

Cry Chiasmus 3



Turning quotes upside down
and inside out for the third
and perhaps last time...

KOLB

HÄH

"Cry chiasmus...
And let loose the
blogs of words!"

Volume Three

Created and compiled,
with help from others, by...

Roger J. Burke

Cry Chiasmus...and let loose the blogs of words: Volume 3

aka

The Diary of a Mad Rhetorician

By

Roger J. Burke & Friends

Foreword

As author and publisher, Roger J. Burke has made his best effort to produce and distribute a high quality, informative and helpful e-book.

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Introduction

[*screaming at the top of his lungs*]

"I'M AS MAD AS HELL, AND I'M NOT GOING TO TAKE THIS ANYMORE!"

(Howard Beale, played by Peter Finch in the film *Network* [1976])

Dear Reader:

A woman carries a fetus for nine months, give or take, and produces a beautiful babe – a fact for which we should all be truly thankful.

Without really thinking about it – literally and figuratively – I carried this long and winding narrative around in my head, and my diaries, for nine years before I felt sufficiently confident to produce something that made some passable sense – and which would maybe provide *some* entertainment for those who, like me, are fixated with words that sound the same and their rhetorical derivative, chiasmus.

So, now, I can present this third volume to the many patient supporters of my chiastic efforts – and apologize to those few who took the trouble to send me samples of their own chiastic comments and waited ever so patiently to see their efforts come to published fruition: *mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*. I hope you enjoy what you find therein, as I do hope the same for all other readers.

It nearly didn't happen, though.

My dilemma came down to this: having produced two prior ebooks about chiastic quotes and rhetorical notes, and realizing that the format and construction of both were, at best, only *just* adequate to the task, I decided I wanted to do something completely different. Not having the talents of the Monty Python ensemble, however, I simply thought about it endlessly, it seemed, and eventually put it all into the too-hard-basket; until, late in 2010, I realized I would wind up *in* a basket unless I stopped dithering.

So, as I was writing those last words – *stop dithering* – in my diary, I suddenly paused as that funny feeling went up and down my spine: I'd reached a proverbial eureka moment. Furiously, I searched for all my diaries, eventually finding them in a cardboard box at the bottom of a cupboard in the walk-in clothes closet. How *did* they get there, I wondered? Never mind; I now had them all in front of me, from 2002 (the year I started to keep a continuous diary) to 2010 – nine years of chiastic ruminations mixed with a complete jumble of social, sexual, political, psychological and economic commentary about – what else? – the human condition.

Maybe, I said to myself, I can now provide much of the context of all my chiastic concoctions, thus allowing my readers to know exactly – or approximately – how I came

to construct *almost* all of them. I say ‘almost’ because some of my diary entries are less than satisfactory and, I have to admit, even illegible to *me*. As a writer – well, yes, I *should* know better, I agree (as an explanation, I might have been drunk, some of the time of writing.)

Anyhow, I regarded the context as an important, even fundamental, aspect of this work – because I am convinced that anybody, with enough thought about a topic, can produce an original comment using chiasmus. And knowing the circumstances surrounding my *own* commentary, I decided it would be sensible to allow all readers into my inner-most thought processes. So, I hope that you, dear reader, agree that my decision *was* sensible, although tardy, to say the least.

Diaries are funny, though, and I’m not the type of diarist who produces a copper-plate narrative. Hence, it became obvious that it was just *not* practical to transcribe all of my commentary, as is. Not only would that be boring, tedious, repetitive, ordinary and just plain dull, it would miss the point of bringing chiasmus more alive, more pertinent and more accessible to all readers. In short, I had to reconstruct my winding thoughts into a constructive and, I hoped, *somewhat* instructive narrative.

So taking up my mental axe, I hacked away at all the texts, using only those parts (well, okay – a few other comments, also) that specifically referenced all of the chiasmic comments I created in those nine years – some four hundred and sixty or so – and all of which zero in on my favorite targets like politicians, religion, philosophy, family, war, society, lawyers and so on. Occasionally, I have included extended commentaries (aka angry rant) to help support that contextual framework.

Some chiasmic constructions, however, just did *not* satisfy me enough to warrant inclusion in this volume, I thought. I pondered my options for quite a few hours. Eventually, recollecting what Jackie Chan did with his movies, I had another eureka moment: **I’ll take out the less-than-satisfactory comments and put them back in as out-takes.** Maybe somebody will have a giggle or two at those that misfired. Hence, at the end of each chapter, you’ll find a section headlined Out-Takes.

Now, realizing that not every reader needs or wants to wade through how I constructed *this* comment, or what factors caused me to create *that* comment, I felt I should also make it easy for any reader to quickly scan through the text to find all chiasmic creations in the shortest possible time. This was achieved simply by bolding all such efforts, thus: **I am my epitaph – my epitaph am I** (by the way, I’ve reserved that headline for my fake marble headstone after I’m dead – my perfectly chiasmic, self-referential joke).

For readers who would appreciate even *more* commentary about chiasmus, you might want to read the series of essays I’ve uploaded, and will continue to upload, to [American Chronicle](#) and [Sharktooth](#).

Perhaps the aspect that will provide more appeal to some readers is the knowledge that, for the first time, I have included chiasmic comments with explicit sexual content and

connotation. I've deliberately held back these racy and raunchy items, biding my time, until I was ready to produce this volume. You will find them, in bold, sprinkled throughout this narrative and perhaps when you least expect it. Some literary purists, though, might feel I'm debasing the long history of chiasmus by including such touchy material. So, will some of my comments offend? Well, I don't set out to offend, of course, because I'm simply exploring the many literary avenues of chiasmic expression; and I hope all readers will view them from that perspective.

Finally, as some readers would already know, the proposed title for this volume was to be a prosaic effort thus: *Cry Chiasmus...And let loose the blogs of words: Volume 3*. Catchy, yes; informative, I guess; but bland, I'm sure you'd agree. I wanted better, a bit more zing; but didn't know what it should be (Oops, those previous sentences form a rhyming verse – an accident, I assure you). Only when I'd started into the text did it come to me in the form of the subtitle; because I realized I was venting a lot of *anger* about the state of the world, physically, and how it operates, economically and politically. Hence, I'm mad (angry) – even *quite* mad – not *MAD* (crazy); although, I suppose some might accuse me of the latter. So be it.

I think that makes the quote at the top, from the movie *Network*, so appropriate. Hence, at my age (pushing seventy), I guess **I'm still a bit hard to get on with, I know, but at least I can get a hard on, still.**

As a final comment, following this Introduction, you'll find nine Chapters with the year as the title for each; an Epilogue completes the book.

Chiastically yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. J. Burke', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Roger J. Burke
Brisbane, Australia.
March, 2011.

P.S. I'd recommend trying to get *Network* and watch it. It's still an effective commentary on global media and, for its time, a warning about the future that is now.

Diary of a Mad Rhetorician

- **2002**

- **2003**

- **2004**

- **2005**

- **2006**

- **2007**

- **2008**

- **2009**

- **2010**

2002

May

My birthday is in May; also for my daughter Elena (on May 24). Mine is on the fourteenth; may it continue for many such occasions. Amen to that... Don't do much except note its passing each year, however.

I also note that Elena and I share this month with people like Saddam Hussein, Pope John Paul II, George Lucas, Sapa Walter Sisulu, Tony Blair, and the Brooklyn Bridge in New York, if you can believe that. I never knew bridges had birthdays.

Nothing special about the weather – end of autumn, is all.

There has been a long gap in creating chiastic confabulations since I published Volume 2 earlier this year. In a way, I felt drained, almost as though all the grey matter had been sucked out. But, towards the end of the month, a few sparks began to smolder.

Because I see it was on May 27 that I was pondering my lack of money (don't we all?), the mounting bills to pay, and thought about who to pay first. Not many choices, I reckon. And there it was, bursting to get out: **so what are the choices within poverty? Seems like only a poverty of choices, I guess.**

Funnily enough, I felt better about that; stupid, I know. Anyway, later that day, I had another insight when I was watching a golf game on TV and noticed two of the players having a chat and pointing up the fairway. So, while idly wondering about their conversation, a chiastic joke just flashed into my brain – perhaps a bit of one-upmanship repartee between any two players, thus:

First player: “Want to take a guess about the next hazard?”

Second Player: “Well, I can hazard the next guess, I reckon!”

That made me feel *much* better. Because laughter is good medicine; that's been proven.

Over the next couple of days though, until month end, I doodled around with a few more attempts to come up with something new and witty. Nothing really gelled, **nothing special came to mind; it grated to admit that, but at my age, I'm just so grateful to still have a mind...**

On the last days of the month, however, I concocted two more. The first, on May 30,

came after I watched an interview with a well known politician, an unctuous do-gooder:

Oh, yeah, do good for sure; but, make sure the good is due, yeah!

Not very likely, I thought: politicians always seem to have an eye on their seat, don't they?

The next day, I was brought back to the need to pay those damn bills: no way out, I had to do it – doing my bit for the damned consumer society. And so, I thought: **When do the trappings of society become merely society's traps?** I suppose that question has been around since people started to build houses, way back when.

I decided to sleep on that – mainly because, for rhetorical questions, there seems to be no useful answers.

June

In this month, the creative juices seemed to flow more easily. That doesn't mean I got any better at developing witty thoughts using chiasmus; it just means I created a mess of different ways of looking at various aspects of everyday life.

I started the month (on June 1) with a mixed bag of thoughts, probably brought about by my less than sanguine view of things in May. As I was ruminating on my weaknesses, the adage about 'the weakest going to the wall' popped into my brain; and wouldn't go away. So, true to chiasmic form, I turned it around: **the wall goes at the weakest.** Hmm, might be a good thing for bricklayers to keep in mind, I mused. I don't often toy with *implied chiasmus*, as this one is; anyway, I loaded it into my database.

From there, the day went downhill. I won't bore you with the details but at around dinner time, I tried to get my spirits up – in addition to the liquid form – with a thought about the day:

The optimist asks: "Went the day well?"

The pessimist replies: "Well – the day went!"

Progress of sorts, I thought. Let me cap it with a real downer, however, for those who worry about life, death and the whole damn thing:

Many would say there is a remedy for everything but death.

Perhaps others would say death is a remedy for everything?

Ouch! If such a thought offends those who are religious, well, I can't help it. Some would agree with me, however. **You gotta laugh at death, I think; otherwise it laughs at you.** So, I got some sleep...

Couple of days later, on June 3, I guess I was feeling in better mood after reading a newspaper article about some politicians discussing poverty in society. Why? Well, because it occurred to me that **there's so much talk about the politics of poverty, what we finally get is just a poverty of politics.** Is global poverty coming down in your area? I guess governments are trying their best; but time runs out for too many, too often – particularly kids. That always makes me *mad*.

The next day, I must have had a mad (crazy, not angry) philosophical moment when I paused at my keyboard and wondered: **Is it better to rely more on the love of wisdom than on the wisdom of love?** Which further made me wonder whether there truly is wisdom in love. I suppose there can be, but the staple of many novels is often a pair of fools for love, or fools in love. Which further implies that, in daily life, many follow that pattern. Seems that way to me, from all the stories I read in newspapers, and so on.

So: I guess I favor a love of wisdom, on balance.

Which is probably why, on June 6, I decided to mangle one of the best known quotes in history; and you know it well as the one from Rene Descartes, where he says, in Latin: “Cogito ergo sum.” That is, I think, therefore I am. This is what I finished with:

Descartes said: “Cogito ergo sum.”

That is: I think therefore I am.

Dare I say: Sum...er...cogito.

That is: I am...er...I think!

Next time you wake up from your next binge, it might occur to you. Works for me.

But, maybe not everybody, I guess. Others get their kicks from TV shows, as we all know, particularly reality TV which has ballooned in this first decade of this new century (and millennium). So, after the earlier effort above, it's not so surprising that I'd mentally cut out and kept a chiastic, and caustic, comment about all the garbage on TV:

Y'know, the reality of life for some is that their life is divorced from reality.

My wife and partner, Sherry – a big TV watcher of crap like CSI, Medium, The Bill etc – just hates me for saying stuff like that. And, we know why, don't we?

A few days later – June 9, actually – I saw a doco on TV about FDR and, of course, that line about ‘nothing to fear but fear itself’ came up. Being a martial arts instructor, I know about fear – and pain. So, out of the blue, I asked myself: **Which is worse - the pain of fear or the fear of pain?** Nobody, except sadists and masochists, *likes* fear or pain, do they? Both conditions can paralyze a body, in their own way...

And, on the next day, while that question about fear and pain kept running around my brain, I had another thought – maybe as a result of seeing TV footage of the mess in Afghanistan, after 9/11. It went like this: **The way things are, many just live in fear**

while others just fear to live. Now *that* also applies to many people living in any city, anywhere.

Had enough about fear? Well, I thought I had, but on June 13 it occurred to me that **theoretically, we would all like freedom from fear; but practically, many have a fear of freedom.** Don't believe that second claim? If not, grab a book called *Escape from Freedom* by Erich Fromm. It's available from Amazon online at \$6 or less. After reading that book thirty years ago, my life changed completely – for the better. I then went on to read *The Sane Society*, from the same author.

After those two books, I just had to read every book the man had written. And I did. What a brilliant analyst, humanist and writer he was.

Anyway, if you're open to vastly different perspectives about human relationships, capitalism, totalitarianism, socialism and the consumer society, you will be rewarded richly, I can assure you.

Although my diary for that day doesn't show it (I can't be sure), I might have talked to Sherry about fear, freedom and so on because, over dinner, she said to me: **To be a party to life, must you be the life of the party?** If fear holds you back, you can't function very well in any relationships, can you? I told her I'd put that thought into the chiastic database. That made *her* feel better, I can tell you.

So while on the topic of relationships, we all know it's a constant war between the sexes, in a way. Been going on since the year dot, I guess. Anyway, there I was, on June 15, toying around again with far too many thoughts – and not enough action – when I realized I could make a fair chiastic stab at an interesting aspect of that war, because:

**For some gals, guys are just toy boys;
but for some guys, gals are just boy toys.**

I hope you noticed: that one is another attempt at double-chiasmus within the same construction. In fact, I regard it as one of my better attempts. And the best part, for me, is that I think it states a fundamental truth in some of today's societies.

Aaah, it's now June 17 – and what do *you* hate? One thing maybe most of us do is hate email spam. No matter what we do, those evil (yes, *evil*) people send out millions of the stuff every day. As I deleted all the garbage from the Trash in my email client, I said to myself: No! **Spam is not a necessary evil at all.** I stopped. The light bulb dazzled: **It's just an evil necessary for those who spam!** Yippee! Another *bon mot* for my database.

Boy, I felt *so* good about that one. I hadn't solved *any* problems relating to spam, of course, but I sure as hell now knew that just as good is necessary for our collective psyche, so also is evil. How else can we tell one from the other? Implicitly, you'll no doubt note that I'm not too keen on some of Nietzsche's thoughts on good versus evil.

Anyway, later that date, Sherry and I had a bit of a spat which I tried to make up for when I sent her an email (her computer was at the other end of the same room; she had her back to me, wasn't talking). It went like this:

**In marriage, when you win, you often lose;
And when you lose, you often win!**

I think we had a good night together. In fact, I'm sure we did.

July

In July I went nuts, almost as though I was on fire, because I generated twenty-five new additions for the database throughout the month; almost one a day. What happened, I wonder. Have you felt that sort of creative spurt?

On July 7, a Sunday, the day shows I generated and entered five new chiasmic zingers. Well, I *hoped* they were all zingers. That was also the day that Sherry and I finished putting together a solution to the problem of receiving spam in our emails and developing an ebook about it. You can download, for free, that ebook [here](#) if you wish.

Anyway – on the seventh, I guess I was thinking about the (so-called) war on terror because I scribbled out these in fairly short order...

**When at war, just people long for some peace;
when at peace, some people just long for war.**

Of course, I was trying to get across the idea that it is only unjust people who *want* to go to war. *Because* I think that peace is the natural state of humanity, it follows that war is just all dressed up with nowhere to go.

And for those who are following closely, you'll note I was trying for a perfect double chiasmus, but with one nested within the other. Not quite there yet, though.

A while later, I was thinking about how wars involve generals – necessarily – and decided to work up a general comment:

I like to make comments about generals who like to make general comments.

It's a bit 'punn-ish' I know but it's still a true statement, I think, that generals talk in generalities a lot of the time. Just listen to any general who is pontificating about any war. I suppose they must, to some extent, otherwise they're giving away vital information to the enemy.

To round off the day, I concocted two more – one each for Law and Religion. We all know of the biblical saying that **the punishment should fit the crime. But, isn't it a**

crime that some are unfit for punishment? That occurred to me after reading a news story, from USA, about a sub-normal inmate on death row for twenty years. Twenty years! Sometimes, there's no justice, no matter what happens.

And, finally, it was with some glee that, after playing around with some ideas about religion, I settled on this:

**At birth, you are assured of your death;
but at death, are you assured of your berth?**

I suppose some religions would say 'yes' automatically. Being non-religious now (although I was born into Catholicism), I know how many agonize about heaven, hell, limbo, purgatory etc. Although, y'know, the concept of hell is very much in disrepute these days: as it should be, given the hell on earth we're all experiencing, in our own, separate ways...

I read a lot of online news and keep up with politics, business, and other stuff every day. And, these days, the TV and internet are full of President George W. Bush (hereinafter referred to as Gdubya, one of his nicknames, so I understand). While watching him on TV, on July 10, it was obvious he was playing up to the cameras. And, almost without thinking, I started scribbling on a piece of paper:

**A leader often succumbs to the power of recognition;
those led often succumb to the recognition of power.**

Oh, yeah, I thought, as I watched Gdubya prance about on a golf course, puffing himself up. And what was the press doing? Need I say? Well, okay, presidents must be paid their due, no matter who it is. There was no doubt, however, that Gdubya basked in the 'gory' media glory; it was sickening to watch.

Just before going to bed that night, the light went on – so to speak: when I'd finished scribbling, I grinned:

**If the glory of life is sublime,
is a life of glory just ridiculous?**

You can come to your own conclusion about that question. G'night, Gdubya, I thought – have a glorious war: history will be your judge, as always. I think I was still grinning as I fell asleep...

As many know, the Bush administration is known for its cronyism: way too many corporations and businesses seem to benefit too easily from their association with the Bush dynasty. Oh, that sort of arrangement exists in other countries, of course; it just seems to be so blatant, though, in the USA. If prostitution was the first business practice invented, then corruption is probably a close second because online news sources were

full of breaking stories that involved prostitution and corruption. And that, a few days later, lead me to this:

**What with all these corporate investigations,
those involved in the prostitution of business
have no business anymore in denouncing
those involved in the business of prostitution.**

It's venal people, I think, who just chase after personal riches to the exclusion of almost all else. It's also self-obsessive and potentially pathological. And that's probably why, later that same day, I wrote down this:

**It's a poor person who simply values riches;
it's a rich person who values the poor.**

Now, you might think that's a bit simplistic, even simple-minded. I don't think so, and for a practical reason: without a large base of consumers to buy products made by the business multitude, who would buy all that consumer stuff, much of which is modern trivia (e.g. pet rocks, skate boards, party balloons, bumper stickers *ad nauseam*)? Surely not the rich and the super rich: they live in stratified reaches, way beyond the grasp of mortals such as me, and billions of others.

Well, I suppose we can rest assured: with the continuous manner by which the rich get rich as the poor get poorer, no doubt there'll be sufficient buyers for a long, long time.

And, talking of time, I'm sure we all know that those who are corrupted in and by business sometimes get their just reward: I speak of prison, where many white-collar criminals wind up these days. Generally, their complaint when working is that they have **so much to do, so little time**. Busy little bees, aren't they? In prison for a long stretch, however, I hope some look out the window and think: **Aaah, so little to do, so much time!**

Couldn't happen to nicer people, right? So, while we're at it, why stop? All too often, someone in government has given more than just a helping hand to those in business. And that means, *much* too often:

**You know it's time to go crook at the government
when the government is full of crooks.**

It's so easy to bash away at governments and politicians. They're necessary, we know; but they deserve everything they get – except their fat salaries and perks, to which they become too accustomed, even *conditioned* to them. For what it's worth, I think all politicians should have just a special card – audited by the tax department, yearly – with which they use to support themselves in their job. That is, they don't get any salary or perks: just the power to do what's best for society, not themselves. They need the power;

they don't need the fat salaries. Unhappily, as we all know, **power always breeds corruption; unfortunately, corruption always has the power to breed...**

Talking about conditioning, though, reminded me that **the general conditions of war eventually condition the generals**, in much the same way as politicians: they get too used to the money and the perks, than in the job. For example, the wars in Afghanistan, nor Iraq, ain't going too well for the good guys (that's us); but the totally underpaid Taliban and Iraqi insurgents just won't go away, will they? Tsk, tsk.

Those generals have a lot of experience, we'd hope. But they should always remember that, **in life, while experience counts, they shouldn't always count on experience**; a good general is always flexible in war – or should be – and be ready to change tactics.

War results in...losers, in every way; and there'll be many sorry people. Somehow, I don't think we'll see any apologies from any of those politicians or generals when – or if – the fighting stops in Iraq and Afghanistan (just quietly, I think there's no end in sight for either).

Later, near the end of the month, I was thinking about losers, and it occurred to me **there are two types of losers: those who go through life saying sorry; and those who keep saying they have a sorry life.**

Somehow, I don't think politicians and generals fit within those categories. Which means there is a third category: they just don't give a damn, like Rhett Butler.

August

I just can't leave well enough alone, can I?

Just a day after penning those final thoughts for July, I thought I'd have another crack at those two (necessary, but evil) pillars of society:

The General: War is too important to leave to politicians!

The Politician: Politics is too important to leave to generals!

So, what about the fighting soldiers? What do they say? Most of what say would be unprintable here, I reckon. But, perhaps the following provides a nuance...

The Grunt: More important to just deep-six politics and war, eh? Another way of saying: Just shoot the bastards, all of them!

On the other hand, war does have its place: for way too many years, there has been a War on Drugs (laudable maybe, but misguided definitely) and a War on Poverty (laudable definitely, misguided maybe). Using a War on Terror as a term is just totally stupid, simply because it's impossible to have a war on (1) an emotion and on (2) a tactic of

battle. Terror, as you know, has always been part of the human condition. What the politicians are really talking about is a War on Extremism. We can all relate to that, I reckon.

Which is why, when we consider the extremes in which Big Business wallows (e.g. giant oil spills, unsafe automobiles, toxic medicines etc), **a government might be obsessed with the business of war, but it should also declare a War on Business!** How many lousy products and services must we all endure?

Oh, well, on with the month...

August is that doldrums month that doesn't know whether to be hot or cold – at least, here in Australia. Come to think of it, it's the same in the northern hemisphere too, sort of. According to Dear Diary, it was mostly cold, however; which meant that the children were inside most of the time, playing in bedrooms, on computers, on the TV – all with the usual accompaniment of excessive noise a lot of the time. And that must account for my concoction thus:

**No – you can't be blamed for your parents;
but maybe your parents can be blamed for you?**

Kids! Gotta love 'em: one of the blessings of a good partnership. Musing further on the topic of relationships, however, I thought about the battle of the sexes, the difficulties surrounding marriage, sex, parenthood, yada, yada, yada... You know how it goes, right?

Anyhow, doodling with some chiastic shenanigans, I finished up with this:

**A man's interest in a woman is often base;
But, that's often the base for a woman's interest in a man...**

But, sooner or later, most of us take the plunge, don't we? We get involved – some cautiously; others just fall in, or even jump willingly. But always, I thought, **initiative should be tempered with caution while caution should be encouraged with initiative.**

Later that day – it was August 7 – I was reading a story about spelunkers (those who explore caves), and it just immediately occurred to me that **you gotta have a hole in your head to put your head in a hole!** I just *love* that word – spelunker. I put it into my Weird Word Dictionary I've been compiling for years...

The rest of the month was pretty dry, chiastically. Oh, there were a few poorly constructed ones, and a few ordinary, such as:

**Motto of hip advertising company:
We'll work your marketing plan
and plan your marketing to work!**

We were, well, doing a lot of online marketing in August – or trying to, I guess.

And then there was this:

**For some, food is a necessary evil;
for others, evil is a necessary food.**

(Generally, I dislike food – I know that sounds crazy – but I follow Cicero’s advice as much as possible: I eat to live, not live to eat.)

And probably because we weren’t as financially well as we’d liked to be online, I jotted down this very obvious thought:

**If you have ideas of winning,
just make sure
it’s winning ideas you have!**

Followed up that less-than-brilliant idea with this:

Is any advice about sage, sage advice? (A lousy pun, I know, but I’m not keen on cooking either, as you might have guessed.)

Finally, I came to the end of this run with a bit more politician bashing, but this time with lawyers included (I’m sure you’ve noticed how many lawyers go into politics):

**Politicians and lawyers have this in common...
The former learn to rort the laws,
The latter learn what laws have wrought.**

A week went by. We plodded on through the internet maze – making some money, but still spending. We had a lot of domain names. Maybe we’re spending too much, I wondered? Not the sort of thing that politicians think about, seriously. And, like automatic writing, I just reeled this one off...

Slogan for fiscally irresponsible political party:

Spend today before today is spent! Now that could also apply to shoppers who like to drop...

Not perfect chiasmus, I know. But that type of thought amuses me the most, because there are two distinct meanings – interpretations – that can apply to that slogan. Actually, I think there are four different ways you can look at the underlying meaning! You can decide which appeals to you the most...er, assuming that you *are* amused.

Anyway, on the last day of August, I'd been reading – like others – about the worsening situation in Afghanistan and the buildup to the proposed invasion of Iraq. And so, I closed off with this idea (which, as time passed, became all too obvious):

**Some politicians think there are no alternatives to war left;
eventually, they may be left in a war with no alternatives.**

It remains to be seen what happens, I guess.

September

Well, as the month started, my preoccupation with war drums continued. I know it's pointless to wonder about things beyond one's control, never mind *worrying*, but I just can't help myself: I have to say what's on my mind. Because the next morning, I woke with these words burning in my brain...

**Is the cost of any peace
worth peace at any cost?**

Substitute the word 'war' for 'peace' and what do you get? Two sides of the same coin, is all.

