

OrionWorks Sonova Quark

Brought to you by Steven Vincent Johnson and Darlene P. Coltrain, snail mail address: 6666 Odana Road, 213, Madison, WI 53719. Email Steve: svj@orionworks.com. Email Darlene: dpcoltrain@gmail.com Web: <http://OrionWorks.com>. All material is Copyrighted © by Steven Vincent Johnson and Darlene P. Coltrain unless otherwise specified. Quark is brought to you by *OrionWorks* with occasional help from **Grasshopper Press** when I feel an inspirational mood overtake me. Final layout is assembled in InDesign CS5. Printing done on a HP Color Laserjet Pro MFP M277dw. Some might be asking how do you pronounce "Sonova Quark"? There isn't one.

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Completed (*somewhere around*) on April 21, 2016

My Life as a Rocky Rococo Busboy Confessions of Science Fiction Artist Part 4

Fortunatey, very early on in my quest to find inner-peace I had acquired an internal compass for a prescription telling me to keep active. I needed to maintain a steady routine of work. I also needed to stay in contact with others. I did so primarily for the simple reason that I wanted to avoid confronting feelings of aloneness. Busing tables, working in back in Rocky's kitchen, washing dishes with my colleagues and delivering pizzas made me feel connected with others, vitally so. The demon of abandonment was, more or less, at bay.

There were memorable moments while working at Rocky's, even if most might be considered mundane. Here is a brief list that stick in my memory:

- An after hour melee consisting of unsold pizza slices balled up in tin-foil wrapper. A soggy tepid tinfoil cannonball hits the head with a wallop. Not only do you acquire bloody streams of red pasta drooling down your face, you get lacerated flesh wounds derived from hanging shards of melted cheese peppered with flecks of roasted flesh - aka pepperoni. Rated "R" for graphic violence.
- A couple of early morning skinny-dipping sessions off of James Madison Park, Lake Mendota. Both sexes were involved. Considering how dark it was, 2:00 AM, it was hardly R rated.
- Hanging out in the customer tables for an

impromptu hour of bullshit after closing time. We reminisced, laughed and joked. By the end of that evening I felt at peace with myself. The next morning, waking up from a sound sleep I recalled feeling unusually calm and centered in ways I hadn't felt in a while. I knew the evenings actions of spontaneous bullshitting with colleagues was a major contributing factor for my good mood. Unfortunately it wasn't clear to me how I might go about re-creating another group therapy session of bullshit to promote my continued mental health.



Rocky Rococo co-founders
Wayne Mosley and Roger Brown

- While delivering pizzas I learned that many college students felt exempt from administering tips. On the other hand, if you were lucky enough to deliver to Howard Johnson's you were in fat city.

- I remember delivering a pizza to a young clean-cut looking male. At first glance there was nothing special about him. Upon second glance I noticed his behavior struck me as impeccably antiseptic. There

was an otherworldly fixed smile and glassy stare as if he had been repeatedly inoculated with an overload of goodness. I knew some of my friends had often kidded me as being a Space Cadet. They joked about what planet had I come from. The tables seemed turned that evening. After paying for the pizza the young male plied a white nondescript business card on top of a thirty-five cent tip. I thanked him for his frugal generosity and promptly exited the premises, feeling relieved

as the door closed behind me. I glanced at the card. It read "Unification Church", and "Rev. Sun Myung Moon". It was my first close encounter with a "moonie". If this cadet had been transformed into glassy-eyed robot I knew there was nothing this Moon man could teach me about finding my own path to inner peace. As clueless... as lost... as confused I may have been during that time in my life, I knew what brainwashing looked like. I didn't need to compound my personal collection of foibles with the baggage of a self-professed mes-siah - an egomaniac.

- One evening I was awarded a forty dollar speeding ticket heading south-west on E. Gorham St. It was a sizable financial dent considering minimum wage back in the mid 1970s was hovering around \$2.20/hour. I was on the clock rushing back to Rocky's with emergency baking deliverables in the back of my car. The cop claimed he clocked me doing 39 in a 25 mile an hour residential area. I don't doubt the reading. As the ticket was being issued I got the impression this particular policeman was a rookie. It was like watching someone who had memorized a procedure he wasn't interested in deviating from. I wasn't sure what would happen if I had endeavored to do something creative, something that might have derailed him from the rigid scrip he was in the middle of performing. In a weird way I felt compelled to remain on-track, not that I had a legitimate excuses to dish out. As counter-productive it might have seemed in regards to protecting my own self-interests it felt as if it was my civic duty to assist him in completing his role as a policeman handing out a citation. The way I rationalized it: There are times when we all need to play the role doled out to us. That evening, my role was to accept the part of contractual cannon fodder, where the script's conclusion reveals I help the city collect some badly needed revenue. Not all scripts dole out happy endings for the antagonist.

