

Speaking of Mexico

by Jerry Ratch

Well, I can tell you this much. The balance of my illusions about the underlying nature of mankind grew into grave doubts the day my brother was shot dead by a revenge-seeking Lebanese investor during a business failure bankruptcy in Southern California in 1994. I can tell you that much about our illusions! And the events of 9/11 only added to it.

To make matters worse, and perhaps just a tad more ironic, the crazy Lebanese murdered his own wife first to — get this — *“spare her the pain of what was about to happen.”*

Now that is some code!

By the way, it takes a while to die when you are shot at point blank range in the stomach, then pushed out of the car in a driving rain in a grain field outside Chino. He was found fully dressed, face up in a business suit, with his wallet still on him. Pools of rain having filled his eyes.

So much for trust in our fellow man!

It's funny about religion, and business, and codes of behavior. Some take a gun and go after their wives, or business partners, or both! Some fly airplanes into buildings, seeking virgins in the sky. Some take out a pen and start stabbing at the air.

Here's a poem I wrote about my brother, written from an old photograph taken in some border town in Mexico, when he was in the prime of his life.

My Brother, Outside a Cantina at Night, Mexico

On the mantelpiece
suddenly there it is
the picture taken of him

in his thin, swanky
black leather jacket
out on the town at night
in Mexico with his girlfriend

Holding a small cheroot
in his hand
with his palm upward

His head turned in profile
looking at her as if to say:
"Is this cool or what?"

The hair well over his
ear and collar
Elvis Presley sideburns
At the height of his power

enjoying life after
closing a deal
on an empty building
somewhere

There is something
about the way he's
holding that cheroot
between his thumb
middle and ring fingers
with his palm held upward —

relaxed beyond reason
outside a loud cantina
casting shadows in the warm
brightly-lit Mexican night

I loved my brother. He taught me a lot in my life, and even lent me the use of his house out in Lockport when I got together with Lynda my very first time with her, when I myself was still a virgin. But all love must end, I guess. Or else it goes on forever. Either way ... Either way... Can't finish that thought.

