

## Parties: Poopers & Crashers

Written by Alex Baer

Saturday, 18 August 2012 13:24 - Last Updated Saturday, 18 August 2012 13:42

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After a very difficult and demoralizing week, almost any unpaid blogger can bloom from a wallflower into the life of the party, if unleashed around free beer.

We're not an exclusive Mitt-style membership lingering societally at the country club. Anyone can crash our party and loiter, so long as they don't receive compensation for anything they write online. That was the rule, right from the start, to join this vagabond crew.

This may also be why all of us *still* aren't paid for our work after all these years: We couldn't bear to leave the group. It's as close as we work-from-home yahoos get to an actual work-therapy-social-support group.

Anyway. it's our good fortune to have access to this benevolent fountain of golden, effervescent, liquid assets, here at Hack's BBQ Shack -- a beloved, ancient hole-in-the-wall, an old-time, ramshackle bar-and-grill sort of a place. Fine folks and fine food, not fine dining -- just barbecue and sides worth defending, if ever attacked by enemies, foreign or domestic.

Multiple coats of well-aged paint and sheer worshipful willpower may be all that's keeping the building upright. Its unyielding physical integrity helps us maintain our own soundness, mentally and physically.

When it's this hot, like it's been all week, we sometimes abandon our big round booth in the corner -- gold-flecked vinyl, with a rickety table that lends itself to idle manual or visual tracing of the aqua starbursts and the blobby pink boomerangs trapped in the Formica.

When we're not adjourned at our regular round table, it's because we're in back, at an oversized picnic table where employees, family, and friends hang out -- what we call *The Circus Room*, mostly from all the empty, discarded peanut shells on the dirt floor. It's a little cooler back there.

It's also where we steer ourselves if they run out of seating inside. Hack and Wanda are such good people they would never dream of asking us freeloaders to step aside for paying

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customers. This is why it's so easy for us to just up and voluntarily move, all by ourselves.

*The Circus Room* is also where we herd ourselves when we start to get a little loud and overly friendly in our opinions, shall we say, after a certain quantity of whatever pitchers of beer Hack says he has to get rid of this week. (We owe this honor chiefly to Randy in our group. Wanda, Hack's wife, is Randy's baby sister. In Wanda's eyes, her big brother is just about golden. That connection initially helped grease the skids for us all, some years ago.)

This week, we had a conversational rarity, for us: After a topic moseyed up for discussion, as these things do, only a few ideas were nudged forward, then we all started drifting away. I mean, you get broke, idea-driven people around free beer, and good luck reining us in. But not this Friday.

Randy got things started with some comment about how both political parties have become so corrupt and out of step with the needs of regular people, as to be virtual brontosauruses wandering the mall parking lots: huge, clumsy, walnut-brained, but still very, very dangerous.

"Saber-toothed tigers!" Otto said suddenly, using his fisted hand as a momentary belch muffler. "They should be saber-tooths, 'cause they'll never change their stripes." Here, a brief discussion followed, and the motion passed, without challenge, that all tigers bearing saber-teeth did, in fact, inevitably possess stripes. *They just had to.*

That got us on to how our fathers and granddads would think of party leaders as party *crashers* -- murderously crazed people who actually crashed their parties, ran them right into the ground, like kamikaze pilots running their planes into sides of mountains on purpose, this time, just for the psychotically unhinged fun of it.

After we all crucified both parties for their many sins of omission and commission -- we're all recovering, religion-raised people at our table -- I suggested both parties needed new symbols, to at least better comply with truth in advertising, and suggested mad cows as appropriate for Republicans.

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But it was Chance who really got things rolling by saying, "Republicans should be goats," he summed up, "because they're stubborn as hell, got devilish horns, demonic-looking eyes, and will chew anything down to a bare and destroyed nub." He took a breath, and finished, "Plus, they'll head-butt supporters and friends for any or no reason at all -- usually sneaking up behind you, the cowards, to nail you right in the caboose."

We had just started to build some momentum with our laughter, when Randy took a stab at the *coup de grace*

. "Yeah, you could call 'em 'Goats,' for Greedy Old Asshats, too!" he declared, holding up the cocktail napkin he'd scrawled on, showing us how it would look on the new,

*GOATS*

-y sign:

*Greedy Old AsshaTS.*

As we each recovered enough air to talk, we considered goat anatomy. In the end, we still remain split, as to which end of a goat would best represent Republicans. There were good arguments for each, fore and aft, front or back, top and bottom.

But, I wound up being the party pooper this week, suggesting prairie dogs for modern Democrats, as they always jump up at the slightest noise or tremor, then leap back into their holes -- gone -- having done almost nothing, except chatter to others and hide.

It got fairly quiet for a few minutes, amid the knowing nods, then everybody started drifting away towards home, various excuses half-heartedly mumbled, lamely deployed.

See: We all know this political crap is a sham and just a big, showy game, only bread and circuses for the masses, distractions from the real truths -- we're not *completely* stupid.

But, I also think we are just people, too, and can't always confront the bitter truths we see. After the week we've all had, we probably needed to forget, too -- and enjoy a serving of fantasy world, like everyone else on Earth.

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I think we're also plumb weary, seeing both of these quadrennial behemoths really get their boiler fires going now, getting these noxious, red-white-and-blue, brass-plated fog machines cranked all the way up again.

We're also pretty stunned at the stupefying numbers of people who have voluntarily gulped down buckets of psycho Kool-Aid handed them by billionaires -- the deep-seated belief that regular people should fully surrender the quality of their lives for the supreme advancement and reward of companies and the rich, and be to glad of that chance to do so!

It was a vast sea of vacant-eyed believers, danger clowns all lined up for this circus that we all saw from *The Circus Room* -- performers as well as spectators, everyone with a role to play, a shabby and terrifying musical of call and response. *Who's fooling who?*

From the safe haven of *The Circus Room*, we could escape it all for a while, even as we watched them spending their millions -- now half a billion, with the other half, and more, yet to be spent -- on their negative television ads, nurturing pet lies, thumping their chests, jockeying for position, hammering and yammering away...

...while kids keep going to bed hungry in this country, and we each know deep down that nothing will change.

The gap between rich and poor, the haves and the have-nots, has never been wider in this country, not since the days of the robber barons and the Great Depression. The gap has also never been wider between who we *could have been* in this country, and who we *really are*, all myths aside.

I accidentally invited in the truth while we were basking in a moment of healing and otherwise helpful fantasy -- not the best idea I've ever had, not after the tough, demoralizing week we've all had.

Romney and Ryan ain't the half of it.

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Just the most of it.