I played around a bit with it for a bit more but couldn't think of anything better to say, at this time. So, I decided to construct another joke, using chiasmus. It was lunch, I was eating – and it came to me (the thought and the food):

Harried and hurried worker, at lunch thinks:

I like to have my meal in peace, not piece-meal!

That brought back too many spoiled lunches. On reflection, during my corporate life, I think I missed more than I ever had. I'm not alone in that, I'm sure. But this is something that we all definitely share about being alone:

**We're all alone when we die;
But we die when we're all alone, too...**

Whoa...that's a downer, for sure. Better not think about it, eh? Anyway...

It's a bloody (an operative word) year since the horror of 9/11: a whole twelve months since that terrible day. The press, governments, security experts, pundits, authors etc are humming with the thought of what al-Qaeda might do next. The fear is out there. However, the dreaded N word is in here: maybe al-Qaeda has a nuclear bomb, and an attack team will bring one to U.S.A. or to some other country?

It's every government's nightmare; and not just governments. I'd been doing a lot of thinking about that since that awful day: so much so, that, one day, a memory from my youth came back from the deepest reaches of my brain (proving to me, once again, that no memories are lost), a thought so startling, I couldn't quite believe it: I knew the basic principles underpinning the construction of a nuclear bomb...

There it was, clear as crystal, in fine detail: everything I needed to know about constructing such an awful device. Furiously, I grabbed the appropriate encyclopedia volume from my library (a 1973 Colliers), and quickly found Atomic Bomb. Sure enough, there it all was, in broad outline: everything you needed to know about building a bomb, and you don't even have to ask.

Clearly, and dreadfully, I realized that al-Qaeda could, in truth, easily build such a device. There are only two problems: getting enough of the right stuff and then getting the bomb to the target. Obviously, I needed to know more, to test my thinking. So, I grabbed a piece of fiction by Tom Clancy – *The Sum of All Fears* – and read it in two days, stopping only for necessities.

At the end of that, I had a mountain of information about nuclear technology – Mr Clancy is a *very* detailed author when he writes – and further proof that my assessment of al-Qaeda's ability to build a nuclear device was well-grounded in reality.

I guess I had to think of something to alleviate the stress I felt. Quiet idiotically, it seems, I wrote down:

**What do you get when math dunces meet?
Those with the fear of all sums, of course!**

And, later on the same day – September 12 – I suppose this followed quite naturally:

**Too much haste for war
might result in
too much war in haste!**

I couldn't stop thinking about my revelation about the construction of nuclear bombs. It's not the sort of thing most people want to think about, of course. But now, it was a grim and horrible probability, however slight. I didn't sleep too well for the next few days.

Maybe that's why, on the fifteenth, I penciled this into my diary:

**Those who seek to die in a blaze of glory
will never achieve glory in a blaze!**

The radio and TV news were almost continuously rabbiting on about the anniversary of 9/11, what plans al-Qaeda might have, and what governments were doing. Time's running out, I thought – forgetting, for a moment, that it's always so. And so, I wrote:

**Yes, time gets away from us, I guess;
but we can't get away from time, can we?**

Banal, but true, nonetheless.

I recall discussing the issue of nuclear technology and al-Qaeda with my partner, Sherry; she agreed with the logic and the potential risk. And, the next day, she came to me with a chiasitic thought:

**Unfortunately, with the power of thinking,
some just dwell on thinking of power.**

And that *bon mot* reminded of what Friedrich Nietzsche had said about power...so I added a rider:

**Nietzsche talked about the will to power;
Better, maybe, to talk about the power of the will?**

What we will is what we get? Not always, as you'd agree, I'm sure; even though, according to religious believers, humanity has been granted free will, by divine design. I'm not convinced of that; because, as one of my Irish friends said to me, not so long ago:

**T'be sure, they'll all tell ye we really do have free will, now; but now, few o' us have
the will to be free – really – isn't that right, t'be sure?**

Recall my comments about Erich Fromm and his treatise on freedom. Do read his books, if you can set aside the time; you won't regret the investment.

Well, anyway, as the month progressed, there came more news about the march to war by the Bush administration; which reminded me of a book called *The March of Folly* by that great American historian, Barbara Tuchman, world famous for her definitive book *The Guns of August*. That First World War of the modern era was a war of attrition, as millions fought it all out through hundreds of kilometers of trenches.

And, so it occurred to me that this so-called War on Terror was a modern example of the same type of war – another war of attrition. When will it end? Many pundits voiced their opinions, but for me...

**Any wars of attrition
are never about
the attrition of any wars.**

Fear of terrorist attack is in the news more often; security is being beefed up, across all sections of society; and the rumors of war keep getting louder. There's no doubt that the Bush administration has its sights set upon Iraq and the removal of Saddam Hussein. A

totally wasted effort, I thought, and way off the mark of where the real problem lies. And so it occurred to me, a few days later (on September 24):

**These days, it seems
like the state of the nation
is just a nation in a state!**

Well, it pays to be cautious, of course, but the constant fear of attack simply means that al-Qaeda has already won the War on Terror. Actually, it should be called *The War of Terror* because that's what it's all about, really. Terror, however, is what we all live with, every day: walk down any street, and you could get mugged, bashed, robbed, raped, or killed all too easily. So now, we also have a few rag-heads with bombs, ready to blow anybody to hell and back. So? Get on with your life; forget about them, is what I say.

Well, after resolving *that* issue for myself for now, I put my mind back to creating chiasmic commentary.

I don't know why or how the process began, but later that day (September 25), I finally nodded to myself about this:

**When it comes to helping out others,
Seems like the ones with the time, don't have the money;
While those with the money, don't have the time.**

Time is money, as Einstein once said! I lie: he never said that publicly, as far as I know. It just sounded good to say. He was, of course, principally a man of science; but also, very much a man of principle. Which is unlike others I've read about or even met during my time, because...

**Seems like some people's interest in principles
is often confined to
just the principal plus the interest to get the sum.**

Hmm, I rather liked that concoction: epitomizes the greed of those nasty bankers who gouge us with high fees while screwing us with cheap interest rates. Having once worked in banks, I know what I'm talking about...

Anyway, I quit for the rest of the month and caught up on my exercise routine. I needed the exercise and needed to feel better. I can't stop thinking about chiasmic constructions, though: as I was doing some push-ups, I said aloud...

**To work your body well...
well...your body has to work.**

Duh!

October

Newspapers are full of the run up to an Iraq invasion: a fool's errand and a fool's war, in my opinion. From what I've read, over the years, Saddam doesn't have any nukes, and only the slight probability of chemical stuff to wreak havoc somewhere. So, what's the real purpose of the war, if there are no such weapons?

That got me thinking to this:

**The purpose of any war should be a war with some purpose.
But some people who go to war don't have any purpose,
While those with a purpose often look for any war!**

Will we ever know the whole truth? I doubt it, and I think we'll *never* know.

The next day (Oct 3rd) the topic of truth got me thinking about just how ephemeral it is, at all levels, it seems. Even in law, I wondered whether...

In law, the truth is this: there is no truth in law.

Ha! Ha! Can that be true, really? In a sense, I think it is because we each have our own particular reality. And so, mixing truth and reality, I came to muse about this:

Does the existence of some truth mean there is truth in some existence?

Numenologically (the essence of what I am), that must be true – otherwise I wouldn't be able to write this. Phenomenologically (how I appear to others), however, it's just not possible to be categorical: I *think* I know what I am, but what am I, really?

The likelihood of war in Iraq, though, once again shows the power of politics – in this case, for folly. I doodled around with that for a day or two (and a few others that I won't bore you with) and settled on this (on Oct 9, for the record):

**Unhappily, the power of politics for the good of all
is often reduced to the politics of power for the good of the few.**

See what can be done with chiasmus when you think about it? **But, if it looks easy, it's never as easy as it looks.** Almost goes without saying, no?

And, look, you can change such a construction using 'easy' to say something similar, but different. For example: **if it sounds easy, it's never as easy as it sounds.** Think about that next time you hear somebody singing, or playing a tune on an instrument – neither of which I can do to save my life. LOL! Isn't language marvelous!

But, if I could continue the war angle for a bit longer (without boring you, I hope), a few days later, some further thoughts intruded – even during my sleep, when I would wake up and furiously scribble something down and then fall back to snore again...

So, it was on Oct 12 that it occurred to me that **a government that pursues a course of war may find a war that pursues the government.** Additionally, it's also quite obvious that **the folly of war is surpassed only by those who engage in a war of folly.** And, to cap it all, **any fool can go to war, but war is not for fools.** So, why is it that the current US administration wants to bat a thousand on all three counts? Time, of course, will tell all – well, not quite, I guess, but enough to verify what I claim.

Harking back to the philosophical side of things, I got to thinking about (not for the first time, of course) the great hereafter (hmm, if it exists). Thinking about a 'hereafter' caused me to turn it around and look at 'after here'; joining that with 'life' and 'death', the following just fell into place:

**After here, life comes to death for all;
but death comes to life hereafter for some.**

The first is true, without doubt. The second is problematic for me because I gave up those delusions many years ago. But, for believers, it's no doubt 'true', according to their faith. Good luck to them, as Blaise Pascal might well have said.

In view of that problematic aspect, I thought more on the issue. A day later (Oct. 17), I produced this curly piece of chiastic bombast:

**In life, I am, therefore I know not;
in death, I know, therefore I am not.**

In other words, when alive, you can't *know* what you really are; when dead, *maybe* you do know – but you're not around to enjoy it, by definition!

Oh, well, I'll try to keep away from tortuous mind puzzles and stick to other topics. Like the state of the world – **which seems like a terrible world for people sometimes. Not so, actually, it's just that some people in the world are terrible.** Is that how you see things?

That terrible aspect is all too often in the news, often labeled as public corruption. I chuckled when I saw a local headline about it; and wondered, almost immediately, **whether public corruption is possible only when corruption is public...**

Some days later (I see it was October 22), I was thinking about the public trials of those indicted for corruption, the outcome of which is inextricably intertwined with the lawyers and the judge. Scenes from movies sprung to mind – *Judgment at Nuremberg*, *The anatomy of a murder*, *Witness for the prosecution* etc – you know, the to-and-fro between the legal eagles, the judge telling them off: situations ripe for some sort chiastic conclusion, I mused. Bingo...

**Good judges like to keep lawyers in line;
lawyers like to keep a line on good judges!**

Ain't that the truth, I thought. There's always the law, but there's often little justice, eh?

And, look, while on the topic of corruption, I see I made a note about the draconian steps taken with the US Patriot Act, some of which I would have expected to see only in something like the old Soviet Union. So, there, I thought: **al-Qaeda knows the power of terrorism – others know the terrorism of power.** The world is changing, and not all is well.

On a lighter note, I must tell you that I sometimes write poetry. Nothing that would win any prizes or hearts, or even minds. I write it only as an exercise in using language, meter, cadence, rhythm, metaphor and so on; it's good writing practice for writers, I think.

Anyhow – I thought it was appropriate to pen something for my partner, Sherry. Being in my thoughts quite often (as you might imagine), it became obvious, after a while, what I wanted to say: **My foremost thoughts of you are my thoughts most for you!** A bit clumsy, I suppose, but it gets the point across. How would it sound in music, I wondered?

Oh, yeah: here's a thought for the busy executive (I see on October 26): well, you know how they all rush around to meetings, so many meetings. If you're in that boat, so to speak, try this on your corporate buddies: **Meetings? Most of the time there's not enough time for most...** Then duck, I guess, when someone throws a pencil sharpener at you.

And, finally for October, a couple of doozies for you to think about. The first one is short and sharp, for use either when actually playing craps or when you want to subtly critique a person's attitude, thus: **when you shoot craps, is it always just a crap shoot?**

The last word (actually, a few words) though goes to one of my pet complaints about the way people, in general, misuse the words 'prejudice' and 'discrimination'. To be sure, both words can be used in a pejorative fashion; but that's only one side of the story. Because, when listening to or reading what some say, it's obvious they confuse the two words: while they are related, the meanings *are* different. If you don't believe that, look up a good dictionary (no pocket dictionary, please).

Anyway, I decided that, because both words have received a bad rap over the years, I should attempt to set things right. I'd been thinking about it for a long time (months, if not years) when, quite suddenly, it came to me how to show it all chiastically. Herewith, for you enjoyment:

The word 'discrimination' is so much used, perhaps its meaning is somewhat prejudiced; 'prejudice', however, is so little used, perhaps it lacks discrimination? I do think there is much truth in that statement. And, I hope – I *pray* – that it is viewed as a

discriminating, unprejudiced comment upon the apparently prejudiced meaning of discrimination!

I'm willing to discuss the issue with anybody.

November

Warmer weather now, of course, being summer and all. Strictly speaking, however, it's the wet season in Queensland from November through to March, being sub-tropical; still bloody hot though.

I started the month off with some thoughts about relations and relationships, particularly those between lovers. You'll hear many say that the opposite to love is hate. I don't agree: I think the opposite is *indifference*. And so, on the second of the month, that's when I wrote, on a scrap of paper, at breakfast:

A lover's indifference will make all the difference in love.

I seem to observe that studied indifference between people at shopping malls, usually when sitting together, having a coffee and cake. I often wonder about them...

The war talk continues to hot up also. Liberate Iraq! Down with Saddam Hussein! Yeah, right, I thought; and then quickly penned this:

Wars of liberation never liberate anybody from war!

That's absolutely, categorically true; because, in the final analysis, nobody's totally free and the whole idea of liberty is just pie-in-the-sky rhetoric.

And that's something that politicians should keep in mind, all the time. But, they don't, of course, especially during election time, the news of which now fills the political pages of many newspapers. Now also, you know the old saw about truth being the first casualty of war, right? Think about how polities talk about truth during campaigns for re-election. Here's my take – November 2002:

During election time, candidates often campaign for political truth; better they should reveal the truth about political campaigns.

That's a sad, sad state of affairs, a state that's probably been in place since elections began, way back whenever, in Greece. Which says a lot, again, about humans and how they relate. And *that* only goes to show that:

The sad truth about relationships is that the truth about them is often sad.

Polities – politicians, that is – want to please the voters, of course. Trouble is, it's been shown also that politicians often get into situations that are corrupting and criminal;

which is why I think most politicians have a tendency to be closet crooks. The opportunities are just too easy. Unhappily, not too many of those sorts of crooks wind up before the courts, do they? Well, that particular question resulted in this opinion...

Y’know, many crooks just end up pleasing cops by copping pleas.

Oh, some polties have gone to jail; but, most often they do get more pardons and acquittals than mere mortals like I would. It’s all about power, of course; we all know that. But, on to a more mundane topic...

I wonder if you have a good answer for this:

Do eating disorders include disorder when eating?

Duh! Do visions of *Animal House* spring to mind? I haven’t seen it all – only part. That was enough, thanks. From another perspective, I thoroughly enjoyed composing such a self-reflective piece of rhetoric that has more than just a touch of ambiguity included with that eating.

So, while I appear to be on a roll, consider this thought, also about food...

Reflective moment for overweight food junkie: **What now – fast food or food fast?**

How do you interpret that question? Will the junkie avoid food first, then eat quickly later? Or will he (I’ll weather the howl of ‘sexism’!) eat real quick, and only then go hungry for a while? One mixed up food junkie, huh?

Anyway...I talked earlier about how I’ve been writing poetry occasionally as a writing exercise. Now, I can also say that I’ve been planning to write a novel or two. Just the other day – November 16, in fact – while thinking about one particular story, this occurred to me:

Would-be writer’s musing: Well, I can get ideas for a novel, but can’t get any novel ideas!

Anyway, on the story front, I also write short stories – also great writing practice before doing something longer. One of the stories had to do with a lecherous fellow doing his utmost to seduce a very gullible young woman. As I was writing about his nefarious efforts to try different approaches, this just popped into my head:

More on the rake’s progress: **Never miss an opportunity when the opportunity is a Miss!**

No rest for the wicked, is there now? No rest for the workers too, it seems like. Yeah, there are holidays, but what if you’re sick during your break? This might occur to you:

Just my luck to have an off day on a day off.

Damn! That's probably happened to most people. It's happened to me, for sure – a terrible day in San Francisco, forty years ago. I thought I was gonna die, I felt so sick to my stomach. Huh! It was just a bad case of indigestion.

Gotta take care of yourself, though: it's a matter of personal responsibility and – *yes* – duty, to do what's right. Not just for yourself, but for your family too. They rely on you. So, I'd suggest, very strongly, that:

Individual responsibility makes more sense only when you maintain responsibility for individuals.

So, now: I see it's late in the month – November 27 – and the drums of war keep rolling all through the media. How long has humanity been at war with itself? I pondered that, for a few minutes, after reading a few news items. Way too long, I muttered, sourly. I doodled on a piece of paper for a few minutes with those two awful words, 'war' and 'peace'. Hah! I thought – that's the title of Tolstoy's epic; the one that I *still* haven't read yet! But then, I looked at my hand writing: the first letter of 'and' looked more like an 'e', so that the phrase seemed to read 'war end peace'.

War ends peace? Of course, it does, always. But, what about the reverse? Peace ends war? Not on your life, never! I said, aloud. So there it was, the chiasmic thought scrambling to emerge...

The full irony of war is surely this: **War ends peace, but peace never ends war.**

We are stuck with it, pilgrims, like it or not... And, there *are* some that do like war, that's for sure. Who can forget the fictional Colonel Kilgore in *Apocalypse Now*, when he says: "I *love* the smell of napalm"? Love? What a travesty of meaning.

So, there *is* no justice in the world; only the law, as I've written before. What's worse is this: the bad guys get away too often; too many are wrongly imprisoned; too many are wrongly acquitted. So, I was probably feeling very depressed when I wrote this:

In the criminal justice system, the system of justice is often just...criminal.

Without it, though, **we're just like savage animals and/or animal-like savages.**

December

Aaah, the Silly Season again. Most love it; most hate it, too, I think. I can do without it – the gift giving, I mean. But, I can't do without family reunion, good conversation, good food and good cheer (alcoholic also).

It's the time of good will, right? Even as war preparations continue in the U.S.A., Europe and here, in Australia. I was thinking and doodling about that on the third (a Tuesday, for those who must know) and wrote: For most, Christmas is a time of good will and giving to some others. I turned it around, in my mind, and finished with this:

For most, Christmas is a time of good will and giving to some others; for others, the sum of their giving will just be a good time at Christmas.

That seems about right, from my experience and observations over sixty Christmases, or so.

As the war news droned on, I heard someone on TV come out with a well-worn cliché, often quoted by Saddam Hussein also: 'any war in Iraq will be the mother of all wars', or words very similar to that. Sharpening my pencil, I toyed with it for a while but couldn't see any useful reversal – until I added one word: dreaded. That seemed appropriate mainly because most people dread war; only those in the arms, and associated industries would disagree perhaps.

Anyway, after adding that word, I finally got around to this:

The dreaded mother of all wars is the war dreaded by all mothers.

Fairly obvious, I know. But, like all obvious things, it needs to be said, now and again. Actually, you could say that about any war. Oh, yeah: fathers are implicitly included, of course.

As the days continued, the hot weather settled in. Here, it's usually hot at Christmas, anyway; but, being sub-tropical, we can also receive a lot of rain at this time. Work becomes very tiring, as you know, during hot, sticky weather – which is also not the best time for any hanky-panky with your beloved. Grinning to myself, I realized I could to join the two thoughts – about work and you-know-what, thus:

When he's young, she always wants him to get up to work; when he's old, he always has work to get it up for her.

Well, now...priorities do change as you get older, I guess, particularly as the rot sets in.

As a chiasmic construction, though, it works, albeit a bit clumsily. A few days later (on the tenth), I was thinking more about the choice of words when trying to construct pithy chiasmic comments; and, not for the first time, I was thinking more about the use of homophones (words spelt differently, but sounding exactly the same). It's so important to get the words right. Duh! A light-bulb moment then hit me:

First, I'll get the words right; then I'll I write the words that others get!

The only thing I'll add to that now is this, about the writer's lament:

If I could just think of the right block of words, that would help to stop my writer's block.

A true statement, I think, but only a passably good chiasmic construction. Never mind, press on with other thoughts, I mutter...

Well, here's one for Christmas again: **So, be happy at Yule time, because this time you'll all be so happy!**

You can keep that one handy when you have a load of gifts ready to hand out, I suppose. Christmas, for most, brings one's thoughts back to religious and spiritual issues. For many years, I've been agnostic about the whole shebang: because, I still hold the tenuous idea that, in an infinite universe, all things are (*must be?*) possible. Just as the existence of a god is possible, so also the non-existence. Being so inclined, I'm sitting on the fence, as many do; on balance, though, I tend to think that the non-existence of a god is *more* likely...

Anyway, in the midst of all those ruminations, I was reminded that believers hold on to a core concept: **Eternity is life without end.** Eternity is a word that is indefinable, actually, unless you resort to faith. And, when I turned that comment around: **Surely – an end without life is another kind of Eternity?** – I didn't feel any better.

In truth, however, the thought of being alive (somehow) for Eternity is oddly repellent to me. Why? Because, in all seriousness, there is the problematic aspect of boredom. Yes, I know that's a human concept. But, nobody *knows* categorically what lies ahead, after you're dead...

But: Some people say we have a world without end; though, with the current state of things, soon we could have an end without a world!

If Saddam Hussein does have nuclear weapons, is he mad enough to use them? He's a business man also; so maybe he'll see the stupidity of ruining global business? However, I still think he has none; hence, I don't worry too much at all about the nuclear issue.

However, it's bizarre, isn't it, to be held hostage to nuclear threat, almost every day?

Here's something also bizarre: in the country that has the most inmates in jail – the USA – I read (today – December 20) that some state governors there are releasing even some of the *worst* prisoners early, because there is insufficient space within many penitentiaries. Whoa! What's going on in that crazy country, I wonder?

I kept thinking about that, playing around with words (as you know, by now), crossing out stuff, moving and turning thoughts, and eventually concocted one of my own favorite comments, thus:

It's a bizarre world when convicts, who are prisoners of time, are released because some state governors have no time for prisoners.

Now, okay, I've substituted 'time' for 'space'. I think that's valid, however. For one thing, as Einstein posited, space and time are coexistent; in fact, you can't have one without the other. (For this argument, I'll ignore those physicists who contend that time does *not* exist.) Anyhow, it's the irony of the state governors' situation that so juicy, it's almost Orwellian – the more criminals sent to prison, the more who will be set free! Oh, my, my...

Now – why not just get to the root causes of why so many are sent to jail in the first place? Too difficult, huh?

Moving on...

On to Christmas day, when I heard about a UN resolution about the coming folly in Iraq. From the reports, there was an underlying tension between allies against Saddam; that seemed very clear. Those for and against war in Iraq were lining up. It all seemed so unreal, as to be almost fiction, I thought.

Well, I'll make up my own fiction then:

Comment about Iraq, overheard at the U.N.:

First diplomat: "Well, that resolution will show all them lackies!"

Second Diplomat: "Actually, all it shows is a lack of resolution..."

And, you know what else: **some solutions to problems just end up being problem solutions, don't they?**

Many of those turkeys at the U.N. rationalize their positions by maintaining the righteousness of their proposed action – an act of war in Iraq, as part of the ongoing war against al-Qaeda. It'll end badly in Iraq, I feel certain. But, **some say an Iraq war is just; while others (including me) say it's just war.** And, it's certainly not just any war, is it?

And that brought all my thinking about the pending war to this final thought for December:

**If you try too hard to win at all costs,
all that might just cost you the win!**

The folly to come will have huge costs. And, as soon as the first shot is fired, all control is gone, regardless of what the generals think.

Out-takes

May 2002:

I don't like to think about minds that grate!

Well, I'm just grateful to have a mind, because I'd been thinking about that old cliché: *great minds think alike*. The above failure is an attempt at implied chiasmus.

Start with the best intentions for others? Maybe finish with your intentions bested by others!

There's always somebody who wants to make you look stupid or ignorant, or both.

Don't stop trying to do better, but if you become a nuisance, better try to stop.

I just try to be a better bettor.

Always trust in yourself – don't put yourself in trust.

Yes, but can I always be trusted?

June 2002:

Lament by overworked news reporter:

"Huh. . .the editor just grinds out the daily paper work, while us guys just work out the daily grind!

And not much of it has any grounding in reality.

Thought from a jaded lover:

"Often I just want to talk, while he just talks about his wants."

Well, at least he's talking – or is it just a monologue?

SPAM in our email: most of us love to hate it, but do we hate those who love it?

Spammers should be punished by being forced to read their own messages. . . through Coke-bottle glasses!

Y'know, considering the insanity we see on the outside, you'd almost think it's the

inside where the sanity is!

Now, I'm not the first who's said that, no way.

I play around with words so much, some say I'm a punning funster; other say a funny punster.

Why that's my words so up mixed all are!

July 2002:

The marriage of two can result in the love of one; while the love of one can result in marriage, too.

Ya know it takes two to tango, two to tango!

There are those who strive for mind over matter and call it science; whereas, those who champion matter over mind also call it science. Who is right?

I don't mind either way. Does it matter?

So--when does fixed pricing become price fixing?

Hmmm, but fixing prices is not *necessarily* price fixing, is it?

Maxim for a good working relationship: **Always be up front – and front up, always.**
Say what you're doing – and do what you're saying!

I've got no problem with complaints; it's when complaints are problems...

A complaint is, after all, just another opportunity.

Perhaps it's better to fail at something you love than to love something that fails?

A success of sorts?

Power always breeds corruption; unfortunately, corruption always has power to breed.

As those in the graveyards of corporate power know only too well.

If it's just a marriage of ideas you want, don't get caught with ideas of marriage.

Being honest is always the best way to tell your lies.

If you want to do well for others, does it help to be well-to-do?

Actually, the opposite might be the case.

A good relationship is necessary for making money; but, money is unnecessary for a good relationship.

Good relations are like good wine--they must be aged with care.

When you're looking for favors, favors might be looking for you.

You know – you kick my butt, I'll kick yours!

August 2002:

If politics is the art of the possible, it's just possible there is an art in politics.

Although, it's an art that most shun, right? Probably just as well – we need the actors in movies.

Unhappily, evil feeds on good indeed, making "good" its evil deed, happily.

Happily though, good cannot logically feed on evil.

September 2002:

Long ago, the Bard said:

"What a piece of work is man."

These days, I'm more inclined to ask:

"The man who works for peace is what?"

In short supply, that's what!

A smart woman likes to keep a man with reserve; but, a reserved man doesn't like to keep a woman with smarts.

