

A Chicago Story

by Julian Sereno

“The South Side of Chicago... is the baddest part of town,” lyrics from the early ‘70s Jim Croce song, flitted through my consciousness as I planned my weekend visit for the 45th reunion of the University of Chicago Class of 1972. U of C is located in Hyde Park, on the South Side. I resided there for a decade after graduation.

As appalling as the current gun violence is, twas ever thus on the South Side. Al Capone got the notoriety but hardly started it; it was worse in the late 1800s. Numerically, there were more murders in Chicago in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s than there are now. The murder rate is higher because Chicago’s population is smaller. The difference between now and then is firepower. Then it was .22s and .38s, now its 9mm.s and assault rifles, where the bullets rip through metal, cinderblock and brick as though they were tissue paper.

I was going to avoid bad areas like the plague, straight from O’Hare to the Hyatt in Hyde Park, right around the corner from the spot where Barack and Michelle first kissed. A minibus service ran large vans that stopped at all the hotels. I boarded one along with another

eight or nine passengers. Two Russian women, in their 20s and clad in glitz, sat next to me. The van stopped at hotels in Old Town and the Gold Coast where passengers disembarked. When it headed south on Lake Shore Drive, the Russian women and I were the only remaining passengers.

The driver asked them if they were sure they knew where they were going. Neither could speak a word of English, but one held up her cell phone. The driver shook his head and continued. To my horror, he exited Lake Shore Drive at 39th Street — Pershing Road — in the heart of Chicago gun violence country, and zig zagged up to 43rd Street and finally to the address 64 East 46th Street, a low building behind an iron fence. The Russian women smiled and waved bye. I said “das vedanya,” and the young women departed.

The driver said, “That must be the worst Air B&B in the world.” I agreed, and then thought to myself, “Unless those women are about to be trafficked.”

As disturbing as that thought was, it was a late spring Friday afternoon and I was in the heart of gang violence country. I feared for my life, a familiar feeling harkening to my arrival in Chicago nearly 50 years ago. I suspect the

driver was scared too.

“Where is your hotel?” he asked.

“53rd and Harper,” I replied.

He drove south and came to 47th Street. “We’re not taking this east,” he said with conviction.

I said, “After 51st Street is Washington Park.”

“We are not going though Washington Park,” he said even more adamantly.

So we went east on 51st Street, the southern border of Washington Park, with me crouching in the back of the van as though its flimsy metal shell would stop a stray bullet nowadays.

When we crossed Cottage Grove Avenue and entered Hyde Park, I breathed a sigh of relief. Safe again, another old familiar feeling. After checking into the hotel, I decided to walk the two miles to campus. Early in the walk, my son Alex called from Raleigh to ask about my trip. After I described the ride from the airport, he told me I needed to report what I had seen to a sex trafficking hotline, and suggested I Google one for Chicago.

I arrived on campus and sat on a bench in the main quadrangle and Googled Chicago Sex Trafficking Hotline. It showed me websites with every statistic you could imagine about

sex trafficking in Chicago and in Illinois. But there was no phone number.

So I approached a campus cop and told him my story. He told me to call 911, which I did. The 911 operator heard me out and then put me hold. After a while she came back, and said, “There is nothing we can do.”

“You didn’t witness any coercion,” she explained. “All you saw was two adult women walking into a house completely of their own free will. There is no reason for the police to do anything.”

She thanked me for calling and said that there would be a record of my call and the address where the women were dropped off. And that was that.

That evening was the class dinner. It was wonderful to see my classmates.

The next morning, while reading the Chicago Tribune online over coffee, there was an article about the first of that weekend’s shootings. Somebody shot at an unmarked police car and the police returned fire and shot him dead — in Washington Park.

Julian Sereno is editor and publisher of Chatham County Line.

Comey, Paris, Gays

by Don Lein

The gravamen of the charges being leveled at Trump was that he was “obstructing justice” by confronting Comey and “hoping” he would drop his investigation of General Flynn, as well as his subsequent firing of Comey. As ultra-leftist Alan Dershowitz opines “The President is the head of the unified Executive Branch of government and the Justice Department and the FBI work under him and he may order them to do what he wishes.” “The history is clear, the precedents are clear, the constitution is clear, and common sense is clear.” He deplores “Democratic pundits that insist that Trump must have committed a crime because they disagree with what he did politically.”

He further deplores Comey using a Columbia law professor as an intermediary to leak a story to the press, indicating that Comey should have had the courage to do it himself. He suggests that the Senate subpoena the professor and conduct a further investigation. He further deplores this tempest in a teapot, since the President has the constitutional power to pardon Flynn under any circumstance, thus ending any criminal investigation of him. One suspects that President Trump would not turn the power to pardon into the “Road to Riches” the Clintons did during their tenure. One advantage of electing a billionaire!!

One unexpected outcome from the Comey testimony was that Senator Diane Feinstein has called for an investigation into whether the Justice Department interfered with the FBI investigation into the Clinton private server controversy, by calling it a “matter” rather than what it was: an FBI criminal investigation. Comey opined that he believed the remark by Loretta Lynch, Attorney General, was politically motivated, trying to “align the way (the FBI) talked about our work with

the way the political campaign was describing the same activity, which was inaccurate.”

