

## The Flue Flu: Two Dox to Open

Written by Alex Baer

Thursday, 24 December 2015 17:21

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Despite my flu shot, I've gotten the flu anyway. The irony is not lost on me, but it's a complex vintage, and one not easily achieved or savored. For example, part of me wants to feel I have finally gotten my money's worth in a modern-day transaction.

So much for theory, where the shot is supposed to give you the flu -- sort of -- in order to build up some immunity to the flu. *Well, sure. ☐ Got it.*

But, I'm feeling on the wrong end of an old punchline, where this guy in a joke walks in to a drug store and asks, "Have you got anything for a headache?" and the pharmacist whacks him on the head with an SUV-sized wooden mallet.

Only, in my version of the joke, which is set in current-day America, and involves many players, major political parties will collide, generations of wealth will be shed, and the powerful will melt down their long-standing base over the intricacies of the details which fascinate them: *Who built and provided the mallet? ☐ Who were the suppliers and contractors? ☐ What form of manufacture and transportation was used? What were the raw materials? ☐ Was anyone consulted along the way? ☐ Who did the paperwork? ☐ Who was employed, and where? ☐ And, of utmost importance, of course, where there any emails involved?*

And so on.

Then, we'd take a trillion dollars of The People's money -- representing a considerable amount of their labor -- and burn it, right in the well of the combined Congress, in a show of who and what is truly important in this country, despite official documents and statements, and then we'd all take the Nineteen Millionth consecutive vote -- *hey, they're only a few hundred million dollars vote, you know* -- regarding how and when and where and under what considerations and conditions might The People be entrusted with the dispensing and receiving of Mallet Care.

Such is the desire of our leaders to ensure we have something roughly, but not closely, approximating health care -- as long it is not of the same type and quality of care they themselves receive, because it which would never be appreciated, of course, by we ruffians in

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the Rags 'n' Rabble outside.

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- (Rags 'n' Rabble could be a fairly good name for a tavern, although, for my money, a contender has yet to be found worthy of trouncing my own favorite invention, the fabled Wince 'n' Grimace. Mine was invented long before a fast food joint turned many Americans into slow, witless, purple blobs of that same, *Duh*, larded matter, via that same latter McName.)

\*

Finally, in this headache of a headache joke, there would be a slew of after-the-fact, back-dated medical insurance consultations, approvals, authorizations, prescriptions, disclaimers, and other paperwork to complete, in the current keeping with American Mallet Law and Leasing Restrictions. (As it's been correctly said: *It's America, so there'll be a lot of accounting and bookkeeping and paperwork involved...* )

Then, and only then, *good heavens*, could payment even be vaguely contemplated.

Payment would itself be conveniently made, of course, via debit card terminals -- *sorry, no chip readers in this one, so you'll have to do mandatory-by-Republican-banking committee-enactment handstands, and by typing in your life history with your toes on the swing-out, upside-down keyboard, while humming* Battle Hymn of the Republic in a waltz rhythm -- which really starts to add insult to the injury of your treatment, especially if you've got broken arms, a shortage of limber toes, or a humming handicap.

The headache, of course, improves drastically after hearty exposure to this payment therapy treatment, according to 112.9 out of 10 Republicans.

So, what had been, at the beginning, a relatively harmless, slowly-percolating 2.3 pulser on the Richter Headache Scale is now a dramatically skyrocketing 189.6 temple-vein skull-cracker, with coma cued, preening, and ready for a sudden pratfalling entrance.

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Then, once the post-treatment conferences and professional conventions and junkets to Bermuda and other resort centers have all been completed by doctors, insurers, institutions, charitable organizations, Big Pharma, and other hanger-on parties in the Mallet Care world adjourn, congratulating themselves on the incredibly advanced technological state of Mallet Care in the U.S. -- *second to none in the world, naturally* -- while the patient is left to contemplate Fate, Reality, and Politics, crumpled up in the gutter, rightly concluding through that shriek of constant pain (somewhere above the shoulders) that it might really have been simpler to opt for the simple home remedy of Guillotine Care, or Defenestration Care, right from the onset.

\*

It is a now roughly thirteen years later -- *or, a week or so, for those of you in the Well and Unsick Dimension* -- later, and I am pretty sure I am in the Third Phase of This Flu now. I have run through the standard *Steamrolled All Over* phase, then the *Listless and Foggily Carefree* phase. Yes: One more, all known over-the-counter aids have again been test-driven; they have again been confirmed as being all but worthless -- but, still, also being a quarter-notch above diet plans and New Year's Resolutions in usefulness and effectiveness, but only just barely clear of that ground-scraping low bar.

(And, no, I still do not why they green overnight goop is black-licorice-flavored, and not a more soothing mint taste -- except to keep children and winos out of it, and sloughed off to the Sterno market, where they belong.)

I am now into the Very Dark Ride phase of things, I suspect, known as *Push The Button Already*, in which Generic Planetary Demolition (GPD), if it should be mystifyingly placed in my hands, might very well get triggered.

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(This would of course be a shame, as there are still some nice people and places left, scattered around, here and there; I was just thinking of all the rainforests which would be spared the demeaning fate of being turned into facial tissue for my own swampy facial, and other, tissues to be drained into.