Now, who's smarter, I ask you?

Does the love by someone for you mean that you won some love?

Or, is that just a given anyway?

If a productive worker is satisfied, is a satisfied worker always productive?

Now, it gives me no satisfaction to produce such a question!

Pulp TV: The West Wing fights off the fanatics!

Reality TV: The fanatics oft fight in the west wing!

So, who's running the country?

October 2002:

Lament for the love-sick:

"Am I a lover because I'm your fool, or am I a fool because I'm your lover?"

Well, they say that love can be foolish, and most people are fools for love, anyway.

The law has this effect on people: **For most, it keeps them in line; for the rest, it lines them up in the keep.**

Now, that has nothing to do with being a kept man or woman, okay!

Some tend to confuse the solace of love with a love of solace.

Too much inward looking by oneself may result in too much looking in by others, hmmm?

Food for the poor is usually poor food.

Well – would you eat it?

Writing for a living is for the many; living for writing is for the few.

Well, we can't all be Hemingways, can we?

When times change all for the better, we'd better all change with the times.

But, when times get worse, what d'we do?

Some evil people know the power of terrorism; others, perhaps just as evil, know the terrorism of power.

What about power to the people?

November 2002:

Our tolerance for others should be as religious as the religions of others should be tolerant of us.

Though, just don't make a religion out of it...

Excited grunt: "All ready, sir! It's a general alert.

Bored captain: "So? Okay, alert the general, already!"

Why bother, I ask you? ;)

There are those who just suffer the fortunes of war; and others who war to make fortunes from those who suffer.

Is the business of war just to make war a business, then?

Harried commuter, stuck in traffic:

"And I'm just dying to get to work early, sheesh!"

Maybe, s/he's also working to die early, too?

So, when you're dying to try, you may also be trying to die, yes – and without knowing it?

Y'know, it's the complete height of ignorance to climb without the proper gear; and it also shows a complete ignorance of heights, y'know.

I guess that's why I like terra firma...

I always try to be brave because I'm afraid; but I'm always afraid to try to be brave.

Perhaps bravery is in the trying?

December 2002:

For those on strike, it's a living death to see the death of their living.
Me? I'm just dying to go on living!

In the shower, he thinks he's Singing In The Rain, but she'd just like to rein in the singing.

Well, now, then, there. . . maybe she should just rain on the singing, hmmm?

Smart riposte from entrepreneur, when asked why build a rotating theater:
"Well, all the world is a stage, and all this stage is whirled."

Which just goes to show that running round in circles may not be so dumb after all, sometimes.

Old Aussie prospector dryly reflects on his life in the desert:

"Yep, I reckon many moments are dull in the Never-Never!"

But when you find gold, then it's never, never a dull moment, right? Duh!

Some say that life is futile.

But, it's futile to say that about life, right?

Maybe so? So, may it be. . .

2003

Well, here's a dilemma: my diary for this year cannot be found! I searched all of my files, cupboards, cabinets, suitcases etc, but could not find it. I thought about that for quite a while, trying to recall, for sure, whether in fact I'd even kept a diary. I can't be sure, one way or the other.

You may well ask why? To set your mind at rest: no, I'm not suffering from an early onset of Alzheimer's disease (smart readers will ask: how do I know that, for sure? I'll ignore that, thanks.). There are two good possibilities, however: first, at the end of 2002, our search for another house to live in came to an end. Hence, in the two final months of that year, we were busying packing up, and getting ready to move (the lease on the next house was due to start on February 1, 2003). And second, Sherry's mother was also packing, getting ready to return to Canada (she'd been on a long vacation with us, during 2002).

So, it was a busy time, and all during the Christmas season also. In a way, I guess it's little wonder that I failed to keep a diary. But, after the dust settled, why didn't I start later in the year? No answer.

So, for this chapter and year, I'll follow the same format as 2002, of course, but the commentary may be a bit sparse. However, seeing as how I keep the exact date in my database of chiasmic constructions, let's all see how it turns out anyway...

January

Well, it had to be hot, being January and all. So, there: you can picture me, sweating away over my keyboard, pontificating still on the stupidity of the human condition. The fan would have been on, blowing hard in my face. My thoughts would have been, again, wandering all over the cosmos – and life in general.

Because, from my database, I note that first concoction for January is on that topic of life. We all develop in different ways; but, from my observations, many treat life as a game. And, that's probably why I wrote:

**In the only real game that is life,
is life only real for those game?**

You have to be game to take chances, seize opportunities and so on: life should be lived to the fullest of one's potential. You know the old saw: Seize the day. When I do, I like nothing better than a day on the seas, I love to sail so much!

One of life's joys – and perhaps the most important aspect of life – is the presence of family and friends. Where would we be without them? Large in number or not, we need them like we need the air to breathe. But here's the irony of family and friends:

**Often, family knows you the least, and judges you the most;
while friends know you the most, and judge you the least.**

Hmmm, would it be ambiguous to say that my extended family and I are just good friends? How about you?

Having a good relationship – and certainly a loving relationship – has much to do with trust. Generally, none of us would love or even be friendly with a person who is untrustworthy. Yet, there are times when we must; for example, with public officials, politicians and so on.

Hence, I must have been quite cynically inclined when, on January 23, I wrote:

**Secret motto for corrupt politician:
Whatever I want, whatever it takes, take whatever I want.**

I suppose that caustic comment can apply to anybody, any profession...

Those polities could learn a bit from corporate executives, too, I'd think: all too often, the business news screams about the latest piece of corporate corruption. Who can you trust? As always, one must be skeptical, careful and discerning about those with whom you interact. And, sad to say, that generally includes most that have excessive wealth.

What about those who have little real wealth? A few days later, I penned this:

**There are those who affect a pretense of wealth;
then there are those who just have a wealth of pretense.**

Posers one and all, I guess. The world seems to be full of them. Why can't people be true to their own selves, and to others? That got me thinking even more, I guess, because I churned out a couple other related expressions of discontent about people's attitudes and behavior, thus:

Often, a person's mien says it all, even though they all say they say what they mean.

And that was quickly followed, on the same day, with this:

If you mean to say something, try to make sure it's not mean.

Truth and consequences! That's a game, I think. Frankly, the way the world operates, I often think that honesty is not the best policy. I know that thought's wrong-headed when taken to the extreme, but I tend to think that most people can't take the truth about themselves from another. Yet, who else can we turn to, except those we trust?

On another topic for this month, I've noticed that tax cuts for the rich – particularly in USA – are beginning to get a bit of flack from some economists. That sort of cut has never made any sense to me. What do you do when you get a freebie from anybody, particularly the government? No need to answer.

That sort of thinking, however, brought me to this conclusion:

In some governments, there's poverty in the economics of some that results in the economics of poverty for the many.

I have a gut feel – I'm not alone – that the continued economic policies of the Bush administration will not bode well for the average American; so also citizens of other countries that follow the Bush doctrine. How can a government reduce taxes for the rich, rape the economy of much needed money to fight two wars in some God-forsaken countries on the other side of the world and still expect those most in need at home to survive in an economy that's already in decline?

And, as for Saddam Hussein and the now real likelihood of a shooting war in Iraq? What's the plan for after this war? Nobody's saying much except to "liberate" the Iraqis and promote the first real democracy in the Middle East. Oh, I get it: after a bloody war, Bush expects to reconcile the opposing factions. I have news for Mr Bush, thus:

Reconciliation between enemies is only possible when there are no enemies of reconciliation.

Given the noises and voices screaming at each other in the Middle East, I don't reckon there'll be too much success in reconciliation when the war is done – if it's ever done.

February

Officially, this is the end of summer. But, like winters in North America – particularly Canada – the season just seems to drag, on and on. Hence, it's not unusual to have the sultry heat continue right through March and sometimes into April. But I hope not.

Anyway – starting off this month, I see that I produced one very similar to one that I did in 2002, thus:

The cost of any war should not be a war at any cost! (Have another look at my thoughts on peace at any cost in 2002).

However, all wars get out of control, don't they – including the costs?

That sort of continual subversion of wars is enough to drive anybody to drink. Come to think of it, any aspect of war would tend to do so, I reckon. And, why not?

Anyhow, reading the next entry in my database suggests to me I'd been thinking about drinking which, in turn, stimulated the memory banks about an old movie called *Days of Wine and Roses* – quite a good drama about a husband/wife team who descend into the depths of alcoholism. If you ever have the opportunity, do see it; it's worth your time, I assure you.

Regardless, this is what I wrote:

During his days of wine and roses, he often rose, with a whine, in a daze.

That great actor, Jack Lemmon, the star of the movie, epitomized that attitude on a few occasions in the story.

And so, being on a roll that day (February 4), or so it seemed, I also produced what I regard as another of my best attempts at deliciously ambiguous chiasmus with this paradox for heavy drinkers:

Keep a hold on your drinking and your drinking will keep a hold on you!

Consider the different meanings for 'hold': while it can mean to grasp firmly (take a hold), it can also mean to cause to stop (put a hold on that behavior). As always in language, context determines meaning. So, what sort of spin would you put on that chiasmic conundrum? And think of this: consider using the two *different* meanings in the same sentence – and then reverse the meanings. Have fun!

Well, moving on, a while later I was listening to radio and on came what is claimed to be the most popular rock ballad ever: *That Lovin' Feeling*. Apparently, it's been played on radio more times than any other song. So asked myself: **Is having that loving feeling the same as feeling loving?**

Y'know, I don't think so; at least, not all the time. I suppose, once again, it depends upon what sort of meaning one applies to 'feeling loving' or 'loving feeling'.

But, heck – love is topic always close to one's heart (no pun intended - npi). How often have you been rejected by another? Depressing, for sure. But, we all keep coming back for more, right? (Well, most of us do, I reckon.) I recall another song about being a fool for love. And I thought of the guy who might say this quietly, to himself:

I may be a fool for love, but I have no love for fools.

That's a bit of a self-referential paradox: does it mean he thinks he's a fool? Sex makes us all fools, I think: the animal instinct is just so powerful. Seriously, I can't help now thinking how ridiculous humans appear when engaged in the sex act. Gratefully, however, having done my duty years ago, I can take a more sanguine view of things from the vantage point of being well into my sixties. In or out of marriage, however, it's the same thing. Or, is it? I thought about that as I idly penned this convoluted comment:

**Some go into it, thinking it's a marriage made in heaven;
others, much later, know it's heaven when made in marriage.**

I'm still not sure I know exactly what I was saying there; it seems to morph in meaning every time I read it. Perhaps I'll know some day?

For now, I'll leave it and consider more about the current times, specifically the looming invasion of Iraq that is planned for sometime in March/April. I'd been reading about some of the logistics and support operations for the invading armies. Without any doubt, I thought, when I read about an Australian that won a contract to supply meals for the invading forces, once again I had proof that:

**For some, the business of war
is to make war a business.**

War certainly is a dirty business, especially in the kitchen. Oh, I know it's necessary; but I don't have to like it – especially when I think it was a dumb move, literally, to even *think* of invading Iraq. There are many protesters, still, around the world; here in Australia, also. I even considered getting out on the streets myself, but I decided to leave it to the more energetic youth.

Now, if I'd been in politics from the get-go, I might have been able to think seriously about this:

**Is it better to be a political dissident without,
or a dissident politician within?**

Given a choice, I'd rather be in than out. Wouldn't you?

And, for me, the worst part about the whole mess since 9/11 is the crazy scramble by governments to institute an almost continuous stream of alerts. Granted that vigilance is mandatory; it's the price we pay for the freedoms, such as they are, that we all enjoy. However, I think numbers, codes, and color-coding has reached ridiculous proportions, especially in USA. I've read many articles that highlight the inadequacy of such tools.

So, I guess, in a fit of derision at the end of the month, I wrote:

**These days, with so many security alerts,
We're all in danger of getting weary of being too wary,
And, now also, of being wary of getting too weary...**

I wonder if much will change as the so-called War on Terror continues.

March

This month was quite sparse, overall, for my creative efforts with chiasmus: only five for the whole month.

Toying around again with relationships, I came back to the topic of love, of course. Like everybody, I've had my fair – unfair? – share of bad experiences. I guess that's another reason why I've always liked Woody Allen movies – they always seem to resonate so well with my own thoughts about love and pain and so on.

Anyhooo, this is what I wrote on March 3:

Those experienced in love don't always love those experiences.

Obvious when I think about it, naturally.

Couple of days later, I thought I should add a rider to the one above. Or, maybe I was just thinking about how to Do The Right Thing (hey, a movie title, from 1989) when in a difficult relationship. Here goes:

If it's the right thing to do, just make sure you do it right.

A few weeks went by, going by the dates in my database, so I must have been busy with other things, or drunk (but not disorderly). Eventually, near month end, I think I reread the above and decided it needed some embellishment. Don't ask why, although I think it might have been related to the invasion of Iraq. Try this, in that context:

Some do what they think is right for the wrong reason; though others do wrong for what they think is the right reason.

Does the shoe fit on George W. Bush, perhaps? But, which aspect is more applicable to him, in the context of his invasion of Iraq? You choose.

I guess I must have been thinking more about the war, at this time. Like most people, at that time, I reckon. The topic of war has, arguably, been done to death from a literary perspective; the genre is probably one of the most used in books. Though, I think romance is the biggest money maker.

War, however, has so many contradictions, so many opportunities for irony, satire, tragedy etc that it's unlikely the volume of war books, stories, commentaries – and writers like me – will go away.

So, to finish off this month, I'll leave you with two hot questions about war in general and that now much-overused phrase 'war on terror':

Is it that no war is good or is there just no good in war?

Frankly, the only people who can answer that question lie at the wrong end of the gun barrel, don't you think? Think of the terror...

And that allows me to segue into this:

Is all war just a form of terrorism, or is all terrorism just a form of war?

Well – obviously to me, it's both. However, I think the whole concept of a 'war on terror' is just plain stupid: terror is a tactic of war, and has been for millennia. So, it's asinine to think that any war on terror will ever be finished or won.

April

This was a better month from the perspective of quantity – although I can't comment on the quality. As always, that's for the reader to decide.

Anyway, by now the Iraq invasion was well under way; and on my mind as well as the rest of the world. Idly, I wondered what some of those grunts might be thinking as they advanced on Baghdad...

**Pithy comment from grunt at the gates of Baghdad:
"Some of those die-hards in there will find it hard to die."**

So true, I thought; the carnage begins.

And, recalling my prior comments about life and games, I did a quick rewrite and came to this:

War is not a game, and only the game go to war. Well, not quite, I suppose: there are those who are forced to go, game or not. For example, I've read that many National Guard personnel from USA have been 'drafted' into the invasion to act as support personnel for the regular army. Still in harm's way, though...

Still on the invasion, I kept churning out what I hoped were incisive chiasmic questions about the progress of that totally unnecessary invasion:

I wonder whether the war in Iraq will result in the end of any uncertainty – or just the uncertainty of any end.

Well – often the end of something is just the beginning of something worse, unhappily.

The speed of the advance to Baghdad was not so surprising, given the superiority of American armor and aircraft. Still, the media raved about it, all the while it seemed. Huh, this is what I thought...

While the Bush administration maybe wages war better in Iraq, does it also make a war for better wages back home, in good ol' USA?

Not likely, I muttered, given the massive tax giveaway to the filthiest of the filthy rich – the top 1% taking home more than the entire shrinking middle class! Well, *some* people gotta make sacrifices, right?

I wouldn't be the first to question the state of Gdubya's mind, given the big risks facing his forces in Iraq. From the get-go, even I could see that his army would be the easy target of terrorists and insurgents for a long time – and I have no experience of war at all. And that caused me to pen this:

Gdubya can have confidence in his military brains trust; but, can we trust in his brains, with confidence?

Not to be too unkind, I've made a significant, and perhaps unfounded, assumption there, haven't I? Recall the well-known oxymoron: military intelligence?

Aaah, enough about war for this month, I must have said to myself: get back to basics – human relationships...

So, why is it that some family members are more like friends, while some friends are more like family?

You've noticed that, I'm sure. Family! Gotta love 'em, I guess. But, is this more to your liking:

Some people love to hate each other, while other just hate to love each other. Where do you sit, do you know? I know I fall into both sides of the issue in my worst moments; but love says it all, ultimately.

There again, at the very personal level between lovers...

Some women have men who love hard; others just have men hard to love.

On the other hand, in later years, other aspects start to become more important: the more you live with the same person, the more there's room for greater accommodation or, unhappily, alienation. In between those polarities, however, we might get to a situation like this (if we're lucky?):

I may be hard to get on with, but at least I can get a hard on!

Never stops, it seems – the constant thinking and talking about sex. I'm a lot older now, of course, so the drive is more or less in neutral now. The brain still functions most of the time though, which made me think of this:

Young couples often just have a mind for sex; old couples often just have sex in the mind. I should be so lucky?

It's not all bad, though, as we all know, despite the continuous battle of relationships. If you're really lucky, you'll have a few good friends; if you have a family that is bearable, then this might be as close to heaven on earth as you can get...

I think life is a relative success when you have family as friends and friends as family.

And so, life goes on...

Just watch out for gold-diggers though. On that note, it's interesting to realize that old comment assumes that 'gold-digger' is always female; well, that's how it's defined in most dictionaries. In times past, of course, the digger was either sex, but mostly men, probably.

So, here's an idle thought to help those who dig the ground for real gold – good advice to gold diggers everywhere:

Take up your pick – and pick up your take!

As a final comment for this month, sex rears its ugly head again – as always:

Thought from a lascivious person, possibly female...

The bigger they are, the harder they fall; but, the harder they are, the bigger they...feel.

May

The war in Iraq is over! It's been won, according to Gdubya: Mission Accomplished. Huh! Then why are people still fighting?

It's just gonna get worse in Iraq, and elsewhere. Problems all over the African continent, particularly Sudan and Ethiopia; the continual hunt for al-Qaeda in Afghanistan; the never ending Palestinian/Israeli issue, and so on, and so forth and fifth...

It's so bad – enough to keep me mad – I must keep focus on the positive:

For sure, some just want a piece of a battle somewhere; some others, thankfully, want to battle for a peace that's just.

Let's all hope the bad guys just go to pieces. Hang on – just *who* are the bad guys? Easy answer: the guys shooting at you, right? Very depressing.

Here's something easier to grab you: throughout my chiastic efforts, I've considered revealing the thoughts of a guy who's continually looking for his next fuck. It's something that's on the minds of many fellows, as we all know. Now, Isaac Asimov created a whole industry when he penned *I, Robot*. That story was an earthquake, not just ground-breaking, in science-fiction, way back in the fifties when first published.

Anyway, for your pleasure or otherwise, here is the continuation of The Animal Thoughts of I, Rake – aka The Rake's Progress:

Em...some guys say easy come, easy go. Me? Go easy, come easy, in any guise...

A girl can never be sure about that guy in front of her – except for that one thing they are all chasing. So, who *can* you trust? No firm answer again – and not even priests, cops and judges are beyond the worst, especially concerning kiddies. It's a sad world inhabited by too many badly fucked-up people, no question.

Talking of bad people brought to mind a novel I'm writing about extremists – bad people, by definition, I'd say. Maintain a continuously extreme point of view and, pretty soon, you've lost the plot. It's a full novel of over 100,000 words (or will be, when finished).

Anyway, for the writers out there, I came across – during my online searching – two clever chiastic thoughts that I wanted to include in this monologue. First, after completing some investigation into the difference between a novel and novella, I saw this when reading *Immediate Fiction* by Jerry Cleaver:

Definition of a novella:

“Too big to be little and too little to be big.”

And, later, while reading through a lot of material about why writers write, how they think, and how they manage to complete, I came across this *bon mot* (which is variously attributed):

We don't think in order to write, we write in order to think.

I agree with that perspective because during the process of actually composing all of this monologue to accompany my forays with chiasmus, I've changed my thinking many times about what, how, when and why to write. It's actually a revelation to realize that it is happening, even as I type.

Revelations are good to experience, usually. There are exceptions, however. In the mid seventies, I came upon one of those exceptions when I drove across the U.S.A. and saw that country for what it truly is: a succession of decaying cities and other infrastructure while the opposite imagery is projected (literally) around the world on TV and in cinemas.

Not only was I disappointed, I was shocked to see the levels of poverty that existed in the country that touted itself as the go-to destination for thousands of tourists and immigrants: the place to be, the place of your dreams, no less. Now, nearly thirty years later I can only wonder whether any other visitors had any thoughts similar to this:

I went to find the lie of this big land, but all I found was this land of the big lie!

Moreover, in such a gun-crazy society as the USA is – apparently, there are a few hundred million of the damn things – and considering all the crime we read about there, it's an easy claim to suggest that....

There are those who love to kill, and there are those who kill for love.

Oh, the U.S.A. is not alone, is it? But, there just seems to be more opportunity where there are so many guns and so easy access. Will the U.S.A. ever change? Given the current constitution for that country, I very much doubt it.

June

Is my mind losing it? Are my gray cells decreasing at an accelerated rate?

Hope not, but this month was the leanest month of all – only two chiasmic quips! What *was* I doing? Well, it was winter, so things tend to slow down in that season, don't they?

On the fifth, I composed a punish-type chiasmic thought with this:

In the many affairs of man, I guess many a man has affairs.

The street fighting in Iraq continued, of course; the noise from Afghanistan was fading, however – al-Qaeda had escaped to the northern spaces of Pakistan, I read. I suppose I must have been thinking about all the global political shenanigans now in progress.

And, naturally (or, *unnaturally* I'd suggest), the body count in all the wars was going up steadily; which made me, not for the first time, think again about living and dying. The moment we are alive, we start to die – a sober thought and inevitable.

But, y'know...I'm sure that I'm always just dying to live; but I'm not sure that I could live without dying.

Somehow, the idea of being able to live forever is quite troubling to me, as I've mentioned before – mainly because I'm not sure at all that I would or could stay sane as I watched others continue to die. And, as to having everybody live forever – well, the earth ain't big enough, is it?

July

Another short month – short on chiasmus, that is. It must have been the cold weather, right?

Early in this month, I reacted to the news from Iraq, particularly reading about what American generals were saying. A constant request was for more grunts to help beat the insurgency now in full swing; others were urging Gdubya to get out while they were ahead. And so, I said to myself...

Some generals just count on wars; others just want wars that count.

But, can we always count on the generals? I wondered.

Only towards the end of the month did I consider another aspect of the battle of the sexes:

Most men want some love-making anytime, but most women want some time before *any* love-making.

How much time do we have?

Not enough, according to some, I'd say – because, over the years, I've heard many men talk about their sexual exploits. And, that brought to mind more thoughts on The Rakes Progress, at the office, for example, as he says:

Okay, I think I'll take another bit of time off...like, time off for a bit of the other, okay!

Last, for this month, my thoughts turned to brothers and friends:

If some friends can be brothers, why is that some brothers can't be friends?

I have four brothers now; one died long ago when only twenty-one. Quiet frankly, I think they are more brothers than friends. Perhaps I am the same? A family dispute still hangs in the air; but I shouldn't let that stop me. More time needed, I think.

August

Those relationship issues were obviously preying upon my mind, all limited by my all-too-limited knowledge about most things. How much do I really know? How much does

anybody really know – in contrast to ‘think’ or ‘believe’? A thorny point which caused me to pen this:

The sum of my little knowledge in general is the general knowledge I have about some little things.

Yes, our life, our survival is crucial to each of us, but, in the scheme of things – an evolutionary process that is neither good nor bad – our own needs and wants don’t amount to a ‘hill of beans’ as Bogie famously quipped in *Casablanca* (1941). I suppose believers with a faith in a god might see things differently.

A day later – it was August 9 – I must have been mulling over that last thought as I kept on with writing my novel, because I wrote:

**Megalomaniacal thought from a not-so-great novelist:
When I write, I’m God; and when I’m God, I’m right!**

So there! In my fantasy worlds of words, I am the Creator, with the power of Life and Death over all of my creations. I might have puffed up my chest as I wrote it; I can’t recall. I probably grinned wickedly, if not stupidly.

Anyhow, the continuing Iraq debacle caught my attention a week later: as many expected, it was all going down the toilet. Whose idea was it to go to war? I’d read – somewhere, I forget – that Gdubya had told his National Security Advisor, Condi Rice, that the only reason he would invade Iraq was to get rid of Saddam Hussein. At that time, Gdubya thought that was a good idea.

Huh! I quickly wrote:

Let’s always hope that ideas about war always result in just a war about ideas.

We should all be so lucky! So, next time somebody has an idea...

September

My thinking and energy must have picked up this month because I churned out six pieces of chiasitic trivia; yes, only six, but better than the previous two months.

Along with politicians, lawyers and used car salesmen (should be *salespersons*, actually), another group that is much vilified is the idle rich, and probably denigrated simply because they are much wealthier than most of us. So, why are they so idle? I’m not sure they are; certainly, their money is not, being responsible for so many stock market crashes, wouldn’t you say?

Do they think only of money, or do they have other opinions?

Here's an idle thought that might have occurred to one of that idle bunch:

In sum, I do have a wealth of opinions, including an opinion about wealth for some!

Now, what would your opinion be?

Nothing wrong with the rich that a few heftier taxes wouldn't fix. Let's face it: just why do some like to keep billions in the bank, or stocks? Just to make more? You can't spend it all, even in ten lifetimes. Maybe that's one reason why some of the very rich have, in fact, donated huge chunks of their fortunes to charity and other worthwhile causes?

Like the arts, for example – many of the wealthy like to see their money put to such use. But, perhaps, not with this sort of result:

Pithy comments by theatrical producers, on opening night:

First producer: "It's so awful, the cast will die of shame!"

Second producer: "Hmmm, it's a shame, 'cos the die is cast."

On to the war in Iraq then...with further comments from Baghdad:

Gung-ho grunt, arriving: "I wanna piece of the action, yeah!"

Battle-weary grunt, leaving: "Yeah, well, I just want some action for peace."

Baghdad is a hell-hole, from what I read; gotta be crazy to even *think* of going there. Further south, where the Brits are looking after Basra, I overheard this comment between two soldiers there:

1st soldier: "There's no bloody peace here, mate."

2nd soldier: "Sright, mate, the peace is too bloody."

It's all just a bloody war, right? No end in sight – and no sights on any end: just a relentless, ruthless, god-eat-god war where everybody will lose...and the only certainty is uncertainty for an indefinable time.

