

Wherefore Thy Sting, Sweet November?

Written by Alex Baer

Wednesday, 24 August 2016 18:02 - Last Updated Thursday, 25 August 2016 15:54

Those firm rubber mallets come closest, so far -- the ones over there, with the wooden handles and the black, hard rubber heads. The bamboo cutting boards aren't bad, but they're brittle and splinter too easily under heavy loads.

Pounds per square inch of pressure, deflection energies, angles of attack -- all these have to be taken into consideration, and a lot more.

See, like many Americans, and an increasing number of observers eyeing our system from other countries, I'm looking for something -- anything -- to make the political pain in my head stop. However, I would like to leave something like a smoldering tree stump inside my shirt collar, where my old head used to be -- you know, something that might yet grow back in the transformative Spring, after the numbing kindness of Fall, after the hibernation and healing of Winter. It has been a simmering, killing cruelty, this inflamed, and inflammatory, Summer political season.

I don't want my head and its troublesome political thoughts to be gone forever, understand. I'd like the possibility of it budding back out later on, in March sometime, for example, or April, when even the floor of a burnt and scalded forest might be expected to leaf out and live again.

Meanwhile, I expect to quash the pain, and stem the rumblings from my brain stem. I'd like the higher executive functions to go on vacation, like higher executives everywhere. Thing is: Most hard surfaces, I've learned so far, have no shades of gray -- they can either kill you outright, if you launch your head at them, like those steam radiators having elaborate floral metallurgy designed in, or like those mammoth, exposed cross-beams in the attic of old mansions and belfries, or they do nothing at all, like these spindly four-by-fours.

Note: □ Don't try this at home. □ As a trained professional, I've worked up, over time, through the primaries, to the point where no four-by-four could cause me more than a passing yawn.

Until you can appreciate Marlon Brando's performance in *Apocalypse Now*, in a first-person sort of way, beginners should stick to tongue depressors, while intermediates should remain in the range of wooden rulers and paint-stirrers. Canoe paddles are strictly out, at least until your

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technique has been critiqued and assisted by a plaid-belt-level Master Head-Whackist.)

We are not a religious cult, but we do occasionally cry out to the heavens for mercy, beseeching any available powers greater than ourselves to simply put an end to the current political season, or to us, if only to save on karmic wear and tear, and overall depreciation of The Universe and our own poor selves.

* * *

Welcome, everyone.

As former supporters and campaign contributors of Donald Trump, we'd like to underscore your good decision to join us here, at the Old-Growth Treehouse of Knot-Headed, Head-Whackistry, especially now that you've gotten wind of what your boy is doing with your cash and checks now!

As you've already heard, he had given himself a nice, fat raise, running your contributions through a jacked-up rental fee for his campaign headquarters in Trump Tower, once someone else was footing the bill. That would be you, of course, the supporters -- I mean, former supporters.

And now, of course, everyone is learning that he plopped down 55 grand at Barnes & Noble to buy copies of his book, at retail prices, for giveaways to convention delegates, which helped him pocket bushels of royalties!

That's illegal, of course, but The Donald is too clever to have to obey laws or pay taxes or follow the rules, like all us little people, right?

Well, I think we are all starting to see how this is going to work out for regular people and taxpayers, once this kid gets the entire set of keys to all the candy stores in the land!

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But, you know how it is, to be just a big rich-kid -- or a spoiled bully, really -- with no self-control, and your whole world and life is one huge candy store with your name on it, and everything is one long, sweet-candy rush, right?

Well, even though Trump's hazed-over hallucinations haven't stopped, we're certainly glad that yours have! So, thank you for coming to terms with your addiction to car-wreck ignorance and train-wreck arrogance, and joining us all here, where we, too, know your pain.

Let's see if we can all achieve a less painful way to live life than the way we have so far this year. Now that you've shaken it all out in the warm-ups, let's start in earnest. Spread your feet apart to shoulder-width, in a comfortable and balanced position. Then, loosely grasp your trainee baton with both hands, like a baseball bat or tennis racket, placing the hand you most favor on the very top of the grip.

Remember, although this might feel strange, we want to let your weakest hand, at the bottom of the grip, drive the initial strikes, letting your favored hand simply ride limp as a sort of weight or brake to the beginning blows you will be landing on your head and face.

Once you learn the patterns of blows, the maximum strike speeds, trajectories of arc, and deflection angles, you'll be allowed to administer the blows to yourself using your favored hand, to produce the greatest possible intensity -- and the greatest possible relief.

For now, though, this is a time of learning the basic moves in Head-Whackistry -- a blend of martial arts, Tai Chi, miming, mosquito-slapping, fencing, and face-palming.

Remembering the opening salute, bow to the north and the east where it all began, then bow to the south where it grew so large, as was expected -- now, exhale and inhale here. Then, rise, quickly, kicking out, to assault the west and the unbelievers, the doubters, two, three!

... and recover, to the resting stance for beginners.

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Hold on a moment, please, class -- Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, would you mind helping Ms. Lymington to the Sidelines of Honor for a moment? Thank you.

Beginner's Luck, everyone, knocking herself out like that on the first try -- right off the bat, so to speak! Good for her! Well done!

Not to worry, though, you'll all soon be unconscious by lunchtime, at the very latest, using our proven techniques, here at The House of Plaid-Bliss Relief and Head-Whackistry.

All right, resuming the beginning attack stance once more, with your feet apart, at shoulder width, and grasping your baton with both hands...

* * *

Should we look into materials other than wood? It's an interesting question, thank you.

Some say we should look into metals, like steel, but I favor wood -- especially wood soaked in water for a week or two. It's a much more natural approach to unconsciousness. The furthest I might be willing to go? Iron -- *wrought iron*, maybe, or, perhaps, *overwrought* iron, in keeping with the season.

This is just a joke, of course. People expect it from *Brother Plaid*.

Now, please excuse me, ladies and gentlemen of the press. I have a rather large class of advanced intermediates coming through today from the RNC...

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Today's Bonuses:

Speaking of living in the Funny Pages, here is a quick tour of some earlier-day comics -- er, graphic novels:

<http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/eyeball-kicks-art-spiegelman-on-one-page-graphic-novels>

Roy is haunted by Trumpian disasters present, and yet to be:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmH42sWoQK4>

Life feeling out of balance? ☐ You're not alone:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4WINj1TTqA>

Erratum: ☐ Sorry I failed to include you, Florida, in a previous rant about the ease of voting by mail. ☐ It's just that I thought you, and Texas, and some others, had already succeeded in seceding. ☐ Good to be back to an even 44 states again! -- ab

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