Vladimir Putin weighed in indicating Comey is eligible for political asylum in Russia, much the same as Edward Snowden. Putin indicated that “It looks weird when the chief of a security agency records his conversation with the commander-in-chief and then hands it over to the media via his friend.” “What’s the difference then between the FBI director and Mr. Snowden? In that case he’s more of a rights campaigner defending a certain position than the security agency chief.” Putin indicated that if Comey “faces some sort of persecution in connection with that, we are ready to offer political asylum in Russia to him, as well.”

President Trump has pledged that the U.S. “will continue to be the cleanest and most environmentally friendly country on Earth,” yet he walked away from the Paris agreement that his predecessor favored – why? Firstly, let’s look at the history of climate alarmism. In the 1960s and 1970s climate alarmists said we were facing an imminent ice age that would kill millions of people. Typical was Kenneth E. F. Watt, University of California, in 1970 said “if present trends continue, we will about 4 degrees colder...in 1990, but 11 degrees colder by 2000. This is twice what it would take to put us into an ice age”. The UN indicated in 1989 that “greenhouse effect could wipe nations off the map”.

Now three decades later, not having seen any nations disappear, we have an accord that states “IF” it were achieved, it would “LIKELY” ward off “SOME” effects, giving a “CHANCE” to stay below an unknown trigger temperature. The accord is also non-binding, with no enforcement in the plan. One wag indicated Trump should not have walked, but instead run away from the agreement. While most of the verbiage may be unclear, what is clear is that a significant portion of the multi-billion dollar Green Climate Fund will be financed by American taxpayers. What is the Green Climate Fund? It is an UN agency which will redistribute wealth from developed

countries to less developed countries to allow them to construct alternative energy infrastructure.

Is the UN unaware that the US is 20 billion in debt with unfunded liabilities totaling over \$200 trillion? Every dollar that goes to developing countries for green energy technologies is a dollar American families or industry cannot use. Our energy programs under Obama have been rife with crony capitalism (see Solyndra) with politically connected firms – can we expect the U.N. to be any different? In our own Moore County, there are questions about the decommissioning plan for the solar plants that are planned for there. If the company goes belly up, who is financially responsible and what do we do with all the mercury?? Indeed, President Trump has done us all a favor in stepping away from the not well-thought out, feckless Paris Accord.

The last item of the title is most disconcerting/distressing. The Gay Pride Parade in Charlotte rejected a float that noted gay leader Brian Talbert had designed which was to be 27 feet long, and have a “bunch of American flags, a “replica of the Statue of Liberty”, “female impersonators” and the “most patriotic music anyone has ever heard”. Talbert indicated that “You were going to look at this float and be filled with pride for being an American.” The organizers accused Talbert of being “anti-gay” because of his support for President Trump. Talbert’s credentials go back to 1994 when he was one of 50 or so people who marched in the first Gay Pride parade in Charlotte. He recalls Christian demonstrators throwing rocks and bottles at them and spitting in his face. He sees the discrimination continuing, but now it is the Gay community that is doing the discrimination. He summed up the situation thusly, “I want them to realize that they’re doing the exact same thing they say bigoted people are doing to them- they’re the oppressors now. It’s disgusting, and every gay person in America should feel ashamed.”

Don Lein is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. A Chatham resident, he is involved in a variety of civic activities.

BIRDS

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water often tops the banks in the Spring.

There are two other species we commonly see on the Haw River and Jordan Lake. There was a time; however, when it was rare to see either one of them. If someone thought they saw a Bald Eagle or Osprey, you would doubt that it was true. You didn’t doubt the person’s ability to identify either one, it was just that there were so few actual sightings. Quite often people would see a hawk or vulture and think it was something-else. Immature Bald Eagles don’t have the white head and tail feathers that make the adult so unmistakable. It is not until year six that the adult Bald Eagle is fully mature which is characterized by both white head and tail that goes along with both yellow eyes and beak and a dark brown body and wings. Ospreys on the other hand, are smaller than Bald Eagles and have white underbelly feathers that go along with white patches on the head.

Both Bald Eagles and Ospreys are fish eaters. Ospreys work for a living. Quite often you may see an Osprey flying down river with a fish held in its talons so that the fish and the Osprey’s body are parallel. Behind it you will see a Bald Eagle not

flapping its wings as often as the Osprey, but nevertheless catching up to it. Without much of a protest, the Osprey will let the Bald Eagle swoop under it and snatch the fish from its talons. Because of this behavior, I often refer to Ospreys as Bald Eagle fishing poles.

Sad to think that both species almost became extinct because of the use of the pesticide known as DDT. Turns out that DDT had the negative effect of thinning egg shells before a chick could even hatch. When a parent bird would attempt to incubate the egg, it would break. Thanks to the ban of DDT, Bald Eagles and Ospreys have made a tremendous comeback. Sounds like a success story, doesn’t it. Well in a way it is, but unfortunately, DDT is still being manufactured and sold around the world. What effect is it having on birds and other wildlife there? If it is banned here, shouldn’t it be banned worldwide?

Joe Jacob, a Chatham resident for more than 30 years and a marine biologist by training, is president The Haw River Canoe & Kayak Co., www.hawrivercanoe.com, 336.260.6465. He worked for The Nature Conservancy for 20 years and served as Director of Science for TNC’s Southeast Region.

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