Which reminded me, a few days later, about a first-year Philosophy student who, back in the 1980s, finished Phil 101 with this comment:

"I just finished Phil 101, and now I don't know whether I'm certainly incoherent or incoherently certain."

I'm certain that's what he said; I'm just uncertain about what he truly meant. Let me know if you know, okay!

October

The rest of this year was paltry in comparison to prior months. I was, I recall, deep into the finishing stages of my novel. So, that would account for my distraction at that time.

Besides, it was getting on for Christmas – and nearly everybody takes a break at that time. Thinking, as you know, is very difficult. Thinking about creating what I hope are chiasmic gems is doubly so. Oh, I'm not complaining; I like drumming up chiasmic goodies. But, sometimes, I'd rather it was all just like making sausages: crank a handle, out the next one pops.

Which may be why I churned out this on or about October 12:

Better make sure you're doing some thinking before you're thinking of some doing...

Stands to reason, of course, especially before going to war. Maybe I'll send Gdubya a free copy of this book when I've finished? Too late, I know. Maybe it was always too late?

Is Gdubya a happy guy now, knowing what he has unleashed? Frankly, I hope he's extremely unhappy, because the following could well fit Gdubya's frame of mind:

Much unhappiness has less to do with not getting what I want, and more to do with not wanting what I get.

For Gdubya, his choices in Iraq are not that choice, are they? He's probably praying like hel...heaven to make it right there. Hands up if you think God – if such an entity exists – is listening. Oh, here's a thought...

Does the idea that God simply exists, exist simply because God is an idea?

As any thinking person knows, ideas exist as much as anything else even though they are intangible in the first instance. Interestingly, even if I have an idea about something and say absolutely nothing ever about it, it still exists in my mind, for as long as I have a mind. The idea is real for me, but not for you; it's just a different type of reality to the words that I'm writing here, now, and you're reading.

Well, let's move on to easier thoughts...

November

Christmas now seems to get under way earlier and earlier. Half-way through October already, the big stores had the glitz and glamour out. Well, that's the consumer society, of course, of which most of us partake – from necessity, mostly.

So, what do you think? Do you think that: **In this age of the consumer, has the consumer come of age yet?**

Frankly, I think there is way too much waste, as a result of, for one, too many time pressures for most people – including not enough time, as many tend to say. But, wouldn't it be nice if production and consumption were always a zero-sum game? You know, slow down a bit, take things more leisurely, because...

I think it's better to have time to properly consume than to consume improperly the time you have.

You can tell I'm getting old, right, and sounding all parental-like? Comes with the territory, of course. Oh, yeah: and by the way – *everybody* has the same amount of time, every day; it's up to all to use it wisely. Nobody should have to tell you that again.

Back to Christmas, though...

It's the time of giving; it's the time for people to take stock of their lives (and not to take stock from stores without paying!); it's the time for families to get together and get drunk; it's maybe, also, the time to learn to love one another – again. So, just remember this:

You can always give without loving; but you can't love without giving, always.

Being an average sort of person, though, I'm not one very qualified to pontificate about love; although, if you recall a movie called *Love Story* (1972), you'll remember the tagline: "Love means never having to say you're sorry." What a bunch of baloney, I thought, at that time; in fact, that put me off going to see it.

To me, loving someone is, first, knowing that person; romantic love i.e. love at first sight, is ephemeral. Deep, lasting love comes only after knowing a person, in every intimate way. A corollary is, naturally, if you *don't* know someone, then you can't love them, at least, not in the sense of the story contained in that movie. And, as I think about this further, it becomes clear that you must *learn* about a person to actually know her/him.

One could well ask, however, whether it's possible to ever truly *know* somebody. From my perspective, that's where honesty and trust come into play. If you have indeed reached that pinnacle with your partner, then you are both fortunate; half the global population doesn't get anywhere near that, I'd suggest. When you do get there, you'll then realize that...**you can learn without knowing, I suppose, but you sure can't know without learning.**

December

For whatever reason – probably the onerous burden of the Christmas period with the

increased level of personal debt – I was most remiss: I hardly thought about chiasmus, because I have only two comments, both of which are concerned with the Law.

Maybe I was watching too much Law & Order or one of those programs that deal with the scientific aspects of law enforcement – you know, CSI and stuff like that? Generally, I avoid such commercial rubbish. To please Sherry, however, I sometimes succumb to her entreaties to consume (I won't say 'waste') a couple of hours by cuddling up together.

Anyway, here are a couple of thoughts arising from watching and talking about such programs...

In the realm of investigation, the absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence.

After looking at that, I thought it could apply to any kind of idiot who's ready to believe in just about anything – UFO followers included. Mind you, there *are* UFOs, yes indeed: Unidentified Flying Objects, as defined. Nothing about ET, aliens, bug-eyed monsters and so on, however.

That never keeps a good UFOlogist down, though:

Furthermore, in that same field, it's important to treat facts with imagination; but, I should add: don't confuse imagination with facts.

Hope you had a great Christmas. On to 2004...

Out-takes

January 2003:

Cautionary advice to new salesperson:

"Weekly sales go down when you do sales weakly."

So, just watch out for the monthly then?

Politicians spend a lot of time trying to be very civil to each other; while civil, they're also very trying to each other, though.

I could say they should just keep trying, but I won't.

Comment by sportswriter, after Super Bowl 37:

"Well, the best defense may be a good offense, but Tampa Bay proved that the best offense can also be a good defense."

I liked it so much, I decided to include it in my database. No offense to the Oakland Raiders, of course!

February 2003:

Are board games just games for the bored?

I guess that depends on whether you're one of the bored directors of the board.

While you're banking on the safety of your insurance, do you have any insurance about the safety of your banking?

Well of course, bankers have insurance – they just keep raising interest rates, don't they?

Y'know, it's a no-good government that's always in denial; that often just results in the denial of good government.

Every time they deny, you just know it's true, don't you! Don't you?

Sage advice from sales executive: "Keep writing about markets. . . And keep marketing about what you write."

Is that right? Or is it just a rite?

May 2003:

If politicians want to be taken on faith by the people, don't expect people, who lack the faith, to be taken. . .

The arrogance of some politicians is just beyond belief.

September 2003:

Some are always trying desperately, and that's desperately trying, always, for others.

Am I *that* desperate? I hope not. . .

November 2003:

It's when you're getting a bit on that it's harder to get on a bit. . .

So, when you get it on, on it gets, huh?

2004

January

Steam heat again for the first week, overcast, humid, sticky – and 38 degrees Celsius (that's 100 degrees Fahrenheit for my North American readers) during the day. And not much let up at night.

But, I shouldn't complain: the humidity is nowhere near the levels I lived with for twenty years around the Great Lakes area between Canada and U.S.A. Somebody – I forget his name – told me about the time he thought he was about to die during a particularly long humid spell in Toronto. I can vouch for that – much worse than *any* humidity I've experienced in Australia, or New Guinea, or *anywhere*...

Those idle thoughts percolated as I continued my daily routine on my PC. And while I skimmed through it all, again I wondered why relatively few users posted their real photographs online, preferring ridiculous avatars instead. Faces are interesting, after all; but then it occurred to me that...

We often have trouble putting a name to a face, but online, the trouble is putting a face to a name.

What did The Bard say? Yeah: "What's in a name?" So, maybe we can say now: What's in a face? Maybe it's getting better since the internet started? You tell me.

Reading the news online – more Iraq war news, now getting on for a year: the insurgents are more active, al-Qaeda in Iraq sending in more suicide bombers, the Iraq economy is virtually at a standstill, no water or electricity for the people – hell, the whole caboodle is fast approaching the heights of absurdity, so I wrote.

This:

The absurdities of the war in Iraq simply reinforce the idea that all war is composed of absurdities.

Is that comment just absurd? No, I think not: throughout life, we are exposed to many absurd aspects of our so-called humanity. War just happens to be one of those unpleasant aspects.

One of the fallouts from this war on terror is the introduction of The USA Patriot Act. For

your information, those words 'USA Patriot' is also an acronym made up to spell out an idea that would certainly resonate with Americans. What American, hand on heart however, cannot be emotionally moved by those words?

But, in the context of that legislation, here's what USA PATRIOT really means: "Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism". Ugh! How long do you think it took some turkeys in the White House or the State Department to dream that up? (I have a sneaking suspicion that it came from the devilish ravings of one Dick Cheney; but, I could be wrong.) You can check Wikipedia if you don't believe me about that acronym. (I actually found out about it from one of Michael Moore's books.)

Well, the sum of all *that* is another absurdity that occurred to me...

Pre-9/11, America was a nice place to visit but irritating to get into; post-9/11, it's now an irritating place to visit, but a nice place to get into.

How the world turns...

And which brought forth a further reflection upon the nature of government during scary times as civil rights in many countries are increasingly infringed in the name of national security:

Y'know, it seems like government for the people these days is looking more like people who are just for government.

Well, we need government, of course; so I guess we should more actively knead the politicians we need – to attend more to *our* needs, and not theirs. Oh, boy...

What do you think? Do *you* have an opinion? If not, think about this:

If you don't know what you really think about *whatever*, can you ever think about whatever you *really* know?

What I do know is this: I know what I do. Unless I'm sleep-walking, I suppose; or drunk. Again.

Anyway, one thing leads to another: while thinking about visiting the USA or any other country these days, I had read that there were significant changes being made to the manufacture and use of passports. And so, eventually, I arrived at this comment:

Before, a passport used to be something to keep a foreign traveler safe in a country;

in these days of terror, they're more something to keep a country safe from foreign travelers!

Well, I'm just a stay-at-home, play-at-home guy anyways – most of the time!

And, finally, for this month, I noted a story about the career of Elvis Presley, still the King of Rock'n'Roll, as we all know. In some ways, it was a caustic article that described the extent to which parents of the 1950s initially reacted to his stage presence; yet, in later life, there he was – entertaining, perhaps those same early critics, with live appearances at Las Vegas. So, I set out to describe that process chiastically, if I could. After a few *awful* attempts, I finished up with this:

**First, when Elvis sang away, young girls fainted and parents screamed.
Later, when Elvis screamed away, young girls sang and parents fainted.
Finally, when Elvis fainted away, young girls screamed and parents sang . .**

As a rock and roll artist, I think Elvis sang the blues with the best of them. And, yes, as a matter of fact, I still do have most of his records I bought fifty or more years ago. Moreover, I still listen to them, occasionally – my favorite being the sound track from *King Creole*.

February

A strange month: wet, drizzly, cool for the first twenty days, then 44 degree heat (116 Fahrenheit) in the afternoons for a few days, then back to a great cool change! It was unlike any other February (here, in sunny Queensland) I could recall.

So, I was just lazy, I guess. Because I took a chiastic holiday, except on the tenth when I experimented with another attempt at implied chiasmus – that is, a comment that uses a well-known saying but turns it upside down (or inside out, if you like).

I'd just finished watching (again) that Stanley Kubrick fantasy, *The Shining*, and was thinking about the horror of the Jack Nicholson character repetitively typing out those awful words: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." Do you remember that? Delicious horror, no? As I thought about that line, I idly flipped the words around to this:

All play and no work makes a dull boy jack!

How appropriate, I muttered, considering the character that Nicholson played, all too well. Some things really seem to work out after all. And, better still, I really like that construction and its thematic thrust. Hope you do also. Why not use it, next time you see your teenage son or daughter playing the inevitable video game? And watch for the blank look and 'Huh?' as a response.

March

Getting cooler by the time this month rolled in, and not only from the perspective of weather. Let me explain...

Following my "success" with reworking the only effort from February, like any good Hollywood mogul, I decided to try it again; but this time, with a *different* well-known saying.

**Bored lover's thought, as she spurns him again:
"Well, the flesh is willing, but the spirit is weak. . ."**

If I've offended those who prefer Matthew 26:41, I apologize. But it's time to go, I reckon, when a partner thinks like that. What a shame some *never* go on time!

Now I *was* indeed on a rollercoaster...

A couple of days later, on the third (a Wednesday, for those who must know), I reckon something in the news from Iraq must have helped to generate this:

Are all intelligence failures simply failures of intelligence or failures simply of... intelligence?

Is the intelligence of that question related in *any* way to the question of intelligence? And please note also my attempt at concatenating chiasmic constructions.

'Big storms coming', I see from my diary notes. Well, a different type of storm erupted on March 11 when al-Qaeda extremists hit the trains in Madrid. What an outrage; what a mess. The story splashed across the world and the Internet: a media frenzy of fact, opinion, lies, fiction, inaccuracies, and so on – and all soon followed up by government meetings, platitudes, action plans, statements and so on, again. Soon also, there'll be conventions, I thought. And, as one who has attended such in the past, I'd suggest that:

Conventional wisdom would no doubt say there's not much wisdom at conventions.

So, who cares about conventional wisdom? I don't. (Try to sing that line to the tune of "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?" from the movie *High Society*; it almost fits the meter.)

As with all stories, the hullabaloo subsided over the next week, but the investigations just got more detailed and prolonged. Having an academic and writerly interest in Islamic extremism, I followed it all closely. But, all the time, I'm thinking about how I might be able to chiasmatically satirize bin Laden or al-Qaeda. Nothing suitable came to mind. But, as I was thinking about the megalomania of bin Laden and al-Zawahiri, an image of Napoleon intruded.

Now, being an historical figure with a supreme concept of his own self-importance, I began to wonder what Napoleon thought when he was finally caught. Here's a possible snippet from his private thoughts...

Quote from Napoleon, as he set sail for St Helena:

"Well, looks like I'm fated to live, still. . .but, will I still live to be feted?"

Well, you do wonder what some great people think as they see the end coming. So, I hope somebody's around when bin Laden is killed or caught. *Insh Allah!* (I just threw that in for laughs because I don't believe in supreme entities or deities.)

There's no doubt, though, that bin Laden's presence has had the desired global effect of forcing all authorities to be more aware and responsive: recently, a local shopping mall was in lock-down during business hours when a suspicious package was found in one of the underground parking lots near one of the large concrete support pillars. False alarm, of course. The irony of that episode is this, however: who needs a fanatical Islamic extremist to show the need for constant awareness against criminal acts?

So, if politicians and authorities weren't too worried in times past, I think it would be safe to say that...

These days, the politics of terror undoubtedly instill terror into politics.

And, for many politicians, that *might* just be a good thing. . . at least cause them to start *really* earning their fat salaries, one hopes.

Mind you, as an aside, I don't think any politician should be paid a salary: essentially, they're on the dole, doing a job they must do because the voters elected them to office. Sure, they need the power to do what politicians must do; so let them have it. But instead of a salary, each elected official should have a special debit card for all expenses; and, every year, a special government department must audit all transactions. Think that suggestion will ever get off the ground? I can almost see you, and many others, shaking your head: not in this life, pilgrim.

Getting back to the war of terror, though (can't escape it anymore), some experts make a (good) case that we were all better off when The American Bloc faced off The Soviet Bloc in the Cold War of the twentieth century: at least, everybody knew where they stood with MAD – Mutually Assured Destruction. Only the occasional proxy war between the Not-So-Jolly Giants disturbed the status quo from time to time.

Times *have* changed. Now, some liken the current world to a spiraling chaos in progress, particularly with the constant threat of instant attack by extremists, anywhere; and, worsened by the continued Balkanization of the world, as ethnicity increasingly results in conflict and calls for independence. In part, it's come to this, I think:

With all the conflicts around the world, seems like the habit of force has assumed the force of habit.

That one's for the diehards, who don't seem to find it so hard to die after all, do they?

April

Autumn doldrums – the weather changing in spasms, as though it doesn't want to dive into the coming cold completely. It doesn't take much to make me feel cold now. I often say to Sherry: Let's move up to around Townsville or Cairns! Fully tropical clime where the cold never follows. Alas – Sherry won't go to an area where there is even a *hint* of hurricane or tropical cyclone...

On a practical level, it's probably not so easy these days to just pack up and go, especially when money is short – the bane of most people's lives, it seems, including ours. And, as I read about rising costs, it also seems that more people are living at the margins of society. So...

For many people, being marginalized is hardly living life at the edge – it is *really* just the edge of life for many.

Why do my bills always exceed the amount of my balance? That's probably a constant for most also, given the mounting debt people have on credit cards – and just getting worse.

The rest of this month was skimpy, chiasmically, having only a couple more. However, I see that I was actually experimenting with nested chiasmic constructions. Those that follow came to me after reading more about the abuses of power by American forces in Iraq:

Some people use the power of knowledge effectively whereas others effectively misuse the knowledge of power.

Moreover, power gets to some too much, just as surely as some get too much power.

Because most of us have read about the abuses, beginning in 2004, at Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad, I think I'm close to the mark with those opinions.

June

The month of May came and went without so much as a comma being written. Oh, I was busy with my online studies through Open Universities, but I failed to think of anything

new on the chiasmic front. Besides, May was birthday month again for me, so I took it easy.

Guess what: June was no different – for me. However, my daughter, Elena, came to me on the seventh with a doozy of a delicious and devastating chiasmic comment. Now, remember: by 2004, Elena was only ten (in May). This is what she handed me:

Death is a fear for some of us, while fear is a death for all of us!

Impressed? I hope so. I was left staring at that, mouth agape, as she walked away, back to her toys... And, look: all I've done is show her only *some* of my stuff, and ask her opinion.

And I thought *I* was passably good...

July

Anyway, on to July – which, like the previous two months, was light on chiasmus thinking.

Because, it wasn't until near the end of this month that I had a go at turning just a few letters around this time, within the same word, in an attempt to produce another scintillating piece of entertainment. So, it's not strictly a chiasmic expression – but it does work, thus:

Some advice for those who won't stop talking:

**A good conversationist
is one who is also
a good conservationist!**

Too much blah-blah always leaves me blah... because one should always know when to *stop* talking, don't you think?

August

Let me now just say a few more words about *patriotism*...

Some of you might know a famous quote, defining the word as “the last refuge of the scoundrel”. That's been variously attributed, with the finger pointing to Oscar Wilde, most of the time. It's the sort of sardonic comment one would expect from such a trenchant wit as he.

I suppose citizens of any country would, if pressed, call themselves patriots of their country. Why wouldn't they? I was born in Australia, but lived most of my life in other countries; now, however, I live in Queensland, as much another country to Australia as Texas is to the United States. In Queensland, they also do things differently – everybody here knows that. (Some muvvers do 'ave 'em, as somebody once said.)

Throughout my life, however, I've voiced my sincere disapproval of nationalism of any persuasion, national flags, jingoistic boosterism, the prostitution of sport for country and so on; you'll get bored if I go on too much. On the other hand, I sincerely believe that Australia is, for me, the best country on this planet in which to live; having visited many others, and lived in some, I think there is no substantive equal.

So, what does it truly mean to be a patriot? Serve the country, or just serve yourself?

Well - let me ask that chiastically:

Is patriotism when you mind the state, or is it just a state of mind?

Did you mind me asking? Or have I stepped on some patriotic toes? If so, I do sincerely apologize because I know that people in some countries – the United States being a prime example – regard the concept of patriotism *very* seriously. My intent here, however, is simply to provide a different, and perhaps new, perspective for those who may be stuck in a rut...

However, if I've gone too far with my commentary here, maybe I should take my own advice, thus:

When you say what's on your mind, you'd better mind what you say!

So true, of course. But, it's funny (peculiar), isn't it, how some will say: So, tell me what you *really* think! And then protest that they *don't* deserve what you tell them. . .

Oh, well, one guy who doesn't have the problem of saying what he thinks is good ol' Gdubya; his problem is, according to many, not being able to clearly state what he's saying a lot of the time. However, he's no slouch when it comes to restricting what others have to say, because...

While Gdubya is making abundant speeches about freedom in Iraq, he's increasing restrictions on freedom of speech in America. . .

Such irony! Free the citizens of one country while gagging the citizens of your own. And, it's not just in America also: even Australia has introduced draconian laws against freedom to say what you think (in addition to sedition and libel/slander laws already in place) post 9/11.

A friend of mine has, more than once, cautioned me (jokingly) about what I say sometimes because “walls have ears”. What’s ordinary life coming to, these days?

Well, running away won’t change anything, I know. No matter where you are in today’s world, there’ll be somebody listening, watching, analyzing and judging. To what end, though? As John Maynard Keynes said, back in the 1930s, in the long run, we’re all dead anyway. Cynical though it may be, it’s true; and which is just another way of saying this:

While few experience the life of a marathon runner, we’re all runners in the marathon of life.

And the great thing is: we *all* get there in the end! Oooops! Fuck it!

September

The Big Dry continues...

In August, we had the first light rain in four months! For this month, it remained dry again for the whole thirty days. Everybody’s hurting, especially the rural areas where, I’ve read, suicides are very much on the increase – mainly due to farming businesses going bankrupt (at least, that’s what is reported; I’m sure there are other reasons, though).

It’s a political thing here in Australia: the management and distribution of water for traditional Australian farming (sheep, dairy, wheat) versus commodity crops such as cotton, rice etc. Vested interests (speculators, investors, lobbyists) have, over many years, convinced state and federal governments to invest in the latter to the detriment of all – in my humble opinion. So...

Unhappily, the power of politics for the good of all often degenerates into just the politics of power... for all the good *that* does!

Take the power out of politics and what do you get? Those who should be charged with crimes against humanity, perhaps? Well, that’s a bit strong to say, I guess. But, across the land, too many rural families see personal tragedy every year.

On the other hand... there are some who continue to do handsomely, in the worst possible conditions for most people: war. Another newspaper story today chronicled the exploits of Halliburton – that scion of capitalist enterprise that has extracted obscene profits from the carnage in Iraq. Angrily, I scribbled in my diary:

Many experience the fortunes of war; only a few experience war to make fortunes.
(Would it be better if *everybody* made a killing in war?)

As I transcribed my concoction into my database, I realized I’m fortunate to have no experience, both ways. And by the way, I wondered, where and how did that expression

“fortunes of war” first come into language? Probably pointless to try to find out...

We learn what we know, of course – but we don't often know what we learn.

And...we hardly ever understand! Still, being an armchair philosopher, I like to think about how things start, where we're all going, what are the big questions and answers (if there *are* any answers) – much like anybody else who takes some time to stop and think. In today's world, that last is difficult sometimes, I know. And, thinking more on the above comment about learning and knowing, it should be clear, I think, that we all have our different ways of looking at the same thing, concept, situation etc. In short, each person's views (npi) on reality are different, are they not?

For me, also, there is a deeper issue, if not a puzzle: as much as the whole of each person's existence is real, it's also imaginary – simply because language has provided the ability to create the manner in which we all see so-called reality. And, that idea can be applied to *all* that is real as well as imaginary. For example, even though Sherlock Holmes is an imaginary character in books written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the author's famous character (plus all his others) is, nevertheless, real – as real as any imaginary idea I have in my head, at any time.

So, it's curious, isn't it: The real world is imaginary, while also real; and the imaginary world is real, while also imaginary.

At least, I hope it is what I *think* it is! Anyway, you'll probably be glad to know that I do try to avoid getting into such convoluted mental gyrations... But, when the opportunity arises, I tend to get carried away.

Talking of opportunities, though, brought to mind an article I read recently about the scale of diminishing jobs in various post-industrial countries (collectively, the West), just as there are countries in which job opportunities are on the rise (in China, India, for example). Long ago, for example, I traveled to the U.K. where I started my career in computers. People are still doing that sort of thing within many industries; and, it's likely to continue, given the requirements of encroaching globalization. Still, as an outsider coming in to London in the 1960s, I found out that...

The same opportunities for all don't mean that all have the same opportunities.

It just means, of course, that the inequalities are more prevalent, under certain conditions. Maybe that's another reason why Earls Court, in London, became a hotbed of Aussie angst and revelry?

October

Winter's gone, finally, for this year. By mid-month, it's been averaging 18-20 C at 6 a.m.; which means that, by mid-day, we're up in the high thirties. Lovely! I'm progressing well with my online studies at Griffith University – actually managing to achieve some Distinctions and High Distinctions; which is also great for me, but a bit surprising.

Hot weather, however, always tends to slow you down; which means, as the sweat increases with the heat, I'm less inclined to exert myself, preferring to sit in front of a fan and catch up on some movies. Sherry, on the other hand, prefers regular TV programming like NYPD Blue, Law and Order, CSI and other such pap for the masses; I kid her a lot about it, even as I recognize the value of some of it.

All fiction teaches us lessons – about a wide variety of issues and principles, as you know. In truth, we'd be lost without having stories to tell and being told stories, wouldn't we? But, there is truth for me...and then there is truth for you, and everyone else. And, that point comes across all too often – in real life and in fiction, because:

When considering the matter of truth for all, often the truth doesn't matter for some.

Well, ain't that the truth, especially when it relates to Law?

Getting back to those TV programs, though, I can't really get into them very much, any more, simply because they're so formulaic: each week, same old, same old. Why do people keep doing that – watching, basically, the same story almost every episode? Think of it: a murder, a body, the evidence, the trial, the complications, the surprises, the verdict, the sentence, etc etc. Something's missing, most of the time, I think: *originality*.

Anyway, on one occasion this month, I did watch a program with Sherry and was so annoyed with the story, I scribbled this on a piece of nearby paper:

In murder trials, does the body of evidence necessarily depend upon evidence of the body?

Jokingly, I also wrote: *If not, does the case have no body, hmmm?* And, no, it's not necessary to have a body to gain a conviction, as many actual cases have shown in the past.

My final effort this month came after another of those programs dwelt upon the time factor: always a crucial element, and especially when somebody is awaiting execution while an intrepid reporter or cop or investigator is trying to uncover the real truth. We all know it well, don't we? How often have you heard: Time is of the essence? So...

Time is of the essence – right! Right – but what is the essence of time?

November

The heat is ON! Between 05.30 and 6.00 a.m. each day, the temperature now varies between 20 and 22 C; by midday, it's got to 40, before slipping back to the high thirties. The fans are working hard – all seven of them, dotted around the house. The hum can get intrusive, I guess, but I just try to ignore it. And the heat. And sweat...

It's crunch time in the USA, of course, with Gdubya running for a second term. He's opposed by Senator John Kerry, a guy who doesn't impress me too much. To give Gdubya some due, he's generally open, cheerful, positive (perhaps unduly) and (unintentionally) screamingly funny, at times. In comparison, Kerry comes across as a dull, intense, plodding corporate suit who seems to be every bit the opportunist who's in the White House already. So, why change? The only thing going for Kerry, in my book, is his (now) opposition to the Iraq war.

