pop -- a sound that just nicks the corner of your ear. (A sound not uncommon around here, where the fascination with illegal fireworks continues matched only by the rate of people still blowing off stray fingers.) Then, about a minute later, there were nine to ten more pops, and in rapid succession.

- **Deep breath:** One thing of many with which I came away, after eight years in the military, is a clear memory of what small arms fire sounds like, and what semi-auto and full-auto fire both sound like. And this was definitely gunfire, and on full auto -- or else someone was mixing their meth-and-Budweiser cocktails a little strong for the semi-auto crowd at the party's bar.

Even with experience, those sounds will make you squint, re-examine what you just heard, run comparison sound files in your mind, and evaluate your notion of where you live -- what planet you're really on, what country you're really in, what rules Nature can *possibly* be using now, and so on.

Once the tumblers all clicked, there was nothing I could do but call it in -- which is another long and painful story, of course. As has been pointed out to me many times by fellow road travellers, nothing is ever easy, even the stuff that used to be.

- (Whenever I have to call 911 I think first about Nine-Eleven -- well, since Nine-Eleven, anyway. Then I think about Nature, about human Nature. Then I try to cheer myself up again by thinking about that old, bad joke in which someone asks, in a panic, if anyone remembers the number for 9-1-1. *Uhhnnmm.*)

Upshot -- so to speak -- of the phone call: A deputy came out to check around. Talked with him on the phone for a while somewhere in there. We went to the back yard and listened to the deputy talking with our neighbors, asking the question, "Anyone fire a gun over here tonight?," and getting lots of Academy-Award contenders in the Stunned, Incredulous Response category,

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then the deputy pausing a moment and asking the exact same question again, the same exact way, and getting sudden bursts of blabbing and babbling brooks of information: "Yeah, but that was earlier today...."

*Sure, like 15 whole minutes earlier tonight, we're nodding to ourselves, myself and my fiancée.*

Upshot -- so to speak -- of that visit: Nada. Nothing, Zero, Negatroid. No accomplishments, except, maybe, a shot across the neighbor's bow -- so to speak -- that they need to come better armed to such sheriff's visits, and packing MUCH better responses to deputy inquiries. Our neighbors also learned that they broke down like cheap shotguns under casual questioning no more intense than bar banter about *Who you like this year for (enter name of sport here)?*

I'm just glad someone came out to check for any dead bodies on the neighbors' rental house lawn, after I was first told that someone would call me back around noon the next day. This caused me to ask a question of my own: ***What?!?!***

The reply: Owing to budget cuts, no one was available to respond. (Here, of course, my scalp had an impromptu *WTF* party that caused my remaining hair -- whatever I hadn't already yanked out, absentmindedly, to ripple and produce a very bad version of the Watusi and Tango.) Under more questioning, I found that we did indeed have a deputy on duty, but that he was available only for *emergency* calls.

This was hard to believe. I asked the 911 operator -- a nice woman, in a center, I later learned, was in a different county than the one in which I live, and in a city about 30 minutes east of us here -- a question that sounded like a satire or parody of the old duck-and-cover conversational set-up routine: *If this had been an actual emergency...*

The question was innocent enough: If this were an *actual* emergency, do we have anyone who *could* respond? (The implication here, in the way it was asked -- straightforward, and not in a smarmy or semi-comedic or ridiculing manner, despite my clear ability to do so if necessary -- was this was a pretty good emergency here, as reports go of semi-auto or auto gunfire at 11:20 on a Saturday night at a big, boisterous party, as dialed in by an experienced observer...)

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The answer, thankfully, was, we did. I suggested a response would be a very good idea -- *that this was, in fact, an actual emergency and resources should not be held back in reserve, as I had it on good authority that the big Melg invasion was put off by Secret Planet Y-72 for another few weeks...*

OK, the last part I didn't really say. I still wanted to be taken seriously at that point. (My incredulousness and related reactions were to come later.) But I did learn that, since a recent levy had passed, we would have coverage again, once the money did what the money did under such conditions, which was to squirm and grumble its way through the system... eventually.

OK, so, if you're coming into this country late, here's a quick recap: You are now in America, Land of Constant and Eternal Rights and No Responsibilities Whatsoever, and in Which No IQ Test is Needed for Citizenship (Whether Originally Conceived Via Foreign or Domestic Means).

This means that Common Sense has already been abandoned, chucked away, given the heave-ho, tossed. It also means infrastructure will no longer be funded, because it is every American's Right to complain about the crappy infrastructure, then insist someone else pay the tab for it. (Hey -- don't look at me that way -- I voted *for* the levy, I'm proud to say -- despite my voluntary, *wallet-tary* twinge.) This belief system is a Republican one, refined, in somewhat recent years, by Libertarians.

- (By contrast, Teabaggers believe we need no infrastructure whatever, and would be happy driving on rock chunks and fetching their own water, whereas Libertarians believe infrastructure is a necessary evil, but should be paid for by someone else.)