But, since there are still a few of you left who appear somewhat sane, and who live in groups of reason and reasonableness, I vow to heroically heave myself upon the grenade, assuming the fetal position around the device, if GPD plunger is thrust into my astonished control.

If it helps any: As always, I try to remember all the fever dreams in which the mercury tries to vividly escape out of the big-numbers-end of the thermometer, or where the fever gains control of the digital display algorithm and plays *The Price is Right* with my temperature readout.

\*

Meanwhile, back in Mallet Care Land: Media would cover right-wing critics criticizing patients, saying ordinary people had no right whatsoever to develop a headache, and, further, that these medical malcontents would probably be just the sort who attempted amputation and suicide at the first sign of a hangnail.

There would be online trolls tearing people to pieces for daring to suggest headaches might be cured, or at least, alleviated in some way. And may the Flying Spaghetti Monster help anyone who suggests that we now have the technology to eliminate the causation for all headaches, if only we would choose to use it.

Trolls would go completely beserk, reacting to these ideas on the level of the people who dare to access care they have paid for, in advance, like Social Security, while fending off suggestions to pick equally on anyone who dares to file a car accident claim, based on the prepayment of their car insurance...

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Fox would have 24-7 roundtable sessions with noted healthcare authorities -- all the current Presidential candidates from the previous decade -- and pick apart levels of care to be made available to the public, based on each million dollars of income.

Big Media would then cheer on right-wing darlings backing legislation guaranteeing further study on Mallet Care, for the good of all Americans -- indeed, *all humanity!*

\*

Good thing the pharmacist wielding the mallet was a Democrat, *says our guy in the joke*, or I might've been beaten by grand piano legs, gouged by spoons, flayed with spike-strips, beset by loosed hyenas, set on fire, shot by Gatling guns, and then drawn and quartered, as required under the current terms of the Republican plan for Americans Seeking Health Care in Modern Post-Industrial World.

\*

This could also be my *third* or *fourth* cold --- *bam, bam, bam* (and/or *bam*) -- right in a row, without a break, without a letup, in the last couple weeks. Given the range and bouquet of symptoms, it's possible: Ah, the Grocery Store spins, the Workplace Bring-Home ambience, the Pharmacy take-out-special, not to mention the special, magnetic resonance of the Hospital's MRI waiting room...

\*

What came down the flue so far this year, as luck? The flu. Several of them, I think. I have started to name them: *Wheezy*. □ *Whoozy*. □ *Iffy*. □ *Swoony*. □ *Trippy*. □ *Drippy*. □ *Coughy*...

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At least the pellet stove is still working -- which, by the way, Reason tells me, works on electricity, and stops working when the power's out, even though there are pellets available to burn, so the whole thing becomes a really nonintuitive thing, like a shadowy, double-Ninja reverse-twist on irony.

- *Power* is another word that gets over-used, so, when the power goes out, and you say, "We're out of power," it sounds like it's the first time we've been without power since the last time the lights went out. Truth is, we've been without power since 11/22/1963, at least -- and just don't know it. *Makes me think about 12/12/2000 in a whole new light, you know? □ One where the lights stay on, to make it less terrifying...*

It's all a paradox -- and that word's sound, now that my temp has levelled off to 101, makes me think of parallax, which makes me think of the film, *Parallax View*, from the 70s, those sublimely innocent 70s. *How right did th*

at  
*film have it?*

- Imagine what we, today, would look like now to those hopeful, earnest, innocent, disco-point-shirted youths -- or even to the stragglers from the 60s, to those starry-eyed, anything-is-possible, exploring-anew creative types. Or even to the greed-is-good, full-bore 80s, ME-FIRST types...

Imagine what our world, and what we have done with it, and who we've become, would look like to them -- even as we try not to *be* them.

It's a paradox -- *all paradox, all the time.*

\*

(At 101 Fahrenheit, you get all sorts of interesting things to think about -- like, why it is, that barber shops and hair salons aren't called Fur Removal Establishments, except, that we all

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desperately need the boost of continuing to think that we, ourselves, are not animals, and not like the lower orders.)

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(If you need anything, I'll be outside, talking to the burning bush of snow, asking it what brand of Mallets it prefers.)

\*

(As a child, I remember being given a false choice on a mandatory scenario: You can either like it or you can lump it. Sounds like Mallet Care to me -- lumps and all.)

\*

Well, we haven't got much for cards in this hand of the game, partner -- all I got is a paradox to open. *Pair-a-dox?* *Is that a Doctor Suess thing?* *No?* But, hell, even with a *pair-a-docs*, I'm not in much better shape to start this hand, not for this flu-filled game of life, not physically or psychologically.

But, then, we're just primates, and this is just Mallet Care, with all of us waiting to pull a full house of Mallets and Aces, at the very least, and charge out on the playing surface with a stack-of-chips on a half-assed, barely-juggled bet.

Best not to let expectations get too far ahead of the curve.

Like they say in the better Zen car manuals: *For best results, don't drive faster than your headlights.*

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All I can add to that? *Steer into the skid, unless you're aiming for doughnuts in the abandoned parking lot, looking out at the dark, and a fresh, hushed fall of lazily-draped snow.*