He's got a fight on his hands, though, to win against Gdubya. After watching Kerry on Jim Lehrer's News Hour one day, I wrote:

**Idle musing by Presidential hopeful:
"I will fight for every vote, yes, but
should I vote for every fight?"**

Sometimes, though, it's a fight to just *get* a vote from many voters! The more I think about so-called democracies that *don't* require citizens to vote (as in USA and others), the more I realize the truth of that much-quoted adage: The people get the government they deserve.

That's not completely fair of me, though: in other countries where dictators, kings, and gangsters rule, this occurred to me:

Seems like in some countries, they're either fighting to vote or just voting to fight. . .

You might recall, also, that the election of Gdubya in 2000 was clouded by the fact that many voters, in a number of states (Florida comes to mind), were *actively* prevented from getting to polling booths on time. No matter how we cut it though, democracy is a mess for sure, but it's the best mess we've got.

See how time is a tyranny to which we subject ourselves? You must vote at a certain time; we often don't have time, we say; we try to avoid wasting time; we must be at work on time; but, we also try to take time off. And, worst of all, we try to kill time. I've got news for you, pilgrim...

We can't kill time – time kills us, already!

So, get it right, including the time. Now, what time do you have?

Well, it's time to stop the stupid war in Iraq, for one; and get back to the war that matters – the one in Afghanistan that most have forgotten about, except al-Qaeda and the Taliban, of course.

Because the news from Iraq about the US military action in Falluja isn't good, with some of the most brutal close-quarter conflict to date in Iraq. I tried to imagine what it would be like and what sort of thoughts might occur to participants and general population there. This thought kept recurring...

"Is the offensive at Falluja just, or is it just offensive?"

Well, like anything, that depends on whose side you are, I guess.

December

Hotter still...

As the month progressed, the temperature at 6 a.m. sat between 24-25 degrees C almost every day. By early afternoon, I registered 42-44 C on some days – some of the hottest I've experienced in Queensland. Anyway, on December 26, I wrote my only effort for the month (Christmas preparations got in the way, naturally). Here's what I said:

**As children, we're often not afraid when we should be;
while as adults, we're often afraid when we shouldn't be.**

I have no idea why I wrote that – I made no additional entry to help explain what I was thinking. Except, maybe, I was thinking how ignorance and fear do awful things to all of us as we grow.

Although, I filled almost a whole page about the catastrophic tsunami that ripped into the west coast of Sumatra with upwards of 250,000 people killed, maybe more. Maybe I was thinking of those people I saw, looking out to sea as the water receded prior to the massive waves to come? Having lived, long ago, in active earthquake zones in New Guinea, I'd seen, many times, how the sea retreated during a quake and then to return with a rush. So, I knew you must take action to get to high ground ASAP.

Pity the people who acted like children.

Out-takes

January 2004:

Don't confuse the art of philosophy with the philosophy of art!

It takes a real artist to get things confused.

Eventually you must take charge of things yourself before somebody has things to charge against you!

Too easy to get ripped off these days, yes?

Most often, politicians claim to be servants for the public good; instead, the public is often the servant for most politicians' goods!

Who pay the taxes that wind up in politicians' pockets?

Does Hugh Hefner just love to lust or simply lust for love?

Is that a question that most should ask of themselves?

March 2004:

Now, we all hope that God has time for us, but do we all have time for God?

But, was there not a time when God had no time, for anything?

April 2004:

A good database is not necessarily a base for data that's good!

Well, you know the old saying: garbage in, garbage out.

November 2004:

Base politicians, on a power trip, sometimes trip up their political power base.

Well, you can mess with toys, but when it comes to the boys...

Another great moment in dog philosophy:

First dog: "Hey, I hate this dog's life I lead. . .

Second dog: "Duh! It's the *owner* who leads the life of a dog, already!

So, who really is best in show?

2005

January

It's still summer, but you wouldn't know it: temperatures are lower this month, but humidity is up because of increased cloud cover. Despite the clouds, however, the rain came on only four days, and only lightly – most unusual because this time is supposed to be the wet season.

Iraq is still a mess. Seems like almost every day that suicide bombers cause havoc somewhere in that benighted country. Obviously, those types of extremists would not agree with this...

While some think the end always justifies the means, I think those means rarely end in justice.

Just any ol' means won't always end in means that are just, will they?

And...who gets most of the blowback, literally? The general population, the average family, the homeless, the poor – generally not the rich and comfy. The longer this Iraq war goes on, the longer the Iraqi people suffer. As always, it's the powerless, at the bottom, who suffer the most, because:

The poor, by definition, generally have a poverty of expectations, one of which is the expectation of poverty.

And, the reverse is also true.

March

February was marked by a complete dearth of chiastic creations. It's generally the most humid month because it usually rains the most over those twenty-eight days. Amazingly, however, the rain fell only on the last day, and only very lightly. To my knowledge, that's never happened before in this area. Part of the climate change scenario?

Anyway, I wasn't too hot or sweaty to offer the weather as an excuse for doing nothing chiasmically. However, I *was* busy with my online degree course through Griffith U: had to complete two long essays for two different units.

On a sad note, I marked the day that the great playwright, Arthur Miller, died: Thursday the tenth of February. He was eighty-nine. I'd seen some of his plays and movies, over the years. I always enjoyed them: *Death of a Salesman*, *The Crucible*, *The Misfits* (my all time favorite Miller story). What a career in literature he had – so full of life, and playing life to the full.

Maybe that's why, early in March, this occurred to me...

If you want to truly experience life, you must put some life into your experiences.
Drift along, though, and you'll just be a longtime drifting.

Talking of which – drifting, that is – brings me to one of my favorite rants (which I'll simply introduce briefly, so that I don't bore you): I'm one of those intolerant old fogies who'd like to stamp out all online *video* games! You know, the type that just circles a race track in cars or on bikes; or, in the ring, with boxing or martial arts; or, the inevitable shoot 'em up type of game where you blast away, willy-nilly, all and sundry. What a waste: of time, resources, money, oxygen, food etc. Need I go on? No, you've got the message. Oh, sorry, some say there *is* a benefit: better hand-eye co-ordination. Tennis, anyone? But, online chess – that's a whole different scenario, bro (although, I'd still much rather play across a table).

Anyway, it's why I wrote the following:

I might be a candidate for the funny farm when the level of life in my games exceeds the level of games in my life.

Sure, life is a game, in a real sense, when interacting with people. We all play it, because we must. But to carry on gaming with a video screen, *ad nauseam*...?

Sick-o, baby, *sick-o*!

What's also nauseous is the continuing carnage in Iraq – to which there is *still* no end in sight. Now, recall: the USA and others invaded that country, in April 2003, to bring Freedom and Democracy to the people of Iraq, the bread basket of the Middle East. Two years later – and we could be forgiven in thinking that it's now the basket case of that area. From what I read, the *only* place that has consistent power and fresh water is The Green Zone in Baghdad, fahchissake!

Some freedom, huh? And, where's democracy? Yet, I read of Iraqi citizens – usually officials – who are ecstatic about the defeat of Saddam Hussein and their chance at freedom. Rightly so, no question. But, all the while, the presence of American and other forces act as sober reminders that freedom always has a price. As I pondered the future for the common people there, I wrote a couple of things that might have been said by people there...

Comment by new Iraqi politician, 2005:

"We love the power of our freedom."

Response by US commander, still in Iraq:

"We love the freedom of our power"

What next? I wrote. Forever a client state of American hegemony – even if an elected government is *ever* installed? Too soon to say, of course. The only certainty, from my perspective, is this: the people there will continue to live in daily, abject fear for way too long a time.

Living comfortably in Australia, I cannot even begin to appreciate the damage being done to the Iraqi psyche. Moreover, there is little likelihood that I'll ever be subject to the same type of fear experienced by the Iraqis. It's a different matter for the citizens of the United States, however. Having been blasted once on 9/11, I can understand a degree of citizen skittishness about another blast. Yet, look around in U.S.A. today, and you won't find people wailing, wandering the streets (oh, except for the estimated half million homeless who do, in fact, wander about) and fearing another attack, as people do in Iraq.

No, what you'll find is simply a population generally glued to a computer screen, a TV or a cell phone while they consume the inevitable burger and Coke – thus continually adding to and encouraging the growing (npi) obesity problem. However, in the spirit of offering unwanted advice, I'd like to offer the following to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in the United States...

Suggested motto for DHS, USA:

"We will not live in fear and we will not fear to live."

Well, as President Roosevelt – Franklin Delano, that is – said: "...the only thing to fear is fear itself." Sure, that was in another context – during The Great Depression – but it's a valid message to all extremists now, I reckon.

April

A slight cooling for this month – down to 16C at 6 a.m. some mornings, but still warmish (18-20C) during the day. Like most people, I get eager to see and feel change. So, I'm looking forward to cooler weather – although, having experienced twenty years of North American winters, I can do without the white stuff for the rest of my life.

Two significant deaths occurred this month, the first being my dear Aunt Gwen, who died April 16 from the combined effects of cancer and old age; she was eighty-two, I think. A wonderfully ebullient person who had many children – thus, many cousins for me – and one who epitomized, it seemed, the idea that one should always "strive to be happy", as

the text of *Desiderata* so eloquently finishes with. However, like many Australians, she would sometimes (unjustly, in my view) rail against what she perceived as the laziness of the Australian aboriginal, coupled with many complaints about “too much being spent upon them”. Not the only ones, I thought, but I didn’t press the issue with her, especially during her last year. She’d made her mark with her nuclear and extended family, and is remembered with great fondness.

Not sure that I can accord the same, or even similar, to Pope John Paul II, who died on April 2. Having reached the stage in my life where I doubted the veracity of all religion and the very existence of any supreme entity, I neither felt sad nor happy; only indifference, perhaps, at his passing and the knowledge that *maybe* things will get better for those women (and men) who are still oppressed by some of the Catholic Church’s restrictions. Obviously, all depends on his successor, I thought.

Contemplating both lives, as I did, I wondered about the accuracy of my assessment of both – a person I knew to some extent, and one I knew only from news reports, magazines and books. Indeed, what can I make of anybody, given how difficult it is to communicate with and truly know another? What does that make of me? I toyed with those thoughts, and others, for while; and then I wrote...

You are what people make of you; and, you are what you make of people.

What does that make of *my* identity? I think I’m forever in a state of *becoming* after *having been*. I see that as much more than just a feature of the passage of time, even though, physiologically, I’m a different person second by second, as cells die, change, mutate and grow within me. Perhaps the sum of my knowledge and ideas, acquired with each passing second, represents the essence of my identity? From my perspective, I think that is so.

So, my identity changes over time. Yet, time is simply a theoretical construct for use on this planet we call Earth (a dumb name for a planet, in my opinion – Phoenix sounds a lot better to me); cosmologically, however, there is no reason at all to believe that time actually exists. Let’s face it: you really can’t grab the Present – it’s gone, baby, gone, before you know it – the Past is what you were before, and the Future is what you will be, in the next nanosecond.

I’d been going through these mental gyrations, on and off, for years actually. That prior chiastic construction got me going again. And, so I wonder if the following thought helps...

So, is the future always in the past, just as the past is always in the future?

Y’know – the more I think about it, the more I think it is *actually* correct; and I don’t mean in a categorically deterministic manner. Mentally groping around like this makes it all almost painful to think about it, though. And, we all have enough pain, don’t we, as it is?

As an aside, however, I think, in a perfect world, the whole issue of human relationships might be on much better ground if everybody maintained complete honesty between each other. Gasp! Maybe that would cause *too* much pain, perhaps? Yet, most of us are socialized to believe that honesty is the best policy...

I don't believe that anymore; in fact, I tossed it out years ago, I forget when. From my observations, the societal norm is judicious lying sprinkled with moments of *necessary* honesty. Conflict and pain – *sometimes* accord – arise when necessities clash. The strongest – however you wish to define 'strongest' – wins: a Darwinian perspective, without doubt. Some experience more pain; others more pleasure. And, quite often, pleasure at seeing pain in oneself or another: *schadenfreude* is a constant companion within the human psyche, I think. So, I ask...

Is the pain of seeing pleasure in others better or worse than the pleasure of seeing pain?

We all know some people are sadomasochistic; I'm not talking about such psychological aberrations. But who hasn't taken pleasure in seeing the pain of defeat in an opponent? And, who hasn't ever experienced emotional pain, however fleeting, at seeing another easily succeed at a task too difficult for yourself?

Live with it, I say; it lives within you.

May

Well, it's a bit cooler now, but this is unheard of: a freak hail storm – a meter deep – in Brisbane, just a few kilometers south from where I live made world-wide news on May 19. Never seen anything like that since I lived near Toronto, Canada; but, even the hail one day there wasn't *that* deep.

Apart from plugging on with my BA studies online, the only other event of note was a local meeting between some home-schooler families. While we continued to home-school our young ones, we've been trying to find some good contacts in the local area. Maybe our standards are too high? Because we can't seem to find any family with which to maintain contact and attempt some form of interaction for the kids. So, the meeting came to naught for us – again. Some people just tend to be a mite too abrasive or abrupt, know what I mean...

Which probably accounts for my chiastic reflection during the month:

For best relationships, common courtesy demands that courtesy is more than common.

That should be a measure of our commonality, wouldn't you say, when first meeting? So, I live and learn...once again.

The war – so called – in Afghanistan is apparently moribund; there is very little action just now, and not much news either. Looks to me like the Taliban are regrouping and rearming so that they can come back one year and win back what they lost. Who knows when, though?

Grunts from the US and NATO are still dying, however, in sporadic attacks – just making sure that we all know the Taliban still pose a deadly threat. The allied forces are firmly entrenched and occasional raids against the Taliban and al-Qaeda are being conducted.

Winning in that country will take a long time, I reckon; and it'll take a lot of friendly (and unfriendly) persuasion – not to say arm-twisting – by the US administration to get the Afghan government on track and fully on board with the plan – whatever it is.

Just how much pushing and shoving of the Afghans will be needed? When is it too much – or not enough? Karzai seems to be corrupt and/or ineffective. Maybe he needs to be replaced? Or, at least, being hauled up and dressed down?

But, when does the power of just persuasion become just the persuasion of power?

Is that a persuasive question?

June

June is the official start of winter in Australia. Having experienced North American winters for twenty years, I know what winter means. In Queensland, we don't have real winters: just weather that's slightly cooler and drier than the rest of the year. And, no, I won't bore you with clichéd, chiasitic machinations about 'weather', 'whether' and 'wether'.

That does, however, cause me to think again about how so much of language rhymes. Is there a language that contains no rhyming? That condition seems unlikely because poetry has been so much part of language for so long. Which inevitably, I think, results in the idea – perhaps even truism – that **the poetry of language is best experienced within the language of poetry**. Now, that *is* an obvious comment...

Or maybe just a great song? A novel can be poetic, of course, but in a different way.

Anyway, as I indicate at my website, all animals have some sort of language, with ours being the most complex, perhaps; and, arguably, the most powerful, in so many ways. Hence all politicians, particularly, should take note: **The power of language should not**

be subverted by the language of power. Is that just a faint hope? I suppose so, but politicians should learn to just shut up sometimes and do the right thing for the people who elect to elect them. It really bugs me that too many politicians get elected just to get a big pension down the road.

Even so, I'm not knocking government (as I've noted before). It's obviously a fundamental for modern society's survival, in all its flavors, democratic or otherwise. I note that my father once said to me that the perfect form of government is a dictatorship; at fifteen, I nodded my head. Only much later did I realize that **under dictatorship, the people are the property of the state; whereas, under democracy, the state is the property of the people.**

Or is it? Maybe the state is now the property of the modern corporate conglomerate? So, it's really okay, after all, to be a man of property, I guess? Gotta love it, I suppose...

Speaking of which, it occurred to me that love is, among other things, just another four letter word. How *can* I just reduce such a beautiful concept to the level of work, piss, shit, fuck and cunt? There is a connection with all four, though, is there not? Another four letter word: life. But, there's the rub, to grab a well-known saying: **Life doesn't always produce love, but arguably, love always produces life.**

Where would we be without love? So, I guess it's the best four letter word there is. Hmm, so how many four letter words are there, I wonder? Another project for the backburner I suppose, if I can ever devote the time to do it. At my age, regrettably, I might not have enough though...

And which segues nicely into my final chiasmic comment for the month: **I live to regret much, I know; but also, I know I never regret to live.**

So, grab your life and have it too! My final written note for the month: Doctor's orders: No cheese and eggs as from June 15! Bit late to start, huh? Gotta watch that cholesterol...

July

London hit by its own version of 9/11: young, home-grown terrorists with al-Qaeda affiliation detonate bombs on four Tube trains and on one London bus. July 7 is the date – 37 dead, 700 wounded, at first count.

There is only one certainty from my perspective: it won't end for the foreseeable future. There is generally no negotiation with those sorts of terrorists: kill them or put them in prison, forever.

How did those young men hide the truth of their actions from their families? It is amazing to me that they could carry on living with or close to their families without revealing their

plans – which means they were all lying through their teeth, for a long time; and they were good at it, or few were taking any notice. In time, we *might* find out.

That whole episode made me think more about the word ‘lie’ and its two distinct meanings: to rest on a bed, for example, and to tell a falsehood, something that’s not true.

One thing leads to another, as we know, and soon I was thinking about male-female relationships – a perennial topic, of course. Let me see if I can play around with those meanings, I thought, and come up with something for this month. After thinking a while, I came up with a blank. But later, as I went to have a rest after lunch one day, it hit me:

A man lies with a woman while lying to her, often; a woman, however, often lies to a man to avoid lying with him. . .

I wrote in the diary: The great lie?? As I look at it, I realize that’s an unintended pun. My, my – how the mind works, I thought.

But, we all do it, don’t we? Even if we don’t want to, sometimes, right? Which – you guessed it – led me to concoct this:

Doing what you want may be good for some; but *wanting* what you do is better.

So, better do it right, too, whatever it is – very first time, eh! Oh, I *wish*...

August

You’ve probably noticed that my chiastic contribution in July was paltry when compared to previous months and years. Getting old, drying up, losing synapses, I suppose. My only hope now is that my penchant for creating chiastic confabulations – couldn’t resist that alliteration – will not disappear completely.

What I noted also, during this month is that, for the first time, a swelling appeared on the left side of my neck near the jaw. It was quite large, and easily seen. It occurred a few times, and then receded after less than a half-hour. And, there was no pain, only a distinct discomforting feeling, like a stone in your sock. I made a note – I’m reading it now – to “see the doctor if it gets worse or too annoying.”

So, I guess I might need to do that; if things do get worse, then I’ll *want* to go to see him. But, as I thought about that, it then occurred to me that: **Doing what you want is not always the same as wanting what you do. . .**

Now, is that self-referential, I wonder? Well, depends on perspective I suppose. And, as I already noted, I might be getting old and dotty, as I continue to question the status of my mind.

In the mirror, I can see a weather-beaten exterior enclosing a screaming child wanting to get out. Well, that's what I like to think. So, I don't bother with mirrors much anymore. But...

When young, I poured over my youthful reflection in the mirror; now older, I find the mirror is a poor reflection of my youth.

But, I hesitate to break the mirror. There's just *no* accounting for stupid superstition.

September

The not-so-swell swelling appeared again a few times in this month. Quite annoying but still no pain: can't be serious then, can it? I wrote. Look on the bright side, anyway: winter is behind us all – bring on the heat, yeah!

Much of the month – aside from my chiastic ramblings – was taken up with the burgeoning issue of mobile/cell phones on aircraft. My position is this: when on aircraft, passengers should be seen and not heard – unless they're in need of medical help. I include myself in that global group. Phone rage is already problematic on trains and buses; it's not yet on planes, but it will be unless the public knows. So, after completing some online research, I sent a letter to Motorola, Nokia and Vodaphone to ask for details about the plan to introduce usage on aircraft. As expected, I received no replies. Was it arrogant of me to even *think* I could get a reply?

I filed all the information I had collected and made a note to keep track of any news about the whole, stupid plan. But, I thought: this is what powerful organizations can do, and get away with.

And, there below my notes about sending the letter on September 28, I scrawled: **Love is always powerful but power is rarely lovable.** A few lines lower, I had this: Unhappily, **the power of love is often subverted by the love of power. . .**

Banging on all cylinders, at least for a few minutes.

But that must have got me thinking more about power and how it operates and what it does to people and institutions. For example, when just a young, ignorant teen, I thought it was great to consider philosophical concepts like freedom and equality, not realizing they are mutually exclusive conditions.

That paradox returned later in the month when I wrote: **When I think about it, it seems like freedom doesn't result in equality for all, and equality doesn't result in freedom for all.**

So, I guess it depends on how freedom and equality are defiled. . .er, sorry, *defined*! Well, the growth of world trade has helped in both cases, opening up markets and so on, even as the effects of terrorist attacks tend to slow things down – the airline business for one. And, I keep hearing/reading about people who are against globalization, the natural result of international trade. Bringing all of that together later, I wrote:

Just as some dread the globalization of terror, others dread the terror of globalization.

Terror of globalization? Why not? Terror is global; the effects of globalization can be terrible. So, which is worse?

Enough from me for this month. Let me share some input from a contributor: Avi Tanners who sent an email with this:

"Well, it's a bit risqué, but it does fit the criteria of a chiasitic quote, so here goes: Back in college, I noticed someone had written the caption "Sexual Innuendo Week" on their dry-erase board. So I wrote:

Sexual innuendo, huh? **Nothing comes to mind...or was that nothing minds to come?"**

I emailed back, telling Avi that I wasn't sure whether I could include it, but I'd keep it in mind...ahem!

Avi wrote back: "No worries; I kind of figured that would be the case. I'll be thinking up others in the future; that was the only one off the top of my head. Thanks for the information – I've always been interested in those phrases, but never knew what to call them until I read your webpages. Keep up the good work!

Adverbally yours,
Avi"

Many thanks to you, Avi, for your input and encouragement. And, well, now, as all readers know, by now, during the process of editing and compiling this diary, I finally decided to publish all the 'naughty' chiasitic commentary I'd developed.

October

My efforts this month are somewhat better - but, somewhat cryptic, too. For some reason, also, I was concentrating on the topics of life and love – again. As if I haven't said enough about them already...shoot!

Quite frankly, I like to laugh a lot; in fact, I tell my kids that my prime job is to *make* them laugh. As *The Reader's Digest* taught me in my youth: Laughter is the Best Medicine (just recently, I read a newspaper article which detailed actual medical experiments with laughter on patients; there appeared to be medical improvements that were statistically significant). But, laughter can hide a lot of things, too, mostly about oneself, I think: so...

If they say you laugh too much about life, maybe *your* life's not too much to laugh about? Laughter *is* the best medicine, yes, but gotta watch for those overdoses, yes? To avoid hiccups, if nothing else...

As a kid growing up, I'd be in fits of laughter about the many cats and kittens my mother accumulated (at one stage I recall fifteen cats of various sizes from newborn to grumpy old male). Maybe that's where it all started, I remember it so well, because most of us (my brothers and sisters) chipped in to play with them and watch their antics.

That's why I produced this thought:

Chasing after a good pet is very much a labor of love; petting after a good chase is, arguably, a love of labor. . . The chase is always on, I guess. . .so, on with the chase!

As I finished, I grinned, realizing that I'd constructed a thought that could be understood in sexual terms, as much as something less stressful – like playing around with kittens.

Getting on towards the end of the month, I guess I was in a more contemplative mood about life, love and death (as we get older, those things do seem to intrude more often).

If everybody has a love of life only some have a life of love. Sad and true.

Surely, a love of death necessarily means the death of love? Some say that death is but another stage in life, and hence there *is* love after death. . . I don't believe that anymore, though.

On more mundane issues, and while getting towards month end, Sherry and I usually go over the state of our finances. Getting more difficult to make ends meet, of course. But, I console myself – and Sherry – that we're a bit better off than others. But still...

Living within your means is hard for some; having the means for your living is harder for many, though. Life wasn't meant to be easy – except for the filthy rich, perhaps?

I ended the month in some pain – I was bitten by a spider or ant on September 27, resulting a large swelling on my right foot. It was like the proverbial red-hot needle, as the cliché goes. Swelling lasted four days! And damned if I could think of something chiasitic to fit...

November

Peak oil is big in the news this month: we're running out, according to many 'experts' and those 'in the know'. As I can't do anything about it (like most other things), I won't worry: I'll be dead, anyway, before it becomes a big issue for me. Who can you believe when it comes to the future? Whatever: conventional wisdom grows and snows on some. But...

Would conventional wisdom posit there's not much wisdom in the conventional?

Well, certainly not at conventions, that's for sure – if you've been to any conventions, that is. I did attend a few in my time – most of them a waste, for sure.

Speaking of time, it has occurred to me that it's quite possible – maybe even probable – we've all been conned about it. Although we all pay homage to it, have you ever wondered whether it *actually* exists?

Not long ago, it came to me – via my readings, not from any innate knowledge or insight upon my part – that time on this earth is simply a theoretical construct to help us make sense of our planet and local solar environment. How else could we get to work on time?

Thinking and reading further, however, it became clear to me – via some philosopher/physicists – that the question of cosmic Time is problematic, to say the least. Why, for example, should a concept of Time exist at all? To be sure, Change exists because we see evidence of it. Has anybody actually seen Time, however? Can anybody even point to the Present, seeing as how the Present barely exists for a nanosecond? And, leaving us just with the Past and the Future? Fascinating, is it not?

Well, then, you won't be surprised or puzzled by this claim:

As is well-known, time is of the essence; but the essence of Time is unknown. (That's a variation of a question I posed back in October, 2004.)

From now on, I don't accept there *must* be some kind of cosmic clock. There is, only, just a construct by humans as a convenient mathematical and physical tool.

So, I think it's time somebody got that right, don't you think? I've tried to do so – humorously and philosophically – with articles I written which are online for you to read, if you wish. Just go to your search engine and type in this: Time +“Roger J. Burke”. You should find my efforts, and other stuff of mine, on the first page of those search results.

December

Déjà vu! It's that time again...

Just at this time, there was local news of political corruption. Not for the first time, in this

area, too. So, what else is new? I thought. Prostitutes were involved, also. Oh, dear – can there be *more*? Does anybody really care. Well, when I finished the story, I got out a piece of paper and wrote:

Public corruption certainly involves the prostitution of politics and often the politics of prostitution.