- On Christmas Eve I volunteered to work the night shift at the W. Gilman Street location, off of State Street. Holiday customer traffic was light. By 9 PM there wasn't a customer in the restaurant. A generous off-duty coworker brought in a pan of freshly baked brownies into the back kitchen. I followed the aromatic trail into the back kitchen, and scarfed down several squares. In no time there was a party going on in the back.

About thirty minutes later a distinct maudlin mood began to color my habitual neutral attitude of playing the role of a nondescript busboy. I started asked myself, why the hell was I working on a holiday-eve. I ought to leave. I sauntered over to the manager's office and requested I be let off since there were no customers to clean up after.

She agreed. We bid each other holiday cheer and I walked out the back door.

As I rolled out of the parking lot I knew I didn't want to go back to my efficiency room on West Main Street. The problem was it's Christmas Eve and I hadn't made plans. I had no idea where to go or what I might do. I had planned to spend Christmas day with my parent's, but that wasn't until tomorrow. It entered my mind that maybe I might want to stop over for an impromptu surprise visit. But then I realized it's well after 9 PM, and they're probably already in bed. I settled for driving around Lake Mendota taking county "M". I figured a short little road-trip ought to give me enough time to chill out before heading back to my little room.

I made it to campus Drive when I was unexpectedly overrun with a wave of disorientation. I wasn't sure whether I was driving on Campus Drive or whether I was out on the belt line. *What was happening to me!* I felt utterly lost. I needed to find sanctuary. The only sanctuary I was familiar with was where I had just come from, the back room kitchen of Rocky's. I rambled my way back to the restaurant. I wandered through the kitchen and headed straight to the manager's office. Stopping at the door entrance I stared at the manager mumbling out, *"I think I'm flashing."* She fixed a penetrating stare back at me and then led me to one of the booths and sat me down. I was shaking uncontrollably. It felt as if I was on the verge of exploding in an unrehearsed cathartic release of raw angst. She sat down opposite to me and assured me that I would be ok. All I was feeling, she added, was suppressed emotions that were welling up to the surface. I knew she was right. I had read psychology. I knew what a cathartic release was. Nevertheless, it felt reassuring not to be alone in the midst of quivering.

It finally dawned on me that maybe the brownies I'd ingested 45 minutes earlier had been spiked. Honestly! It never crossed my mind to have asked the brownie baker what he had put in his tasty creation. My suspicions were confirmed. As surprising as this confession might seem for me to make, the only recreational drugs I have ever ingested, to this day, have been nicotine, alcohol and pot. Alcohol is the only drug I continue to imbibe in these days - typically a glass of Merlot at dinner. After middle-age hit me I learned that downing two or more bottles of beer in short succession tended to give me a headache within an hour. That's not enough quality time to enjoy a decent buzz before having to pay for the consequences. It's not that I'm against experimenting. Certainly not, with educated discretion in mind. Just know what you're getting into. As for me I never felt a strong

desire to personally experiment with stronger mind altering drugs - particularly LSD. At that time in my life, working at Rocky's, I thought it might be wise to avoid ingesting pot as well. Early in my life I feared I might embark on a bad trip, and nobody would know how to bring me back to earth. Had I simply asked the brownie baker I would have politely declined while continuing to admire the aroma. My mistake for not asking.

I have to complement the concerned manager and skeleton crew that routinely stopped by the booth to check in on me. After closing a coworker drove me back to my West Main Street room and made sure I was safely installed in my safe little padded cell. I made it to my sofa and passed out.

I woke up late morning Christmas Day, around 11 AM. Physically, I knew I was in no shape to visit my parents. I called them and cancelled. I claimed over-exhaustion combined with having eaten something that didn't agree with me while celebrating Christmas Eve with the Rocky's crew. I didn't go into details. They didn't push for more information which I was grateful for, even if it was simply out of concern. I apologized that I needed to take a full day's rest and promised I'd make it over the next day. I have no memory of what I did the rest of the Day, I must have slept a bunch more between bouts of staring blankly at moving images emanating from my 12" black & white TV. I made good the following day and visited my parents. Looking back at this incident I'd have to say that the physical resilience of a 25 year-old body is an unappreciated gift.

- Sometimes at night, alone in my cell, I cried. I was in distress because I felt trapped. There were times it just felt hopeless. But then, typically the next day, I was back at work. I always seemed to forget how utterly hopeless it had all seemed the previous night.

* * *

The most important gift I received while working at Rocky's was that it put me in constant contact with fellow workers. Repeated application eventually allowed me to confront my next fear, the demon of feeling trapped. I was time to go about slaying it.

