

The First Several Chapters of His Memoirs

by Larry Strattner

Memoir 2.0

He wrote his first memoir on Facebook. An exercise called 25 Things About Me. His Facebook list became longer than 25 things. It included, "I scream in the darkness", "I am terrified of my dreams", and "Beneath my clothes are sores that refuse to heal", along with seventy-five other thought-provokers.

His friend Boner, who was more accurately a friend of Milo, who was a friend of his cousin in Dubai and who had, up until this post seemed to share thoughts in common, posted, "Holy Shit, Dude! What're You On?"

On? He thought. *I'm On to something. I'm On to who I am. I'm On a roll. I'm running on all eight. What're you on dick-wad?*

After calming down, he went back to his new memoir. He liked to think of it as version 2.0. His Beta memoir. It included new self-discoveries. It refined a few of the originals. "After I cut off my neighbor's head his neck looked like the end of a wiring conduit, which in a way I guess it was." and "After I dug up the groundhog in my backyard with my bare hands and strangled him for digging there, it took me a week to get the dirt out from underneath my fingernails."

He suspected he would need a pseudonym for this memoir. It disclosed the answers to some of the town's more gruesome mysteries. He would have to get a post office box in another town for the royalties. Memoirs were, after all, what people seemed hungry to read. It would sell.

"I snared a Starling and painted it red and yellow. When it tried to rejoin the flock the other Starlings tore it to pieces because they thought it different." He had originally read this in a Jerzy Kosinski

novel and it turned out to be true. He thought about footnoting it but didn't. He was unsure whether Kosinski had merely made it up.

"I see finches," he wrote. Finches were his favorite birds. He concocted bird feed mixes only finches would like. He put the mixtures in bird feeders with feeding slots only a finch-beak would fit into. He used a German-made air rifle to mercilessly shoot squirrels or larger birds trying to raid his feeders. "I kill anything interfering with my wishes or worldview," he wrote. Then he struck out this line since he had allowed the teenagers in the neighborhood to live in spite of their lewd behavior and reckless driving. Perhaps it might be time to rethink this decision. He planted some Chinese Crabapple trees. Finches liked the small dried fruits in winter.

He went for long, quiet walks. These seemed to quell the seething rages swirling about him as he exhumed and reconstructed the truth of himself.

There came a knock at his door. He looked through the peephole. A Girl Scout stood on his porch waiting for an answer. She was alone. He could see she was selling the cookies. He hated Girl Scout cookies almost as much as he hated Girl Scouts. He looked at his twisted and memory-torn face in the front-hall mirror and tried to force it into an expression of interested kindness. He opened the door. "Good afternoon," he said. "Don't you look pretty today?"

Memoir 2.1

Carnage stained 20th Street outside his window. Only dried blood remained. Why these things happened, mystified him. You couldn't expect haters to love each other but, in his opinion, life is not about love, it's about transcendence. Anyone thinking they aren't alone on life's journey has their head up their ass. He decided to write this down and append it to his Memoirs. He would designate it 2.1

His thoughts recalled the kisses of a long ago woman. Her breath had inflated his head and lifted his feet off the ground. He wrote this off to love since when she was not with him he came down. His goal of transcendence did not involve coming down. He planned to remain always above the loveless world.

That woman had some teeth; beautiful, white, straight and there were no electric toothbrushes then. He loved her teeth, and her lips, and her eyes. They took him somewhere else. Might have been transcendence. Might have not. You jump on someone else's trampoline and you rise up. You hope they can also rise with a jump on yours. In the air you're in a bubble looking up. You keep looking up and dream it will never burst.

His street had seen urban battles in recent months. A group of idiots named the Archetypal Disciples lived in the apartments where Buhne Street crossed 20th. Then a bunch calling themselves the Horriblus, opened a clubhouse a block the other way, where Empanata crossed. At outset of these two packs of idiots setting up housekeeping, his block between Buhne and Empanata was merely no man's land. But the Archetypals and the Horribles became irritated with each other and began using the stretch of 20th in front of his house as their OK Corral. His chrome three-fifty-seven revolver shone on the front hall table. These days it was always at hand. Preparedness was paramount.

He moved the curtain on the front door and peeked out at the empty street. He pondered getting hold of a grenade and rolling it out to them while they were going at it. A grenade might facilitate his journey to transcendence. The ancient Romans had gotten that part right. Decimation removed a lot of distractions.

Focusing on transcendence also made him less inclined to aggressive feelings. He even bought more cookies from the persistent little Girl Scout he had initially hated. Her starched brown uniform and green badge sash appeared on his porch regularly these days, like a billboard on a frontage road. He took her advice on what kind of cookies to order. Her suggestions tasted better than his previous selections. She chose the best ones for him

Perhaps he could sell the house and move somewhere the sky was mostly blue. He could look up whenever inclined. He also knew, from experience, if he only just tilted his nose a bit, he would also catch the scent of his long ago lover's breath.