So, they get ya, body and soul, huh? It's a wonder to me that anything actually gets done in government! Aaah – but all the real work is done by government bureaucrats and workers, anyway, not the pollies... I feel better now!

Mulling further about the whole issue of truth and human relationships, a few days later, I finally came up with something that pretty much describes what I've seen all too often:

When it comes to relationships, some people help to pretend while others simply pretend to help.

Which, to me, only means there is too much pretense, and not enough help most of the time. Is that too cynical? Anyway...

Happy New Year for 2006!

Out-takes

March 2005:

The Gardner's Lament:

"Am I just a life in a plot, or is there a plot in my life?"

Maybe he's just lost the plot?

June 2005:

I should always love to live and I should always live to love.

Can't see anything wrong with that, I reckon.

July 2005:

Happiness: Doing what you want.

Heaven: Wanting what you do.

Any idea what Hell is?

September 2005:

Peace for one day is another day that's won peace.

Man, I'd like a piece of that!

October 2005:

Life's meaningless for some but some meanings are lifeless for others. . .

So, where to from here?

December 2005:

Good conversation is when I get to better know those who know better than I. . .

Getting better at learning and learning to be better, hmmm!

The artist's lament, perhaps:

"Do I succeed where others fail, or do I fail where others succeed?"

Know yourself, then?

2006

January

A new year – or just another year? I shouldn't sound so cynical, I guess; but, as life progresses, one of the looming features is the ever decreasing amount of time available. When you're approaching seventy, it seems to matter more than when one is seventeen.

I was in that sort of mood when I wrote this, somewhere around January 3rd:

A life of good living doesn't always mean you're living a good life.

Well, whether or not I'm part of *la dolce vita*, a week later I guess I had a rethink about things and wrote this:

You gotta deal with life before life deals with you!

I shouldn't reify a concept such as 'life' I suppose, simply because it's beyond individual control; naturally, it's what I *do* what matters, regardless of what the deal is at the outset. Trouble is, I've never been sure that what I've been doing with my life is of great matter to anybody except myself.

Maybe that's all I can do anyway? So, take my advice and... No! Don't do *that* – take advice, that is – willy-nilly; think about this instead:

Learn to take advice when *necessary*, but also – learn when it's necessary *not* to take it.

I haven't learnt to take my own yet. . .well, not fully. Who ever does, anyway?

On to other issues – like the mess in Iraq, where the recent elections are still coming to conclusion. Okay, so it's an important part of the Iraqi scene and one that should be applauded (well, the Bush administration has at least got a government of sorts elected), but I can't help wondering about this:

Has democracy brought about fundamental change or merely a change in the fundamentals of democracy?

Considering the political infighting and the behind-the-scene deals I read about, you have

to wonder about it all. Still, those sorts of shenanigans occur in so-called mature democracies, don't they? Would Winston Churchill be turning in his grave about the Iraq elections? I don't think so...

February

Stinking hot and humid for a lot of this month – in the high 30s temperature-wise and over 80% humidity at most times. Still, I'd rather that than shoveling snow in February – as I did when living in Canada with occasional frozen batteries or carburetors, it got so cold. Never again, pilgrim, *never* again will I live in frigid conditions for an extended period. The most I'll do is take Sherry to the Snowy Mountains, which straddle New South Wales and Victoria, for a short stay – just so that she can say she's been there (I went long ago when I was sixteen)

Apologies to any Canadians (and others in similar conditions) who might be reading this; I don't mean to offend, truly.

Later, I was thinking about those who say sorry and mean it, and then those who obviously don't – resulting in this:

Some are sorry and may even mean it; but others may be mean even when they're sorry!

Like when somebody spills coffee 'accidentally' over you newspaper, and effusively apologizes – which got me further thinking about good, bad, and so on. I don't know much about philosophy but I do know that Friedrich Nietzsche wrote something about being beyond good and evil. I haven't read it (hey, there are just so many books to read, already) but I think he might have some affinity with Darwin's theory about evolution: in nature, of course, the whole concept of good and evil has no place, no meaning at all. In short, nature has no morals: it has only events that occur, some of which create life, others destroy it.

Still, we are more than just part of nature: we're in the process of changing it, aren't we? So, what we do, does matter. Some things are good for life and progress; others (e.g. wars, disease etc) are not so good. Hence, if you want to be remembered by others in a positive sense, I'd suggest this:

The legacy of a good person is any person who leaves a good legacy.

Well, okay – that doesn't provide anything that's philosophically deep, but it's a true statement in this context; actually, I guess it's a tautology (that's another way of saying 'useless repetition'). But, that's rhetoric, no? Unhappily, however, it leaves open the question of how to define 'good', an aspect that can be distorted to serve Orwellian needs, perhaps. Mind you, I could simply replace 'good' with 'bad' in the above thought. Would that help, I wonder?

Well, that just goes to show that:

Some questions have many answers – but then some answers still have many questions.

Which raises another thought: If there is no final answer, is there no final question?

March

My thoughts about growing old persisted into this month. I suppose I should watch out that I don't get depressed about it – any more than I already am! Anyway, I did try to put a humorous (sort of) spin on it with this:

Some people get old *and* pretty; others just get pretty old. . .

But, most of us probably just think we're as young (or old) as we think we are. All depends on one's point of view, of course. But, others around you can make a difference. Psychological testing has proved that.

I note that I sent in another of my third year assignments for my degree course through Open Universities. Progress – slow but steady; that's the ticket. I'll get there in the end – sometime in 2007, if there are no hiccups.

There's another kind of progress I could mention here, to do with a continuation of the rake's sexual progress:

"All the time I'm seeking the thrill of love, I love the thrill of seeking. . ."

Y'know, those type of guys must have a high frustration level, sometimes – maybe often?

I used to see a lot of those types during my corporate existence (it's *not* a life, okay!), always chasing tail, always on the make. I remember a real comedian – a Scot – who made fun of himself as he ogled almost every woman in the office. And, this guy was married – so I guess he could get away with it when he made certain all the woman knew about his antics.

For some though, corporate meetings, as a consequence, often degenerated into character assassination of female employees (probably still do). And that's why I wrote this thought – years after my demise as a corporate suit:

Definition of a corporate meeting: **A place where there's an awful lot of talking, and a lot of awful talking.** Too much of anything is not a good thing, as mentioned earlier.

(As an aside, *you* could play around with that type of chiasmic construction, using 'an

awful lot of' and 'a lot of awful', to generate your own thoughts about your own perspectives. For example, at a swimming carnival, it might occur to you that **there's an awful lot of swimming here, and a lot of awful swimming!** Truly, there are many possibilities with that set of words. What about a dance or singing contest?)

One thing, however, became clear as a result of my corporate years: **As a matter of fact, facts do matter!** Forget about truth and just stick to the facts, hmmm?

April

Cooler now, temperature hovering around twenty by mid-day. Humidity way down to the bearable level also. Happy days!

Well, not quite. I see that I sent in some articles to NY Times and to Washington Post – oped pieces, in fact. Didn't even get a response from the former, but a Post editor emailed back and asked me to make a modification and send it back – which I did. Unhappily for me, he emailed again a few days later to tell me that it wouldn't fly after all. Bugger it, I thought. Ah, well – press on to other matters.

As you know, I like to construct chiasmic jokes, if I can; next best is fictional (but *possible*) conversation, between real people that is contextually accurate. Consider this:

Great moments in history #22:

Queen Elizabeth and William Shakespeare are in conversation. . .

Liz: "I just love the poetry of pageantry!"

Bill: "I prefer the pageantry of poetry. . ."

It fits the people and the age, I think. Oh, I forget what the other 21 great moments are.

And so, carrying on the line of thought, what about the cop who is investigating a murder, thus...

Baffled cop, when viewing the wrong corpse:

"This body of evidence clearly lacks evidence of the correct body."

A bit pun-ish, I suppose, but I can imagine it as a piece of dialog in a detective spoof with Chevy Chase, for example, or in a Get Smart episode.

May

Iraq and Afghanistan still flooding the news: more suicide bombers, especially in Baghdad and more coalition troops killed. Mustn't forget the civilian population which

has suffered terribly throughout the whole war. Like all the kids, who get limbs blown off from mines and unexploded ordnance. Makes me sick to think about it, even as I write the following:

In war, many have a chance at fighting, while others have just a fighting chance.

Not much of a chance, though, to do much except try to survive. When will the agony end for the Iraq people?

My birthday again this month, just to depress me even more. Looking on the bright side, however, it does mean I've survived long enough to see another birthday! Am I beginning to sound a bit like Woody Allen (my favorite comedy writer and director)?

Back to work...

While still on the topic of war and peace in the Middle East, I'd like to give all peace-makers a boost:

Those who work for peace are great; and they do a great piece of work!

Keep it going, wherever you are: you're the never-ending toilers – and that grates with the spoilers!

Moving towards the end of the month, I must have been reading a book I liked, but I can't recall which one it might have been. But, there on the page, I wrote:

A book that reads well should be well read.

Does that apply to all books? Maybe only some books qualify? Like, for instance, I had a copy of *Mein Kampf* at one time. It's an historically important work and should be read by scholars and historians, at least. I, however, was interested simply to find out just how well it read for me. Well, it didn't long to find out that it was very tough going: full of tiresome, dull politics, flowery language, outrageous claims, and so on – as you might expect. Worse – for me, it was boring to read with not a shred of humor or witticisms. Finally, when it started to send me to sleep one evening, I gave up.

(Just quietly, I do hope that I'm not doing to you what that book did to me.)

Game over, I said to myself; so I put it up for auction on eBay and made a few bucks.

And, well, while I'm sprouting on about weighty topics here, I may as well let you have this one:

God's work on earth is often a knot for mankind; unhappily, mankind's work on earth is often not for God. . .

Now, although I don't believe anymore in God, I guess the last part would apply to the likes of Hitler and others like him – regardless of the God question.

June

The so-called war on terror grinds on and on. I made a note that the Bush administration continues to waste money and troops in Iraq and Afghanistan – just this month, another sixty-six billion has been allocated to fight 'the good fight', as so many think of it. I've actually been keeping a loose track on the totals each year and, since the whole mess started soon after 9/11, I reckon the Yanks have spent the best part of a trillion dollars in those two countries so far. And, to no lasting end...

Moreover, when you add in the actual and ongoing costs incurred after the attack on the Twin Towers – reckoned to be another trillion dollars – the YTD total cost of the entire process is pushing two trillion!

Despite all that expense and agony, both Right and Left in USA are still committed to the current course and cause. Or are they? Both sides must make compromises to face the common enemy, I guess; but there are rumblings of opposition as it just drags on and on.

And so, this is what happens:

As the political spectrum converges, there's not much left in the Right wing just as there's not much right in the Left!

The Pentagon will still run its war games, though – simulated and actual. I wonder if some of those types are gamers in World of Warcraft, as are a couple of my sons? Nothing wrong with games per se; but, we must remember that...

War is never a game and a game should *never* be a war.

The major outcome of war is death; that's always a certainty, one of the very few we have in life. However, as I followed this line of thought, it presented a nice turn of chiasmic creativity:

The certainty of death in life is in opposition to any certainty of life in death.

No doubt those who have the faith will disagree.

July

Much cooler now in the mornings; and morning walks are more bracing and invigorating, making me feel more alive. Well, gotta walk more quickly to work up a bit of steam, of course. And, deep down in my rat-brain somewhere, I think I have a horror of inactivity:

in short, I like to get things *done*, and that's why I live each day with a routine of sorts, instead of just drifting (as I used to do when younger).

I was thinking on the topic as I trudged, wondering, as I often do, about time and how to use it – or misuse it (and once again, tacitly accepting that it *does* exist, on this planet) – and trying to see the lazy person's perspective. So, I couldn't help chuckling when this thought just popped into my brain...

Lazy Man's Motto:

"There's no time to waste when you're wasting time!"

That's a logical conundrum, as much as it is a truism, and all within a chiasmic construction, albeit imperfect. Occasionally, I'll murmur that as I pass by one of my kids playing WoW. Completely lost on *them*, of course, as they give me a funny look. But, I feel better.

Though I shouldn't worry about them wasting their efforts on computer games: I played other types of games, after all, some of them quite dangerous (for example, an older brother and I actually constructed a small cannon to fire steel ball bearings, using what was called a double-bunger, a type of firework in the 1950s). The difference, however, is that there was always a specific time when a game had to end, when I had to get back home, have dinner, do a wash-up, do homework and so on. All part of life, growing up and so forth...

With the ubiquitous nature of the internet, however, it seems...

For some, it's like the game of life is more like a life of games.

I should couch that more directly, I guess: **the game of life should never be just a life of games!**

The really annoying part for me is that young – and not *only* young – people become so engrossed that social niceties and norms become just *too* much trouble. No, the world is not coming to end thereby, but such attitudes are quite *flagrant* or *blatant*. Don't you think, sometimes?

To appreciate the difference between the meanings of those two adjectives, this will help, I hope:

Something that is flagrant is conspicuously offensive, while something that is blatant is offensively conspicuous. . .

Now, I saw that juicy construction in a column written by one of my favorite writers at The Chicago-Sun Times. I sent an email, asking if he'd like to have it included in this volume, and received his welcome reply; although, oddly I thought, he said not to bother about attributing it to him. Maybe he saw it somewhere else? *Should* I care?

Anyway, all of the foregoing probably helped me to construct this self-referential thought soon after:

Is philosophy the art of asking questions to get the right answers or the art of proving answers to stimulate the right questions?

Perhaps that's a reworking of one of my earlier constructions (from years ago) I'll throw in here: **Do I question the answer, or answer the question?**

Towards the end of the month, I had to go to Brisbane CBD and fight the morning traffic jams, something I'd left behind me when I used to commute in Toronto, Canada. After inching forward too slowly at a heavy spot, I thought, sourly...

While I just rush to live each morning, I don't just live for each morning rush. . .

And, I used to think it was something I just *had* to do. Yeech!

August

Not much doing this month, except to note that the early morning temperature is now getting over ten degrees Celsius. I can handle that.

Finished another assignment for my current unit through MacQuarie University – on the Philosophy of Cinema. I'm learning a lot, especially how the camera lies – or tells the truth, depending on your perspective.

That got me thinking again, as other things have before, about truth and lies. Can't leave it alone, can I? Mainly because it's so difficult to separate the two because no two people have the same reality, as I've mentioned before. Oh, I'm not going to solve anything here: my task is simply to play with words and ideas, like this...

Is it better to know the truth of the lies about myself or the lies about the truth?

Either way, I wonder which tack would provide the reality about oneself. And therein lies the truth???. There again, I could say this, I suppose:

In all matters, the lies about the truth are obviously where the truth really lies.

So, where the truth lies, lies the truth!

Hope you get a good chuckle, if not a belly laugh, out of those.

October

I guess I was on the track of something here, but probably I was just ruminating about the

inevitable end we all face, despite our best attempts to ignore it. It's a pain, I know, but there you have it, a silver lining, perhaps:

The pain of death simply foreshadows the death of pain.

And, let's face it: the thought of death is a real pain in the posterior. Or somewhere...

November

Getting warmer now; and bloody humid too. Add in some severe storms, and this month wasn't much to write home about. One thing about rain, though: it's nice to listen to at night as you drop off into dreary dreams. Do you feel the same way?

Anyway, received some feedback from Timothy Lambert, somewhere out there in this wide world, who sent in a chiasmic comment on the seventh:

"Failing to train is training to fail."

I particularly like this form of chiasmic construction: short and pithy. An excellent effort, Timothy Lambert, and not one that I'd thought of at all. So, your free copy of this volume should be with you now. Hope you enjoy.

Moving on to some other thoughts of mine, for this month...

I harp on truth and lies. We all do both fairly often, I'd say. I know that, as a boy, my dad caught me out many times with my outrageous lies, as much I tried, and failed, to live up to the golden rule. Only much later, when much older, did I realize that the golden rule is, well, for kids: adults learn to lie while appearing to tell the truth. In fact, I think that, as already mentioned, everybody tells lies most of the time – mainly to conform with societal expectations and perhaps to protect those around us; and also for self-protection, of course. These are white lies, generally; for example when telling somebody that s/he looks great in the morning when the opposite is the objective fact.

It's the different meanings of 'lie', 'lies' and 'lying', however, that open a lot of opportunity for chiasmic rumination.

Consider this:

Is it true to say: Where love still lies, lies love, still?

If you think about two basic meanings for 'lies' – telling untruths or residing within – then there is no doubt about what that says. Take the first meaning, however, for the first instance and something else happens, and uncertainty is present.

There again, what if I change the arrangement of the last three words, and remove the comma, to this: **...lies still love?** Note the subtle change in meaning that's now possible for the word 'still' – dead, inert, without substance.

A few days later, there was another news item about a corrupt politician (an all-too-common thing, no?) dipping into travel allowances. Shaking my head once again, I penned:

All politicians are liars; thank goodness all liars are not politicians. . .

But, as I've already implicitly suggested above, I know I must be resigned to half-truths most of the time. Sad, isn't it?

Anyway...only late in the month, did I get back to further chiastic thoughts with this:

In the dot-com world, when is a start-up just an up-start?

It's a thought that applies to other businesses, of course, but I think I must have come across a new, but less-than-satisfactory website when I wrote that – it's just sitting on the page, all alone, with no accompanying notes. I guess I was in a hurry...

December

But *not* in a hurry for Christmas, as you would know, by now. Christmas has lost all meaning for me and many others; now it's just a moronic, shopping frenzy.

In times past, we'd send cards and even letters by real post, to family and friends whom we hadn't seen or talked to during the years. Now, with the Internet, it's all email and Yahoo and stuff like that, plus mobile phones and texting. So, while it was while thinking about writing, I guess, that I paused to write this down:

I write what I like but I don't always like what I write!

That's especially true when trying to compress a whole year into a few lines: can't do it well, at all. While on that type of chiastic construction – using the word 'like' – a couple of others occurred to me:

I say what I like, but people often don't like what I say. . .

So, I'll never be a politician, I suppose. Not that I'd ever want to be, anyway. Moving right along, I then wrote this:

I eat what I like, but I don't always like what I eat.

Not everyone has that choice, huh? Especially the destitute in our societies, and especially in Third World countries.

Seven days later, on the fourteenth, lam (no surname given) – from Italy, I think – sent in a doozey:

"Youth has teeth but no bread; old age has the bread but no teeth."

There are three aspects about it that I like: first, there is a subtle play on the meaning of 'bread' – it could mean real food, or it could mean money. I prefer the latter meaning; and I reckon other readers would also. Second, there's the use of 'teeth', either as the real McCoy, or as a euphemism for strength and endurance. And finally, it's all adroitly wrapped within a context that makes literal sense.

Much appreciated, lam, for your input; your free copy of this volume should be with you also.

Anyway, getting back to the word 'like', I could go on and on, I guess, and even get into the lecherous side of things...

Consider, for example, men (or women) who are obsessed with sex. A well-known celebrity like Warren Beatty, a long-time Hollywood actor and producer, had a reputation for his sexual prowess with many hundreds of women; Jack Kennedy also was well-known for his inability to stop running after and bedding many famous women. Both, perhaps, would well understand this thought:

I fuck who I like, but I don't always like who I fuck.

Y'know, I just realized: that works metaphorically as well as literally!

Too much of anything is bad – even oxygen or water. And sex. So what advice do I have now for those who take in too much food? Try this thought:

When dieting, the object is to lose weight and gain money, not gain weight and lose money.

Especially when thinking about buying pizza, right! I hate the damn stuff, thank goodness...

Happy Holidays! Happy New Year!

Out-takes

January 2006:

Two views of the cosmos:

**Some say seeing is believing;
but others say believing is seeing. . .**

But, my beliefs are often all at sea. . . how are yours?

March 2006:

When political issues run the party on fear, eventually the fear causes the party to run from those issues.

"There is nothing to fear but fear itself" Remember that one?

June 2006:

The practice of positive thinking turns thinking into a positive practice.

Duh!

Reality TV is getting to be like awful fiction; fictional TV is getting to be like awful reality.

Who's gonna tell the difference soon?

July 2006:

The meaning of life is to live a life of meaning.

Know what I mean?

Cops know the power of their reach; gangsters know the reach of their power.

Two sides of the same coin? The perfect symbiotic relationship?

August 2006:

Tomorrow never comes, it is said; but, eventually, everything comes tomorrow...

And just when you don't want it!

November 2006

If you fail to vote then, by default, you vote to fail.

But, don't throw your vote away. . .hmmm, mmmm. No, no, hang on – that should be 'love', not 'vote'.

2007

January

On the home stretch, finally! With my BA (Literature and Composition), that is: I sent in my final assignment for my final unit this month. And was I surprised when I received an email from Open Universities urging me to apply for a scholarship? Well, yes, I was: because although I thought I'd done well over the last three years, I didn't think my record (a couple of Credits, an equal number of Distinctions and High Distinctions) would rank against more diligent – and probably much younger – students.

Realistically, even if I'd had a truly outstanding record, it makes more financial and societal sense to award scholarships to the younger set, simply because a twenty or thirty-something has more time ahead than a sixty-plus-something, like me.

Or, am I simply rationalizing? Whatever the truth was, it's not as bad as The Law, I thought because in law, **the truth of the matter is often that the matter of truth just doesn't matter. . .**

Sad but true, I mused. And, here's another thing that doesn't matter, or so it seems: **fighting for freedom never results in freedom from fighting!**

I'd been reading some of the headlines about the ongoing mess in Iraq and, of course, Afghanistan – which, you may have noted, is beginning to 'wake up' to more fighting. I think I can safely say that, now that Iraq has been 'liberated' and is on the road to full democracy, things are just going to get worse in far-off Afghanistan. The guys at the Pentagon don't seem to know that, do they? Or, *do* they?

But, in our so-called free countries, I never thought much about freedom until my teeth started to fall out, know what I mean? And, no: I don't mean when I was in short pants and sucking on teats. These days, well, **I mind my freedoms – and I keep freedom in mind.** Especially when dealing with road hogs.

Now there's a case for treatment: those turkeys are my pet hate (I know, I know – small things...). They're either stupid or just don't give a shit, so engrossed in their own little world. So, do they *choose* to act in such a manner, even if they don't consciously do so?

I suppose that applies to everybody: **Do we make our choices as much our choices make us?** Well, what happens when a person has *too* much choice? Hmmm, I'll let you know when I get there...

If I ever do, that is.

February

Rain, rain and still more rain. But, that's February in Queensland, the wettest month of the year, typically. Mostly falling at night, just leaving us with overcast and sultry days.

Everybody complains about the rain, of course. And, when I hear that, I usually trot out a clever joke I heard from Carol Burnett on TV – long, long ago. When a character in the sitcom starts complaining about the rain, she quips: “Why, honey! A day without rain is like a day without sunshine!” She pauses, then says: “Did I *really* say that...?”

But, we all complain, don't we? And, one of the biggest is the heavy drinker, I think, something I witnessed in New Guinea, a country that had more than its fair share of expatriate alcoholics. As a Cadet Patrol Officer there in the 1960s, I was quickly corrupted by the culture of alcohol, and also quickly learnt about pain in the head and stomach, almost every morning – something we all dread, yet forget about as we drink.

So that recollection, made me concoct an early morning alcoholic musing:

Oh God, please stop this pain in my stomach – ‘cos I've no stomach for pain!

Now, while we drank mostly beer and liquor, we'd drink anything (almost) when we had to – even wine. But, as we all know, **too much wine also results in whining too much.**

Another milestone: after finishing and receiving my BA, I made application to Swinburne University in Victoria to enroll in an MA (Writing) program. Much to my surprise, I was accepted. And, I started with the first unit at the end of this month.

Much to read and digest over the next two years, undoubtedly; but, I'm looking forward to it. On the other hand, as a writer, **I often feel that I'm missing out on what I should read, and sometimes reading what I should be missing out on. . .**

Aaaah, knowledge is. . .often just mist in the mind, ain't it?

March

Not a good month. . .

It's been unusually warm for March, with temperatures of 20-25 C between 5 and 6 a.m., almost every day! Summer has hung on and outlived its welcome, for sure. Still, as I keep reminding myself: it's better than ice and snow.

In sweaty conditions, though, it's more of a chore to concentrate and keep writing (no, I don't have air-con). Not that I make much money online from my efforts, anyway. I just like to write – because **I never write because I want the money; I only need the money so I can write...**

There's trouble brewing nearby, though: soon after the new neighbours moved in a few weeks ago, the damn cocky they have insists on starting up each day between 4 and 6 a.m. The latter time is not so bad, but the four in the morning is a bit much. Somehow, I knew we were about to have a problem when the cocky's owner quipped (in the first ten seconds of shaking hands): "I got a noisy parrot!" He had the cheek to grin broadly as he said it.

Naturally, we made enquiries with local council authorities. In sum: live with it! They're just *not* interested. About the same time, I got a very destructive virus, ZASS, on my PC which necessitated quick, corrective action. Idly, I wondered if I could introduce a more destructive virus to that *fucking* bird.

However, on with some chiastic ruminations...

Thinking more about the various meanings for the word 'lie', I had a follow-on thought about the continuing saga of the rake's progress:

Will I talk as I lie with her, or will I lie as I talk with her? He's some kind of dreamer, huh?

And that caused me to consider another variation of that situation:

Do I fuck with her as I lie, or do I lie to her as I fuck?

Obviously, that turn of phrase applies equally to men and women – just change the pronoun object.

On to a more pressing item, our rent increased in February. Now – again – we've been looking for another place to rent, but only because the owner keeps increasing this one. I know – I'm never satisfied. The only certainty is this: the bastards will keep pushing it up, no matter where we live.

Thinking about that and my own efforts at writing, I suddenly realized that **many people look for a place in life. But, maybe it's better to have a life in place?**

Once again, I noticed that I can apply different shades of meaning to 'place'. Is that a home, or a state of equanimity?

Still, **everybody's looking for the good life, right?** On the other hand, much too much emphasis goes to **a life that's just good-looking**, I think.

Just look at the crap all over the visual media where shallowness is the major attribute; or so it appears to me.

Ended the month on a good note, though: Went to the shallows of Tangalooma with family and friends and walked amongst the dolphins at sundown. Bliss...