You see, oh, dear, recent arrival to these backward shores: The rich, in America, expect the poor to subsidize them, and that the middle class yearn to be just like them someday. The middle class follows the bait of that false dream, that they, too, can be rich someday, and are meanwhile also motivated, as George Carlin noted, by the middle class becoming poor -- the prospect of which scares hell out of the middle class. Such is the function of the poor in society: to be proprietary prey, and a somewhat mobile motivational threat.

- None of this is funny-ha-ha, but it is funny-ironic-peculiar, in a duck-and-cover,

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semi-emergency, gunshots-at-night sort of way.

We have, meanwhile, discovered that today, in America, Land of Constant and Eternal Rights and No Responsibilities Whatsoever, and in Which No IQ Test is Needed for Citizenship (Whether Originally Conceived Via Foreign or Domestic Means), you have the Right to Fire Your Weapons Wherever and Whenever You Want and Still Pass *Go* and Still Collect 79 million dollars, just like the banks, and just like the slick, surface-skating bling-heroes of the moment, who are fabulously famous for being fabulously famous!

***Yes, and it's all legal!***

We have also learned that there is no noise ordinance, and that all ordinance may be touched off wherever and whenever one please -- even within set distances of schools, daycare centers, religious locations, and wherever young and old might gather, even though no one may smoke or sell marijuana in that zone, or sell pictures of what human animals look like without their artificial fur. Or drink a beer in a paper bag. ***Horrors!***

... which also means one is totally free to play any copious amounts of rap-slash-hip-hop one wants, and at any planet-cracking volume one wishes, and no matter where the sun is on the planetary skin of the sundial -- and that crawling way under everyone's skin with the stuff is absolutely legal, no matter how violent, foul, disturbing, or obscene the lyric or how physically penetrating and invasive the instrumentation.

This human party is not *we're all in this together*, and not even *I've got mine, so go get yours* -- it's

*I'm in your face, more powerful than you, so go*

[expletive unused as it would probably need to be deleted, at least in my world of self respect while addressing you here]

*yourself.*

Large and In Charge, Might Makes Right, backed up by lots of fear, backed up by a nation of laws in which no one surrenders, and no one surrenders any rights, until someone is dead or wounded -- a for-real take no prisoners lifestyle, one you thought was only on teevee, but has today come to your very own seasick neighborhood, like bad takeout that will keep repeating on you until somebody gets seriously harmed and someone has to finally go shut down the usual offender, that damn *Queasy Hut* -- *Fast Food for Slow Minds!*



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It's all legal, here in America, Land of Constant and Eternal Rights and No Responsibilities Whatsoever, and in Which No IQ Test is Needed for Citizenship (Whether Originally Conceived Via Foreign or Domestic Means).

So the Boom-Boom-Boom vehicles cruise back and forth all day, and all night, assaulting our hearing, going right through walls and windows. The gunfire from the One Bale Fits All (TM, probably, in the near make-a-buck future) Home Range goes on, assaulting our sense of disbelief. And the f-bombs and trash-talk-violence are shouted out from the house as the men and women, and the women and men who live there, use their throats to scream and howl their love for one another -- not -- from that rental home, while the small, school-age kids are present, soaking up all that love and care, assaulted by the music and the parents they will likely someday become somehow nostalgic about...

It's all legal. Can't jail anyone for the harm they might do, *Minority Report*-wise. Which is true. But, now that Common Sense and Common Cause and Common Grounds, and The Commons have all been drawn, quartered, and completely mutilated in the town square, it's still enough to make us wonder why it is we can't get ahead of the curve here a bit, and spend the dollar in prevention, to avoid spending the million in post-op societal care, after the damage is done -- all kinds of damage, to all kinds of people, of all ages.

Doing nothing is legal. It's not just the advice to new doctors, to at least do no harm -- it's to do nothing at all unless or until you have to, until you see any money, maybe, until your lawyer says OK, or you get a waiver...

That's just how it is now, in America, Land of Constant and Eternal Rights and No Responsibilities Whatsoever, and in Which No IQ Test is Needed for Citizenship (Whether Originally Conceived Via Foreign or Domestic Means). You wear that 25-cent piece nice and tight in your face, like a monocle, so you can't see that stacks and stacks of hundreds at arm's length.

- Short term means right now. Long term means tomorrow. What have you done for me lately?

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How it is around here, right here, in our old, ramshackle house we are buying and live in -- maybe *exist* in is a closer definition in these fabulous, *Post-Recessionary-Meltdown* days -- it's also completely legal for us to see if any of the neighbors' pistol or assault rifle bullets will assault us, here, inside, as easily as do their songs and arguments and drives-by already have and already do, every hour, every day.

- It's Nature again, claws and all, roaring uncontrollably with the adrenalin pounce and the psychotic bounce of Power, Predator, Prey.

Welcome to America, Land of -- well, you know the drill.

This is where we came in.

Report from The Front: *No, we haven't been killed yet.*