He would have to make sure there was a discriminating Girl Scout cookie representative in his new location. He was beginning to believe in the program.

All in all, he thought, his 2.1 Memoirs were beginning to suggest a direction.

Memoir 2.2

Coffee comes in KCups, breakfast is a Mocha bar, some girls are boys and vice versa, gas is five dollars a gallon, you can't fight five wars at the same time. His note was, *Succinct.* He left out his views on the cost of ammo. He didn't think many readers of his Memoirs would care.

Engine idling sounds caused him to peek out his front window. No one idles an engine anymore. It screws up gas mileage. These days it's balls to the wall, or light up the brakes cherry-red. Katy-bar-the-door. Either full bore or screaming stop. Shut 'er down. No in-between. Idling engines signal a tweaker, someone stopping for an inappropriate quickie or a pervert doing whatever they do.

Old people got high gas mileage because they drove slowly. He'd heard talk about taking away old people's driving rights for creating a public menace. *What's wrong with this picture,* he thought? *Only old people obey the speed limit. They should take away everyone else's driver's license.* He made a note: *stick with the simple solution.*

Sure enough, as he peeped through the front curtain, a big green monstrosity with a pointed front, looking like a Martian with a ducktail hairdo backing up, crept down the street. Twelve guys in helmets scuttled along behind the Martian.

Trés weird, he made a note to add it to his Memoirs. He wrote, *"The Day of the Ducktail Dingleberries."* Then added, *"shitty gas mileage,"* noting, *"Gas has gotten so expensive the rats are carpooling in from the waterfront."* He shoved his three fifty-seven down the back of his pants, felt its muzzle snuggle in against his left

glute and stepped out the front door to watch the procession bump and grind past.

They were heading for the Horribles' house. On his horseshit scale that house smelled worse than the Archtypals' who, despite their name just walked around yelling and carrying signs. At least so far.

He leaned to the conservative. This did not include anti-abortion anti-government or anti-gay, maybe he was a reincarnated, fallen-away Quaker. He had meant to ask his neighbor Sylvia about this. She claimed to be psychic but she died. He wondered if she had seen that one coming.

He was tempted toward his front yard to get a better look at the fun, but hung back in the doorjamb to avoid stray bullets. One promptly *thwacked* into something nearby. Too close for comfort, like the outcome of most of his bad decisions. He wrote, *lots of bad decisions. Like most other people in this respect.*

The duck-tailed Martian turned onto the flower-bordered walk leading up to the Horrible house. Huge tires under the duck-tail flattened the flowers and the machine plowed through the front of the building without knocking. There were shouts and cascades of gunshots. *So many guns around, he thought and so few brains.* Horribles poured out the back door, deserting the sinking ship and dispersing over hedges and fences. Cheers came from adjacent houses. This would make an upbeat chapter.

Duck-tail first, the breaching vehicle emerged through the back wall, still at idle speed, made a U-turn and came back through, out the front, the helmeted dweebles in lock-step behind. To be good at fighting you have to fight a lot and the dweebles seemed to have done more than the Horribles. It sounded as if the Horribles who stayed to fight were losing. He wondered *if ignorance is in fact bliss, why weren't the Horribles more uniformly good natured?* No doubt the neighborhood would be more benign without them.

Unearthly quiet reigned down at the Archtypal's house on the other end of the block. They were probably all hiding in their cellar. He missed the Girl Scout. He was almost out of cookies.

The fight seemed over; he laughed in appreciation, like he would at a Jordanian wedding and fired his three fifty-seven in the air, once. Three fifty- seven ammo cost a dollar forty per round. You better really like the bride and groom before you shoot a full clip into the sky, even at a Jordanian wedding. He made a note to put this in his Memoirs. It would give some historical context and maybe Wow Factor. In a few years a bullet would probably be two dollars eighty. His 2.3 Memoirs were revealing a crazy world beyond, in no way his fault. Perhaps the San Andreas' fault? He looked down his street again, hoping he'd see the Girl Scout.

His Memoir was getting crowded with bullshit. Writing was not as easy as he had envisioned. Most lives have a boatload of stupid stuff in them. The beauty of Memoir is you can skip over the stupid and jam the interesting stuff together making it seem as if your life is more exciting than anyone else's. His note said, *no one's life is any more exciting than anyone else's. Some of us are just better at prevaricating.* He had read Tom Cruise's Memoirs and found them boring. *No need to go overboard,* he thought. *Keep it short, like Tom.* He'd noticed a new book on some weird-ass religion was coming out this year with a portion devoted to Tom. Maybe it would provide some answers.

As the Martian crept past his house again he realized on top of the duck-tail was a Christmas tree with some presents scattered around its base. Most of the ornaments seemed to still be hanging from the branches. The first five or six dweebles were trailing strings of lights and tinsel. He looked for any traces of Santa but saw none. The Horribles had gotten coal stuck up their butts and the Archtypes were going home to bond with the fruitcakes who'd stayed in the cellar.

He had forgotten it would shortly be Christmas.