April

My chiastic efforts crashed this month – I was so pissed off with that screaming cocky in the next property, I couldn't think straight. Besides, I was trying to get stuff done for my MA program. On top of that, one of the sons parked a couple of his cats with us while he was looking for somewhere to live (he'd just returned from Victoria with a whole damn menagerie of cats, dogs, chooks, and other furry animals). I tried to think of ways I could sic the cats on that cocky, but couldn't come up with a good plan.

I wandered around the garden (too many times), peeking through cracks in the fence, eyeing that noxious passerine pest, when, late in the month, I stopped: I'd seen only one solitary bee in the whole place – when there were hundreds last year, and in years before. What's happening? I did the research and discovered the global problem of bee colony collapse.

So this just tumbled out of my brain shortly after: **Concerning the lack of bees globally, these days it seems their absence is present more often than their presence is absent.**

I'm still trying to grasp what I really said there! Could apply to my brains, I suppose...

May

Birthday month. Enough said. I don't like being reminded. On the plus side, however, there was a surprise birthday luncheon for me at my best friend's place; all the more important because I'd never had a surprise bash on my birthday. Maybe it won't be the last?

Progressing with MA program, and enjoying the online interaction. I'm really happy I started this work.

Days getting cooler, as one expects. No heavy blanket yet, though. Morning walks are brisk.

News from Iraq – IEDs still going off, people getting blown to bits. What else is new? Historians will, I think, look back and wonder **about Gdubya's rush to folly – which only proves that it's folly to rush.** We all learn that, one way or another – except people like that excuse for a president, and others like him. Furthermore – while I'm on the topic – **Gdubya's rush to glory also proves there's no glory in a rush.**

There's one certainty about this Iraq war, and all wars, perhaps: truth is always the first casualty of war (although, as I said in an earlier volume, the first truth of war is casualties).

Truth and lies – we're prisoners to the fallout from both, consciously and subconsciously. But, it's in **the subconscious is where lies the truth; whereas, it's in the conscious**

where the truth lies.

So, truth to tell: should we *always* tell the truth?

One further outcome became clear to me: the continuation of these wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are simply unsustainable from an economic point of view. The costs are increasing and the American economy is sinking as I read more and more about the coming implosion of the housing market in USA and probably in other countries, also.

Something's gotta give, and I'm betting that the American stock market will crash in a year or so.

July

Whatever happened to June? There is not one note about chiasmus, nor any commentary. Very cold, maybe I stayed in bed most of the month? No, not so – actually, there *was* an important event (for me): for the first time, a miner bird was brave enough to take bread crumbs while sitting on my right thumb, as I watched, on the last day of the month.

July was very different, though: colder, yes, but about every two days, I churned out another *bon* chiasmic *mot* – if you'll allow me to mangle a phrase. And, get this: it was *so* cold this month that, for the *first* time in living memory, there was a skim of real ice on the windshield of the car at 6 a.m. on July 20! I had to scrape it off with a plastic paint scraper, and had to keep reminding myself that this area is in the sub-tropics...

However, love wasn't in the air (with all that ice) but it was on my mind. At the start of the month, I wrote:

Am I lonely because I love her, or do I love her because I'm lonely?

I guess I was trying another take on lover's lament. Later, I was wondering what would happen to somebody who became obsessed with those thoughts, and penned this:

At what point is the perversion of love transformed into a love of perversion?

I guess Marquis de Sade would have had a lot to say about that. One of these days, I guess I should read some of what he did say – as a matter of interest, professionally...

Then, grinning a bit wickedly, I wrote this in the book:

What may be of interest to the public is not always in the public interest. . .

And, as I read over that, I realized that the reverse is also true. Fickle public, I thought: elastic principles, or none. Just like our usual whipping boys and girls: the politicians.

Which, after mulling on the vagaries of politics and those principally involved, it was easy to pen this:

Principles in politics are generally politicized by the principals. . .

Idly, I wondered: does it make any difference if those principles are politically correct? Or, incorrect? I mucked about with 'political correctness' for a bit, but nothing worthwhile or even close to being clever came to mind.

Must have had a bad outing during this month at the big mall. I hate shopping for anything, usually; I particularly dislike food shopping with other people, tried to get out of it as much as I could. So, it sometimes took all my willpower to maintain a sense of decorum, know what I mean?

Well, I wasn't born for shopping, but shopping must be borne well, I suppose...

Like I said, I just hate it. But, just remember what you wrote earlier, I kept saying to myself:

Control your anger or it controls you!

Peace, man, but it's hard. Oh, I know I shouldn't get uptight, but it's all such a waste of my time: eating and shopping for food. I've got too much to do; each passing day is so important. Sometimes, I really do want to scream at people:

Control your eating or it controls you!

But, I don't, do I, because...because...well, why not? Maybe I *should* blast them verbally? Well, not actually *scream*, of course, but rattle off my chiasitic critique.

Better to keep things simple, even food, I think. Too often, though:

Some have simple thoughts about high living; others have high thoughts about living simply.

And, I guess **living simply doesn't have to be simply living**, does it now?

Yes, I know, you can take the healthy angle too far, like anything; too much (alcoholic) drink, being the most pervasive, probably. However, I was thinking about all the milk I drank when growing up – and it crossed my mind that I could play around with that word in different contexts:

Healthy person say: Drink more milk with your friends!

Drunk person say: Milk more drinks from your friends!

The latter thought was quite prevalent during my time in New Guinea, over fifty years ago, mainly because most of the expatriates were drunk *most* of the time, anyway. Alcoholicly, we were never separated from the milk of human kindness; well, not for

long...

Later in the month, I was reading some articles about online business and, as usual, my mind started wandering on to other – but related – topics, like the relationship between business and war. The business of business is actually a perennial war, of course, with the requirement to *compete* for the customer's dollar. And, as I was thinking about the history of wars and business, this just fell into place:

The 19th century saw great strides in business wars; the 20th century saw great business in the stride to wars.

Looks like the 21st century is going great guns, too! (I know, I know – *baaad* pun! Just stop it!)

And, seeing as how business tends to corrupt many – maybe most – who venture into business, the guardians of the law – the boys in blue, or undercover – have a difficult job to reign in and prosecute white-collar crime (why is it called 'white collar' when it's a dirty business, overall?). So...

Who's out-policing the cops when the cops are out, policing? There's still no good answer that's good, is there?

August

From this month on, I've noticed that my efforts have been paltry, to say the least. On the other hand, I did receive some more online input from those trying their mind and hand at chiastic commentary; you'll find those below, in successive months.

I note that I had a severe viral infection in the first two weeks of August – I was laid out, literally, for that time. So, that also meant I was in catch-up mode in my MA program when I got back on my feet by mid-month. So, shit happens, as people kept telling me.

With plenty of time to think while sweating and shivering, though, I had the presence to write these down, between bouts of vomiting, sleeping, and just feeling fucking sick, or sick of fucking (if that's probable):

Pity the love sick guy who gets nowhere; despise the guy sick of love who gets everywhere. . .

In my ramblings, I remembered a comment I'd made over twenty years ago:

Religion's force of habit sometimes results in the habit of force. I'm not sure, but I think I'd been reading a news report about another priestly pedophile. And, old habits die hard, as we know.

And, I guess I was dreaming when I groggily wrote this in the book: **Does the ideal of freedom from want inevitably lead to a want for freedom?** Freedom, of course, is an

illusion; and paradoxically, it leads to chaos at one end or extreme authoritarianism at the other.

Freedom only ever exists in the mind. So, does the mind only truly exist when free?

Okay, okay, I'll stop.

September

On the twelfth of this month, I got an email from David Young, who was responding to my invitation to send in any (suitable) chiasmic concoction for publishing in this volume. I was particularly impressed by his input which used *double, nested chiasmus* to make a telling comment on human relationships, thus:

"The sole principle for complimenting your soul mate is to mate your soul with the principal complement in your life."

You don't see such double constructions much at all, it being quite difficult to construct an idea chiasmically that has intellectual force, even if you may not agree with it, wholly. For example, I'd suggest to David that the idea could have been posed as a question (beginning, for example, "Is the sole principle..."), thus leaving it open for the reader to think more deeply about the proposition. However, this volume 3 should now be in David's hands. Many thanks, David, for such an incisive contribution.

Warming up more, I noted, and more rain, too. Even – would you believe – some adverts for pre-Xmas specials! In September, for fuck's sake! Nothing's sacred anymore, is it?

While plodding on through my MA reading, a section on fact versus fiction was most interesting – especially the assertion, by some (die-hard post-modernists, of course), that everything is fiction. I could argue against that, quite successfully, I think; but, from some – maybe *many* – perspectives:

These days, seems like fact degenerates into fiction and fiction morphs into fact.

So... is there a word *faction* that can be used? First, it's well-known term for a group or clique; but checking online quickly, I note that the meaning now *also* includes "a story, movie, or television program that is a mixture of real and imaginary events or people."

Which means that it be will increasingly difficult to separate truth from lies, certainty from doubt, fact from fiction. What will all *that* do to our thinking, over time? I pondered that a while, then wrote this:

Metaphorically speaking, is there any real difference between dead certain in mind and certainly dead in mind?

Mind what you say, I guess. . .

When the month finished, it nearly finished me and Sherry: we went whale watching off the northern tip of Moreton Island, which is east of the Redcliffe peninsula. Having sailed in many vessels, in many seas, over forty years, I had no misgivings about naupathia aka sea sickness. Was I wrong? Frankly, I thought I was going to die, I was so sick – brought about by an almost stationary vessel bucking in a one to two meter swell.

So, please don't ask if we had a whale of a time – more like a time of many wails.

October

Another month – October – without anything to show for it. Well, except for my continuing research into the use of cell phones on passenger aircraft – the implementation of which is almost inevitable, considering the outrageous profits airlines and cell phone manufacturers/providers will reap by financially raping the unsuspecting flying consumer. I was so engrossed in that project, I guess, I made no chiasmic entries.

On the other hand, I received more input from another person wanting recognition for his chiasmic creations. So, please welcome Ryan Russell, and his two original concoctions...

In the first one, Ryan told me he attempted to describe the workers in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and penned this:

Woe are they; they are woe.

I've read the story and I know it fits. Most importantly, it is an example of *perfect* chiasmus.

For his second effort, Ryan perhaps implicitly revealed that he has a thing about money (maybe we all do?):

While I spend my time in money, I spend my money in time.

Now, wouldn't that mantra fit some of those Wall St. sharks we all love to hate?

Hope you like your copy of this Volume 3, Ryan. Well done.

November

Sadly, again from my perspective, November wasn't much better than October. In fact, this is one of two that I managed to write in the diary:

Actors live to act; others act to live. Well, we all play our part, as the Bard said, right? I have no idea why I wrote that one. Maybe, probably, it was just another variation on using a suitable verb to pair off with the verb 'live'. In truth, I think there must be hundreds more of such short efforts still to discover. Trust me – *they're out there...*

Another excuse for my tardiness is the continued efforts with my MA program (which now consumes more of my time) and, now also, the completion of my memoir of my time in New Guinea in the 1960s (something I've been promising myself for nearly twenty years).

Maybe that's why I wrote this out at month end, on the last day:

Editorial advice to aspiring writer: Less is more, more or less...

More meaning there, or meaning less? Bah! Humbug!

December 2007

Very wet this month, but it's that time of year, of course. I note that I did four chapters of my New Guinea memoir this month – so here's the sole chiastic effort for the last month of this year:

Most want to have the time of their life; I just want some life in my time. . .

Time is all I got, after all. Hope *you* have a better time than I during the Silly Season!

To perhaps make some amends for my lack of creativity during the last three months, below I've included some saucy and sizzling chiastic efforts (created five or more years earlier) that center upon sex in relationships:

When working girls go out, are they looking for the horn of plenty or just plenty of horn? Blowing your own horn is something else, of course.

Idle thought from a lecher: **I feel better, y'know, the better I feel, know what I mean?** Said with feeling too, I'll bet.

And, having heard many sexual jokes from country people and farmers, this also occurred to me: **Farm girls are good fucking but no fucking good.**

So, have a Happy Fucking New Year – or a Fucking Happy New Year! Or, even a Happy New Year Fucking! LOL!

Out-takes

January 2007:

If no art is ever obscenity, then no obscenity is ever art. . .

So, if something is artless, it's obscene?

April 2007:

In the realm of global warming, surely action to prevent further rise is better than preventing any action?

Hey, it's a hot issue, no?

July 2007:

In winter, some say there's just a lot of humbug; in summer, others say there's just a lot of bug hum.

Does *anybody* say hug bum, or bum hug? Possibilities, there.

In times past, we read the book and then saw the film; now, we see the film and then read the book. . .

It's not the same thing, though, is it?

September 2007:

Throughout life, **figures don't lie but lies do figure!**

Go figure. . .

2008

January

Well, there is rain and still more heavy rain. But, on the bright side, having finished the manuscript for my New Guinea memoir, I sent samples off to various agents to test their reactions.

Another notable event this month was asteroid 2007 TU24, which passed between the earth and moon on January 29, but missing the planet completely. I have a great interest in Near Earth Objects (NEO), the quantity thereof, and the frequency with which they come to close for comfort. Of particular interest is asteroid [Apophis 2004 MN4](#) which will pass within five earth diameters on Friday, April 13, 2029. Seven years later in 2036, on the same date, there is a 1-in-48,000 chance it will impact somewhere on the planet. At around 300 meters in diameter, there is little doubt the destruction somewhere will be massive, if it happens. The world would change once again. Quite frankly, I'd like to be around to see that. There are, however, plans afoot to try to alter the asteroid's orbit so that it misses.

Let us all truly hope so...

For now, though, my more important task this month was to budget for another increase in rent again: god dammed bloodsuckers! Maybe that down feeling caused me to think of this:

Bleak musing of a down-and-out drifter:

"I guess I get to kick around a lot; but then, a lot get to kick me around . . ."

Landlords complain about bad tenants, I know; but all tenants complain about landlords – just like all complain about dentists. Which, I discovered recently, have one of the highest suicide rates on the planet. Well, I guess, when most people just *hate* to see you...

February

Spirits rose this month – despite the continuing monotony of heavy rain – with Panthers vs Patriots game at The Super Bowl XXXVIII (I still like watching American NFL, despite leaving North America in 1993). My favorite team – The Patriots – won, 32 to 29.

Fortunately, it's been a bit cooler for February and not so humid, seemingly, despite the rain. Weird! In the mid twenties mostly, up to low thirties. Just bearable as you sit at the

keyboard with a fan blowing like a banshee!

On February 13, PM Kevin Rudd publicly apologized to the aboriginal population for past sins of our fathers. Long overdue, of course, but little more than a publicity exercise; there were atrocities on both sides, as documented. Still, better to actually say it, than to refuse, as Little Johnnie Howard did, when he was Prime Minister. What a bastard he was.

A new name on my horizon now: Barack Obama is now a viable presidential contender. I'll do some reading and researching about him. And, finally, I got to see a live performance of Phantom of the Opera in Brisbane. The music is good, even great at times; but, I still prefer the original, silent movie from 1925.

Chiastically, I started off thinking about working for a living, and some of the more important fundamentals. I don't know why exactly, but perhaps I was thinking about my growing children and their adventures, shall I say, in the working world, thus:

Learn to work so that you can work to learn!

Seems to me that it's always one or the other, each and every day, regardless of what you're doing.

Then, from a different perspective, I recalled my time as a computer shift supervisor back in the late sixties...

Do supervisors always look over work their workers always overlook?

Perhaps when only looking over shoulders? I tried not to do that, though, being too intrusive. I didn't like it when others did it to me. Who does?

Like anything, the work is easy when you know how to do it, and all part of a learning process. The old saw came back to me: nothing is ever as easy as it looks.

That gave me pause, when I thought about 'looking' and 'easy' from the perspective of sexual relationships. Consider the woman, out for a bit of fun, but not one to be taken lightly, and who might just think something along these lines:

I may look easy. . . But I ain't as easy as I look!

Too bad for any guy who misreads the signs, I guess. And so, following *that* train of thought, it was then easy – ha! – to construct this:

Looking easy is never the same as easy-looking. . .

Too easy, huh?

So, it only makes sense, then, to apply oneself when looking and learning about anything, and particularly concerning human relationships. Hence...

Really learn to look properly; really look to learn effectively.

Looks easy? Not really, as we all know.

Anyway, while I'm on the topic of relationships, it's fitting, I guess, to include some more racy commentary, beginning with something a fiery feminist might want to say:

Why is it that every time I cop a feel, I feel like a cop? Not something that men would know much about, I'd say...

Lechers, however, are everywhere, it seems; and quite active, from what I hear, now and again. So, what does a lecher do, when he's bored? Maybe he has a reflective moment, something like this:

Is this just another fucking day, or another day just fucking? Poor thing. Maybe he should do some light reading from his copy of *Kama Sutra*? Or, just make like the wanker he is?

But, these days, leching isn't just for guys. So, this next thought could be anybody's idle musing...

When each is fucking the other, are they just fucking each other?

The shades of meaning for 'fucking' can play havoc there with one's mind. Frankly, I still get confused (but, then, I'm easily confused, as you know by now).

Generally, I like to be clear about what I say. I probably fail at that as much as others do. But, when thinking about what others do say, I've found that:

Only few stand by what they say - most others are bystanders.

That is to say, they fail to speak up and say what they mean. So, I've tried to get my kids to always stand up to be counted. It's important, I think. Anyway, on to other things...

Afghanistan, for example, is hotting-up even more. American forces are using more UAV sorties against the Taliban in the country and across the border into Pakistan. The Afghan people and NATO **forces there face a life of daily horrors; elsewhere, we all just face the horror of daily life**, don't we?

I reckon we're all lucky to have just our own.

And so, now for something completely – or almost – stupid:

Boy: "Dad - how do airplanes fly?"

Dad: "Fly? Just plain air, son, just plain air!"

Why? Well, it's a play on homophonic sound. I was watching a stupid TV commercial about an old guy providing a stupid answer to a question posed by a young boy. That spurred me on to try to think of something even worse – but, maybe funny also.

March

Somewhat cooler this month, as it should be, by five degrees each morning. Turning fan off from this day forward...

MA program going well – started a Journalism unit this month. In between all else I'm doing, I also managed to finish a non-fiction narrative about some people who had been living in a haunted house. It's taken five years to put it all together; now, I'll find out if anybody is interested in publishing it. (Nothing back from agents yet about my New Guinea memoir).

Noteworthy event: somewhere on this planet, this month, a large US satellite will re-enter the atmosphere and burn up. Hope it's not like the one prior, pieces of which actually crashed in remote locations in the Outback.

Wouldn't that be a nightmare – to have a satellite crash on your house? I wonder what redress you'd get from the US government if it ever happened.

Some people have a dream of a life; others simply have a life of dreams. . .

But, without dreams, there are just nightmares! I don't have too many of the latter these days, and I find it difficult to recall dreams, in part or whatever.

April

I can't recall another month like this: absolutely dry, no rain, not a smidgen. Hardly believable, I know, but true. Oh, sure: it happens in the Outback, deserts and so on, but near the Sunshine Coast of Queensland, a sub-tropical paradise?

What this also means is that, from a chiastic perspective, I was almost as dry. Only late in the month, did I moodily pen the following:

An actor without the right role to play has little play left in his role.

As you can see, that's a play on the meanings for 'right' and 'left', all wrapped up into a chiastic comment about...well, all the roles each of us play at during the days of our

lives... Once an actor, always so, wouldn't you say?

May

Oh-uh, it's that time again: birthday boy. Never mind...

Again: an almost dry month, rain only on May 30 and 31. Nice, cool days, not much humidity.

Read an(other) article (one of many) about the worsening situation in Afghanistan, all about the long time the American and NATO forces have been there, keeping things going while still trying to stem the Taliban guerrilla tactics – and keeping the local population happy, at the same time...

Which brought this thought to mind:

When does a just peace-keeping force become just a keep, forcing peace?

And, more importantly, who then are the prisoners? Oh, boy...

June

As the month progressed, the colder mornings set in: by month end, it got down to between zero and three degrees at five a.m. or so. And, once again, no rain for most of month – usual wintry type of conditions, that we know so well.

My MA program still on track – no insurmountable problems, thankfully. Also thankfully, my life in general follows that pattern. Maybe the worst aspect of doing this MA is the tons of reading that *must* be done. I'm a slow reader; I like to take my time, savoring the arguments, the new perspectives and so on. If I go too fast, I lose track of what's going on; then, I must reread – which is a pain in the posterior.

It's probably why I wrote this, early in the month:

Some read and write what they are; others are what they write and read.

Idly, I wondered again who I was; as I'm sure many do, maybe even too often than I.

This MA is all about writing and reading, of course. So, while thinking about it all, and the work I was doing to qualify for a pass, a number of chiasmic thoughts just had to get out of my brain, starting with...

The whole writing is in the story; the whole story is in the writing.

Obvious, when I think about, yet profoundly true, good or bad. So, is it easy to recognize 'bad' writing. Depends on one's criteria to judge, but, yes, I think it's not too difficult to do that. The secret of good writing is to *just practice*, of course, but also to broaden one's horizons. So...

For all writers: Read well and be well read!

And – be well read by many readers, too.

Anyway, I keep talking about the weather, rain, heat and such like; but, I realize that I haven't said much yet about my anger centering on the lack of action to seriously tackle the issue of climate change. I hope you are angry also. Oh, I'll be dead, I reckon, before the real problems (massive food shortages, massive migrations, massive disruption to global economics, massive weather changes) start, or finish. It's just so disgusting, though, that governments are unwilling to act in global fashion to start helping to reduce carbon emissions and to institute a carbon tax. All of those thoughts came together with this:

Only a positive climate for change on earth will produce a positive change of climate in the air.

Who's for change – for a change? I hope you are.

And, as the month came to end, Sherry and I had a spat about things in general, some to do with our online business. After making up, this occurred to me:

When does a marriage go from just the business of making love to the love of just making business? Sourly, I thought to myself: When it's bankrupt?

Do you recall that musical *My Fair Lady*? Based on the play by G.B. Shaw, *Pygmalion*, it was. Later, I recalled the professor's lament about not being able to understand women! Well, I just had to write this down...

Most understand the love of language but only few the language of love. I'm damned if I'll ever understand women, though.

Love and its language must be humanity's oldest Tower of Babel, yes?

July

How things change! Dry for so many months prior, and then it all dollops down: it rained for half the damn month! Almost non-stop, it seemed. And it was *cold* rain....coldest I've felt for a while, in fact. I don't *care* if it makes grass grow...

The war in Afghanistan drags on, Barack Obama says it's the war that must be won (it's the right war) – unlike the Iraq debacle (that was the wrong war). He's a good, maybe great, orator and shows good timing. He has good speech writers and a flair for delivery. But, why do I feel uneasy about his whole persona? Can't put my finger on it, or him, yet.

On to other things – like taking the piss out of politicians, once more...

**I think it's true to say that
politicians can be criminals
as much as
criminals can be politicians. . .**

Now, ain't that a crime?

Pollies must be pragmatic, I guess, and seize the day when offered. They must be careful, though, because of the inherent risks; they're good at covering their asses, mostly, I guess. Still...

Does opportunity make the thief as much as the thief the opportunity?

But, I don't knock opportunity. . . I just think opportunity in politics should always be used for the good of the people – not the people making things good for the politicians!

One thing pollies do know, however, is when to pay attention to what the people are telling them. On that basis, pollies should keep this in mind:

It's one thing to know when you need to change; it's quite another to know when to change your needs.

So...who needs to change, already? Well, that's something for everybody to think about, from time to time.

To finish off this month, I was thinking about what the act of dying must be like. Unlike anything before, I guess. I'm not afraid of death, but I don't like pain. Only for sadists and masochists, that one. So...

There's no fun in dying, for sure; but I'm often dying to have fun!

Funny, huh? Well, that's life, ain't it now? Oh, and death!

September

Talking of dead and dying, August was another dead month, chiastically. What I did managed to do, however, was to damage my back when I stepped into a hidden hole in grass while out on a morning walk. I had to call Sherry to bring the car and pick me up because I couldn't walk without severe pain. Down to my local doctor and acupuncture expert later that day to get stuck with a few too many pins: almost instant relief. The

man's a miracle with those pins, I tell you!

And – once again no rain for the whole month. And, like I said, no chiasmus: still in pain, but had to go to doctor a few more times and just rest up for a while. At least I could read a whole heap of stuff for my MA, though.

September started off real bad: my older brother tops himself. It's not an act I'd ever thought he'd do. And, over money, for fuck's sake, and a shrew of a divorced wife (getting away from her I can understand). So, I had to go to New South Wales and stay at my sister's house most of month. Late in September, I have some inspiration, when the Dow Jones crashes on September 29:

**When I was young, I knew almost everything about very little;
now I'm old I know very little about almost everything!**

And sometimes nothing about nothing. . . like the stupid, arrogant, assholes on Wall Street. The Great Recession is ON, pilgrim! A bit later than I predicted (back in 2007), but still in 2008, like I thought it would be. So, yeah, I'm glad that I saw the signs coming and got ready to duck.

Can you believe it: some of the highest ranking people in governments and business are saying they *didn't* see it coming. What are we all paying them for? Does that give you or anybody a lot of confidence about so-called informed people and experts? Bunch of dickheads, if you ask me.

On a more positive note, I received a chiasmic effort from Drea (no surname given), another contributor to the commentary here. When I first read it, the full impact of the irony didn't hit; only later, after re-reading a few times, the clever construction became apparent. Here it is:

"In order to reason rather than argue, you must argue a reason."

I don't know whether that's true in every case, but it seems to me it might be. Well done, Drea; by now, you should have your free copy, with thanks.

October

The crash worsens: **it's raining on Wall Street – but, will Wall Street be reigned in?** Couldn't happen to nicer people, could it? Trouble is, it's the honest and small investors plus the dumb, tax-paying people, who'll suffer the most. Those Wall Street bastards (and not only Wall Street, as the news widens) need to feel the pain of Main Street.

Stupid, stupid, greedy, arrogant people, I'm thinking; and just a bunch of fucking crims, for sure. So, this really does make chiasmic sense:

**Criminal behavior is often just stupid;
likewise, stupid behavior is often just criminal!**

So, does it take a stupid person to know a criminal? Like on Wall Street? I don't think so...

Is there any hope for all the Wall Streets? I don't think so, pilgrim. I'll wager that, in a couple of years, the Dow will be well on its way to another bubble. Do any of those 'Masters of the Universe' have any sort of social consciousness? I doubt it – money corrupts, and so on.

Having said that though...

**I think it's never the wrong time to do the right thing;
but also, I think it's never the right time to do the wrong thing.**

Naïve of me to think that way, I guess. Wall Street and its copies are all about power and recognition, and often at the basest of levels. So, I'm certain that I'd take the former position in the question below:

Is it better to use the power of language than to use the language of power?

And, from another perspective, **power is a language as much as language is a power.** Moreover, we all have it – to use, misuse and abuse...

December

Well, I did it again – or, rather, I didn't do any chiasmus in November because I was so caught up watching the election of the first black president of the USA. Wonders continue, it looks like, despite humanity's historical record. Now: I wonder when the first, black, female atheist will be elected to the same position. Not in my lifetime, that's for sure.

On the downside for me, I get a leiomyosarcoma – briefly, a cancer of the muscle tissue – removed from my back by my local doctor, in his office. Took a big chunk out; and, after pathological examination, came back a week later to remove an even bigger chunk. He says I'm okay now. Hope so. Anyway, on to December, where I made a few chiasmic observations... about money, seeing as how this silly season is all about it.

When I've got money, I can afford to be generous;

but, what happens when money's got me?

That's money in the bag, man!

And another mantra for Wall Street, maybe:

Does money find opportunity as much as opportunity finds money?

The terrible twins of finance – we need them, but not the excesses.

And, for all those who get to sit around a table to tear into the will of the departed:

When the will divides up our money does the money also divide up our will?

Divide and. . . get rich, yeah.

In the long run, though, I think this is the case:

**Trouble starts when you get more money than you need;
things worsen when you need more money than you get.**

Trouble always comes in three's, y'know!

Last month I had that cancer, remember? Earlier, this month I had diverticulitis – off to hospital. I was sick for whole week, at home – not the hospital. Late in the month, there were big storms, much rain, the whole caboodle. What next, I muse...

Still, though, I'm progressing with the MA program okay.

Out-takes

March 2008:

You can live without truly giving, I suppose - but you can't give without truly living.
Live to give; give to live! Which? Maybe both, I guess...

September 2008:

In the business world, when does a start-up become an up-start?

Ask IBM about Apple?

December 2008:

**Does the specific principle of Truth
support the idea of
the general truth of Principles?**

Well, everything needs a bit of support, I guess.

2009

January

Any sort of weather gets on your nerves when it persists, proving once again that we're never happy with our environment; well, almost never. On Jan 1st it was 44C in my backyard, for example, in the sun at mid-day! For the whole month, there was only 116 mm (that's just under half-an-inch for those who still don't know their decimal system). Not much to cool off the skin there...

Still progressing well with my MA – now doing Script Writing, converting my novel about nuclear terrorism into a screen play, using an online screen writing software application. In between all that, I still managed to complete three articles for [American Chronicle](#). (Amchron).

A red-letter day on January 20: Barack Obama installed as prez of the USA! He talks tough about closing Gitmo (Guantanamo Bay prison), getting out of Iraq, and fighting on in Afghanistan. And he's gonna fix the financial system in the USA too? I *must* be dreaming.

On a positive note, I found out about the genius of Philip Glass and his music this month when I watched a detailed documentary about him. What a brilliant musician and mind. Anyway...

Chiastically, I became engrossed (again) in the idea of time as we know it, and Big T Time, aka cosmic Time. I sent in an opinion piece about it to Amchron where, if you search on my name, you'll be able to find it. My thoughts in that article centered on the concept of Change versus Time, which caused me to arrive at this:

Does Time pass because Change occurs, or does Change occur because Time passes?

Which further caused me to arrive at this question: if Time does *not* exist, can Change occur? To provide any sort of an answer to that, I must prove a causal link between Time and Change. I can't do that, however; it's beyond my knowledge. All I see is *coincidence*. Back to square one: Time is not a necessity – *maybe*.

Did you see Obama's oratory on the day of his ascendancy to the most powerful office on this planet? Considering his determination to finish the job in Afghanistan (which, by the

way, cannot be achieved through military might alone. Recall the Soviet's debacle after nine years in Afghanistan.), I wondered what he would think of my chiastic comment about power, thus:

Any example of overwhelming power must be tempered with the power of overwhelming example.

So, who has the real power? Time (on this earth) will tell us, of course.

March

February – a nothing month, chiastically. SuperBowl – Pittsburgh wins over Arizona; good game. More rain – 356 mm; and more like February *should* be. Promoted a new edition of my homonym/homophone dictionary to [my website](#).

Devastating bush fires in NSW and Victoria; I sent in a donation to the appeal for money. By the end of the day after it all started, 170 people had died. What a tragedy – just awful.

On the other hand – I'm now on the home stretch to finish my MA program this year, probably by December.

March was better from the creative aspect, and a bit less rain – only 115 mm; and a mite cooler too. The month was full on, with work for the MA, and some articles I wrote for Amchron. However...

Now that the financial mess has gotten worse, I think the latest Great Depression is now in progress (although, economists and others are fiercely clinging to the moniker *Great Recession*). Whatever name is used, it just means:

It's the way of the world – and a world away from honesty, responsibility and accountability. Aaah, how we progress, huh!

For the rest of the month, until the 30th, I was too busy to think as I wrote and wrote for hour after hour. Only when I'd finished the MA and Amchron work, did I suddenly pen the following thoughts all about love, and aspects thereof – a topic that I've probably done to death. Oooops!

Does the death of love result in a love of death? What if I turn that around – do I have the same effect? And, does it only happen at the point of Death?

From a different perspective, though...

A love of life must surely involve a life with love.

Who can live without love? Not me.

Living involves learning about all around us, including family, friends and so on. And, while it's difficult often – perhaps – we *do* learn to love each other. But...

Without learning to love, there can be no loving to learn.

Anyway, loving is *doing* as you learn, I think. And, while I think of it, I'd like to a few too many words to the screen writer who said: "Love is never having to say you're sorry." *Crap!* That's wishy-washy nonsense – like being in a dream world; which I think would simply lead to this:

Dreaming too much about love might result in loving too much to dream.

Dreams are okay, as long as you act – and act sensibly.

May

I'm not even gonna mention that it's birthday month again, for another year.

(What happened to April, anyway? Well, there were 425 mm rain, and it got down to 4C some mornings at 6 a.m. But, I did nothing chiastically – again. I wondered *again* whether my mental gyrations with chiasmus were starting to dry up. Began noticing more swelling under my left ear, near the jaw. Made a note to see my doc again about it. If that wasn't enough, I also noticed that my calf muscles began uncontrolled twitching at night, particularly. One night, I woke up screeching as the fucking muscle rolled up to behind my knee.)

As I got into May, and while thinking about my writing work, I decided that **I'd much prefer to read a thesis that reads like a story than a story that reads like a thesis.**

Just give me a good story any day, anyway.

June

Well, I know winter has set when I register -5C at 6 a.m. in my backyard. No, not everyday, of course; that was the lowest for the month and the lowest I've ever seen in my yard. Moreover, rain was significant for June – 196 mm; usually, it's low, even very low, in the winter months. Makes me even more convinced that weather patterns are definitely changing. But, I could be wrong...

Later, I was thinking again about how wrong I can be about so many things, and how it's so easy to make mistakes, as a result. And that, naturally, brought to think chiastically in this fashion:

When in love, I've made an awful lot of mistakes; I've also made a lot of awful mistakes.

That's a true statement for me; but, one can't win 'em all! You might like to make up your own as the situation demands.

In relation to my own thoughts about love, this would be a good time to bring some of my racier chiasmic efforts...

Women, in general, are always on the look out for a good partner or mate; men, on the other hand, are always out for a good look at whoever happens to come along. So, you might appreciate this thought:

A lot of men look long and hard at a woman just so that they can get hard and long.

In a way, that's sad, wouldn't you say? Don't waste too much sympathy though, because men are built that way. Moreover...

The longer a man waits, the harder it gets; and the harder it gets, the longer he waits.

You can decide what meaning to apply to 'harder'. Anyway, the guys who hang back tend not to do so well, sexually, maybe; so this is what happens, sometimes...

Shy guys tend to draw in the horns with women; other guys simply horn in on *their* drawers!

On another tack, towards month end, I'd been doing some psychological research concerning seeing and thinking about what is seen. Philosophically, many would say that when we observe anything, we change it. Well, I was playing around with ideas, when this occurred to me...

Is it preferable to see the unthinkable or think the un-seeable?

So... maybe what you *think* is what you see? I think that *is* the case, all too often, unhappily.

July

Absolutely not a drop of rain this month – and temperatures once again down to -5C at 6a.m. Brrr – beginning to feel more like North America every day.

But, you know what: not a skerrick of chiasmus either.

Mid-month, one of the sons was involved in a collision but escaped without injury; only his wheels were damaged. Not completely his fault but is a lucky young fellow, as I keep telling him. Stupid git, others might say...

The only other event of note was a tragedy with neighbours: a little girl was run down by her aunt while playing on the driveway of her home. How often do we hear or read about

that? The poor woman was incoherently distraught; the mother, when she arrived, was eventually taken away in an ambulance. I'm not surprised.

And this month, I started on my final two units to finish my MA. Yippee! And that's the reason August and September zipped by with any further chiasmic creativity once more. I felt bad about that; but, I felt even more upset by the fact I couldn't think of anything clever, smart, devious, entertaining or even passably funny to say.

I must note, however, that August 2nd was the day the planet Mars was closest to Earth in recorded history. I'll never see that again... Moreover, I hope I never see again my PC crash like it did this month – horrendous recovery, just before I had to finish my MA: a pox on all computers and software.

September was warmer, of course, and less than 50 mm rain. I just had my head down, bum up as I plugged on through my MA courses: no time for anything else but that. Finally, we were hit by the most amazing dust storms in 60 years – made world wide news. We had to tightly close all windows and doors for 72 hours while it all petered out over the Pacific, dropping millions of tons of red dust into the sea.

October

Like last month, rain was sparse – barely 50 mm. Temperature was rising steadily though: on the first, it was 4C at 6 a.m. On the last day, it was 20C at the same time. Whew! Summer *is* on its way, pilgrim, I wrote...

With a bit more time on my hands now, I concocted the following as a result of discussion with fellow students at Swinburne University about art and poetry:

**Is the Art
of Poetry
as much
in the Poetry
as in the Art?**

I hope you notice that construction is poetically self-referential, while also being chiasmic – a first for me. No, you don't have to clap; just keep reading.

Late in the month, for whatever reason, I was searching for a way to illustrate the difference in meaning between 'affect' and 'effect' (You must recall – oh, my god, have you forgotten – how I illustrated the difference between 'discrimination' and 'prejudice'?), but I was stumped for a long time. Then – *no lie* – I dreamt about it and woke up with an idea. After working with a lot of clumsy, awful constructions you are not allowed to see, I finally got to this:

For a sound effect I need the affect of sound; just as a sound affect is needed to effect any sound.

Is that clear enough? Well, then, if that doesn't affect ya, then I'm having no effect!

November

Hmmm, summer's coming on and barely 15 mm rain this month: most unusual for November, and with temperatures fairly steady in the mid to high teens. So, November, once again, shows it's the month that dithers about what it's all about, running hot and cold, like a yo-yo.

And, now, it's official: I finished my MA program this month on November 23rd! What a slog. Some of my fellow classmates are going on to PhD studies. I wish them all the best, but it's not for me: I don't have the academic discipline to subject myself to another 3 or 4 years of rigorous debate and writing. I've other plans, one of which involves learning to speak, read and write Mandarin Chinese.

Maybe that's another reason why I wrote this – my only chiasmic contribution for this month:

We can read anything without writing; but, we can't write a thing without reading.

It's all in the words or text, isn't it!

December

I won't bore you with any end-of-year homilies or trenchant thoughts about the year that's just gone. I'll just leave you with an oblique comment about the lives of the masses when compared to artists and famous people in history:

Some are dead while living; yet, others live only when dead.

On to 2010 and, I hope, greater opportunities for everybody.

Out-takes

I didn't create enough work to warrant dumping any of this year's into this box.

(I only *thought* about using IBM's infamous comment in IBM manuals: "This page left intentionally blank.")

2010

January

The significant event this month was the release, in Australia, of *Avatar* – the much awaited foray into 3D film making by James Cameron, a writer/producer/director who rarely misses at the box office. The hype has been horrendous. It will do well, without doubt. Well, after seeing it, I hadn't changed my mind: yes, it will succeed exceedingly well, being such a visually impressive feat of filming. I just don't want to see another 3D movie ever again – simply because it's a pain to wear extra glasses; and it does funny things with one's vision.

I'm not alone in that visual assessment: others I know – mostly in my age bracket – feel the same way, but my teenage son and daughter voiced similar, although muted, concerns: Hey, it's part of the action: just enjoy! Really? I'll pass, thanks.

Instead... I've finally got around to picking up a number of books I should have read long ago perhaps, starting with Malcolm Lowry's almost epic *Under The Volcano*, or *The Last Day in The Life of a Drunk*. That's not a criticism, because I thoroughly enjoyed every word (even a lot of the Spanish!), it being a metaphorical *tour de force*, and unlike any other I'd ever read – well, only Burrough's *Naked Lunch* comes to mind as an over-the-top comparison.

Lastly, you've noticed by now that I've waffled on to hide the fact I failed, once again, to concoct anything on the chiasmic front in this month. So, let me press on...

February

Rain still pissing down most of the month, with nearly 400 mm in total. Warm and humid, of course.

Now that my MA is finished, I can get back to my reading, as noted above, and also to catching up on my movie intake. Like many, I try to keep a handle on things I must do, if not every day, then at least each week. In one of my online files, I have a list of around sixty-five movies to see. Maybe I'll get there, maybe not. No – I don't use any super software to regiment my life, but I reckon if you fail to plan, you're just planning to fail – at whatever you're doing.

But, I don't push it onto others – merely suggest, is all. And, all that led me to write this out:

Too many have the habit of force; too few have the force of habit.

C'est la vie, I guess.

Following on from that thought, a week later, I further occurred to me that, no matter how well one plans, it's all in the action that produces results *and* provided sufficient concentration is employed to finish whatever needs to be done. Oh, what a mouthful! Here's the same idea reduced to chiasmic critique:

Fail to focus just on the job? Then you'll just focus to fail.

Just like planning, eh?

March

This month, I caught up with many of the agents I've been contacting about my New Guinea memoir. In the closing stages of my MA, last year, I'd put aside calling agents because I was just too busy. Prior to calling, I did rigorous searches to make sure that any agent I contacted must be interested in non-fiction narrative or memoir. No takers yet for my narrative – well, none that are serious. The most I've got back, to date, are those who want you to cough up money to help with publication. I guess such agents think writers are stupid.

Anyway, the result of calling agents in the U.K., the U.S.A. and finally in Australia (in which there are precious few) produced a big fat zero for that memoir. So, I guess I'll just have to set up a website and self-publish. Too hard basket for now... Although, I suppose I *could* send samples to selected publishers directly – to those that are still accepting anything from aspiring writers. Unlikely, I know, but I guess I will follow that option up now: somehow, I must get somebody's attention.

Those ruminations coincided with some reading I was doing about politics and government, here and elsewhere – with the financial mess still paramount, these days. Hence, I just had to write this...

Government with a deficit of attention rarely has any attention for the government deficit.

And, it's our money, too! That's worst part: they take in taxes, then mess around with it to keep the country operating – which is okay, as far as it goes – then get all upset when people start complaining about blown budgets. And, let's face it: things will be getting worse financially for a long time – maybe until 2015 or beyond – before we're all out of the woods with this (not so) Great Recession.

April

This month was a disaster for my partner, Sherry. While driving home from work (at

Brisbane airport) at 6 p.m. or so, a trucker rammed his big rig into her car – not once, not twice, but *three* times, pushing her (with both her feet on the brake pedal, all wheels locked and smoking) almost into the back of the car in front. That event was traumatic for Sherry and physically painful, resulting in neck and back damage which doctors say will take a long time to heal. Her lawyers are certain she has a no-contest case. I hope so – I would have been sent to jail for beating the guy up or killing him, had I been there. Sherry, in fact, is now on three months leave – for starters – to undergo long term physiotherapy. It will take a *long* time...

So, you'll understand that my chiastic efforts were curtailed while helping Sherry in her recovery process. Still, after reading a news article about rising consumption of resources in China and India – although great for Australia's balance of payments – that information did bring me to this, somewhat sour, point:

The consumption of production makes a production out of consumption.

Aaaah, it's a lousy world we live in, but it's the only one we've got. (Actually, it's not the world, *per se*, it's the people in it.) So, it's quite understandable, isn't it, that I should keep thinking on that topic and arrive at this:

Which is better: Consume less but produce more, or produce less and consume more?

No easy answer, I think. More like Catch-22, given the nature of capitalist economy. No matter which way you cut it, we're trapped by it.

May

The rain has all but stopped – barely 35mm this month; and a sight cooler too, both of which are very welcome. As much as I like warm weather, a cool change is generally refreshing – for a while, at least. Never satisfied, I am, of course...

And why should anybody be? The history of human progress is littered with people who weren't satisfied with the *status quo*, pushing, always pushing the bounds of knowledge to – one hopes – improve humanity's lot on this lot of earth we call Earth (seriously, don't you think Phoenix sounds much better?). Given the current state of the planet and our position thereon, how well have we done, do you think, so far?

Oh, it's a rhetorical question, of course. So, following on from that scenario, this is what I think about knowledge and its more discerning cousin, wisdom:

Knowledge comes from seeing what you're looking at; wisdom comes from really looking at what you're seeing.

Too often we see without looking. And, what we're looking at right now is down the

barrel of a gun as we inexorably move closer to self-destruction by pillaging and plundering the planet in way-too-many stupid ways. Many will disagree, of course; I expect that. I am firmly convinced, however, that humanity must find another path that allows the preservation of the planet, while we continue to exploit its benefits, instead of simply destroying most of it as we proceed along our merry way.

And, we could start by stopping the trend to even more megacities and, instead, start building up the infrastructure in rural areas to spread the economic and social load. It's a no-brainer to suggest and promote the idea that, in a global economy with instant communications, there is progressively less need for people to meet and talk in the flesh.

Hence, it seems to follow from that line of thinking to suggest:

There was a time when change was for the better; now, it seems it's just better to change with the times.

No time for changes, maybe? Those who simply want business as usual are just heading for a fall, I'd say, despite those who still ignore the effects of global warming. Regardless of the argument about its causes, there's no denying that things *are* changing – and not for the better, unhappily. Does it not make sense to attempt some action to lessen the effects? Politics, of course, plays a big part in the process, as does Big Business – with scientists caught in the middle. So...

Which is better, or worse, to know: the truth about lies or the lies about truth?

I'll take the second - I'll always have a slightly better chance at the truth, then. Ironically, in the long run, it probably doesn't matter what we do because the forces against us are just so great as to make our too late and too puny efforts seem totally ineffectual. I hope not, though.

June

Sherry's recovery is proceeding well, but it takes a lot out of each week with the constant visits to doctors, physiotherapist, psychologists and so on. It has to be done, of course. Candidly, I don't have much faith in psychologists or psychiatrists, mainly because I think there is simply too much opinion and not enough fact or science in both disciplines. In short, to quote screenwriter William Goldman's pithy comment about Hollywood: **NOBODY KNOWS ANYTHING.**

I understand that **many have beliefs about their knowledge and knowledge about their beliefs**; beliefs *alone*, however, just don't cut it when it comes to the complexity of the human brain, mind, and psyche. Hence, long ago, I dropped out of a psychology degree course (in my last year) when it became increasingly obvious that *was* the case: there are too many beliefs and not enough science. Moreover, I think there is ample

anecdotal evidence to support the idea that many in the professions are simply self-serving. I can grudgingly accommodate *that* idea in relation to a mechanic fixing my car; in relation to the inner being and welfare, I take no prisoners, however. So, I guess that helps to explain the context of this comment:

Be cautious of those who just seek to help; be open to others who just help to seek.

Now, you could argue, I suppose, that some practitioners do help to seek. Given the many news stories, novels, films, anecdotes and jokes that satirize psychology and psychiatry, however, I wouldn't be too confident about that idea. They're doing a job, and many of them are simply legal drug pushers, like it or not. In a way, I guess, they're trying to do 'good'; but, in my opinion, there's no percentage in do-gooders just out to make a buck.

I suppose I should apologize if I cause mental pain or anguish to members of those professions. I absolve myself, though, in the firm conviction that my opinion won't matter to any of them, in the least. There are worse pains, anyway. Such as:

The thought of death is a pain; the death of thought is worse.

So, I guess I'm happy to hold on to *that* nagging pain for as long as possible. So should you, perhaps.

July

Hovering between 0C and -5C at 6a.m. at mid-month, attesting to a definite cooling in comparison to previous years. Well, it's mid-winter – what do I expect? I keep reminding myself that I came north from Sydney to escape the cold. Go figure.

Sherry continues with her physiotherapy; and I ferry her to doctors and hospitals for even more examinations, x-rays and so on. Fortunately, she has also begun a course of study through a local university – it keeps her mind active and, just by the way, assists with her long term financial well-being. After all, what sort of financial guarantees are there when married to a perpetually aspiring writer like me?

Here's the irony, however: Sherry has enrolled in a four/five year psychology degree course to get her Master's and set up shop, so to speak, as a clinical psychologist. It's a job, like I said; but, I've no doubt she'll be helping others to seek for themselves.

I was thinking more on what people do to help each other when I came upon a news item about a high profile sports figure. You know the type, I'm sure; there are probably too many. Anyway, the relationship between player and coach was a big part of the story, with money being predominant in the narrative. In a way, no different to any worker/boss situation, I thought, at some point. I went through similar processes when in my corporate existence nearly thirty years ago: in the final analysis, it's all about getting the most from

each other at the lowest cost, I suppose. It's all part of the games that people play, in one form or another, and I hope epitomized by this comment:

The player thinks: I'll maximize the use of my ability.

The coach thinks: I'll maximize my ability to use him.

Yeah, yeah – it's the way of the world: so deal with it.

August

All things come to an end – except maybe the Universe. This, however, is The End of this narrative. After this month, I made no further additions to my chiasmic commentaries except these few, about the most important topic in human relationships (and the one I've said enough about): love.

We all need, want it, use it, misuse it and abuse it. We twist it to suit our needs; we ignore it when we feel inclined; we turn our back on it because of pride. But, perhaps most of all, we don't put enough trust in it, leading to situations like this...

Through life, some put loving in trust, instead of trusting in love.

That sort of situation is largely due to an over-riding fear of *losing* love, I think. That's understandable, but self-defeating if allowed to persist; and also psychologically unhealthy, simply because I think an...

Unhealthy fear of love can breed an unhealthy love of fear!

Yet, we all cling to the need for love, however much we try to rationalize a way out of a life which, all too often, seems to be pointless. Still, we go on living as best as we can. Some, sadly like my oldest brother and youngest sister, take their own lives when love dies and despair takes over: their love of life was gone. Maybe that's why I wrote this down, this month, when reflecting on their deaths...

Many have a love of life. But have many a life of love?

Is love something that can be defined, absolutely? I don't know. Moreover, I don't even know if that's a viable question, because love has so many manifestations, from the pure animal to the metaphysical. I can't sensibly comment on the latter, but the former is an all-too-easy mark...

For example:

Do some couples just love to fuck each other, while others just fuck to love each other?

Now, for the first sentence there, you can choose what sort of meaning to apply to ‘fuck’, thus shading the meaning of the whole comment. Adult love, of course, is accompanied by pure – or not so pure – sex, but...

When it comes to sex, some guys are just a load of bull; others, though, have a bull of a load.

Hmm, gives a new slant on that nebulous and over-used word: fully-loaded. I’ve known a lot of guys who brag about it. Maybe you know some also?

Moreover, a smart woman, wanting to rebuff unwanted advances for example, could nail a guy with something like this: **“Okay, buster, think you’ve got a bull of a load, huh? You just a load of bull, is all!”**

Sex is not for the faint-hearted, naturally. These days, now I’m old and past it, seems a lot of women think this way, also:

For some guys, each sexual encounter is often touch and go; for others, it’s always just go and touch.

Men, however, like to think that they can still stay in control, don’t they? And that’s perhaps exemplified by this sort thought from The Rake who lives inside many (most?) frustrated males:

**And so, continuing The Rake’s Progress:
Is it better to feel the full power or just have a powerful feel?**

Age, however, comes into play inevitably: the body sags, the mind searches for truth, death beckons, beyond is unknown terror for some. Yet, for many, the primal urge just won’t go away. And so:

**To cap it all, a passing thought from a sex-starved, disgruntled lover:
“She’s forgotten fuckin’ – and fuckin’ forgotten also!”**

I could have said: That’s life. But I won’t finish with such a cliché. Instead, I’ll leave you with a joke I heard in Rabual, New Guinea, over fifty years when I was just a weed. An Irishman (I kid you *not*) at a bar off Mango Ave told me this:

There’s these two Oirishmen, standin’, lookin’ at a motor wi’ smoke coomin’ from t’ engine block. T’ey look at each other, t’en back to t’e motor. One says: “Aw, fook it! T’fookin’ fooker’s fooked!” (A slight pause.) T’other says: “Aw, fook it!”

That was my introduction to the delightfully delicious ways the word ‘fuck’ could be used. And, it also began my journey into words that sound the same.

Thanks for reading.

Out-takes

July 2010:

It's fine to have reason for a *pause*; it's better to have a pause for *reason* first, no?

Think first – and then think again. . .

Epilogue

This Long and Winding Rant

(with apologies to John, Paul, George and Ringo)

This long and winding rant
Possibly a chore
Will never reappear
I've seen such rant before
It always leads me here
Ever way too poor.

This wild and windy rant
That my brain washed away
Has left this fool in tears
Crying out for pay
Why keep me waiting here
Waiting for that day?

Many times I've been quite prone
And many times pie-eyed
Nobody will ever know
The times I nearly died.

So still I'm just a hack
On that long, winding rant
Bereft and stranded here
Way too long ago
Don't keep me waiting here
Ever way too poor.

But still I'm just a hack
On that long, winding rant
Faint and stranded, y'hear,
Way too long ago (oh, oh, oh)
Why leave me waiting here (don't leave me waiting)
Pay me - no more poor. (yair, yair, yair, yair)