The repetitive day and night routine, as therapeutic they may have been, was started to get to me. Back in my room not only did I feel isolated from the rest of the world, I felt isolated from myself. It began to feel as if the only private world I knew was the tiny universe within the barricaded walls of my one room apartment efficiency. The cinder blocks were closing in on me. Somewhere in the

great scheme of things I had lost the get-out-of-jail card. But where would I go? What would I do? I had worked hard diligently cocooning myself within the safe boundaries of familiar habits that involved physical labor for a full-day's pay followed by the fruits of a frugal existence. Should I stay where I was currently working? Should I go cold turkey and once again escape into the unknown wilderness as I had recently done? My memory of the stoplight death and rebirth experience was still vivid in my memory. It hinted that maybe I needed to let go. Let go of myself... again? I wasn't sure I knew how to do that. I felt immobilized.

In the wee morning hours at the end of another nondescript night shift of delivering pizzas, it all came to a head. Without any obvious provocation that I can recall I was suddenly overwhelmed with feelings of raw frustration and rebellion. What the hell was I doing with my life! I was going nowhere fast. Right then, with no forethought of giving notice to my manager, I quit. I wrenched the hotbox out of the back of my Honda Civic and shoved it in the back of Rocky's kitchen. The simple ritual of removing the hotbox felt empowering. I desperately needed to scale the prison walls and escape. Once again, with minimal forethought in place, I felt an impulsive desire to leave Madison. I'd been thinking about California.

Next Installment: **SECOND WALKABOUT**

Or



Charm-purr burrito

Neva Kay



Crater Lake, Oregon

Circumstances conspired in such a way that I ran into Neva Kay at the 2004 world science fiction convention, Noreascon 4, the year the late Sir Terry Pratchett was a GoH. Neva was a former significant other of mine from the 1980s. I discovered she had married a former Rocky Rococo store manager, the one who had interviewed and hired me. She and her DH (dear husband) are currently living in Maine. She is a Managing Director for Health System Performance at National Academy for State Health Policy. Her UW Degree was in Industrial Engineering.

I really enjoyed seeing Neva again and catching up with what she was doing. I think she did too. I introduced her to Darlene. They both hit it off immediately and the three of us went out to dinner later in the convention. At dinner Neva told me her DH still remembers me. That surprised me. Neva added that he remembered me being somewhat of a flake. I was less surprised. Considering all the behavioral floundering I was going through at that time in my life the assessment was more-or-less accurate. "Yes", I replied, "I was a bit of a flake." But then, I added, as if to justify my existence, "I had my reasons." I left it at that. I was in the presence of two women who knew me pretty thoroughly. Sometimes the wisest thing to do is to cut bait.

Collation Mix-up

c u then!

Steve

In the March edition, #357, My edition showed pages 3 & 4 in reverse order. I suspect it was probably the same for everyone. While it should not have caused undo confusion in regards to following the flow of text, it was the accompanying two page-size illustrations that were, regrettably, in reverse order. That may have inconvenienced some readers. Compounding matters, the margins on page 3 were offset reversed making it difficult to read the inside column. I suspect there may have also been a greater-than-average number of grammatical errors too. I try to keep the most glaring in-your-face typos *at* a minimum. (Should I have used "*at*" have been a "*to*"?) Grammar has never my strong card. Being addicted to spell checker occasionally results in embarrassing nonsensical grammar and spoonerisms. I only have by self to lame. sez me.

Again, my apologies for the collation mix-up.

Or

Revisiting that Kepler Thing

Last month has been a concerted effort to overhaul my C# ("C" sharp) Visual Studio code. Functions and routines I thought I would eventually incorporate in future plans ended up still-born. Extracting a considerable amount of useless interfering code is easier said than done. Much of it had become so embedded it felt as if I was performing a dangerous limb amputation, hoping I wasn't chopping the head off. There are also ad-hoc functions I had not originally anticipated or planned for but discovered I needed to build into the system, typically with little forethought. Going back and attempting to fortify all of that add-hoc code is like trying to perform a delicate transplant without causing a catastrophic organ rejection. When performing delicate life threatening surgery one learns to make plenty of backups before putting the patient to sleep.

More later...

Or

Mail Bag

REDACTED

Or

Ran out of additional commentary room, and time.

Until May, or June



Head butts with Zoey, an accomplished Zen master



To Me, Myself

*To me, I am the world. Myself I love
As None else. Deservedly, I am smug,
For I am better, elite, far above
The penultimate ones, Whose Graves are dug.*

*To me, I am the galaxy. My core
Attracts all lesser objects, for their light
Shines dimmer than my own. How they adore
My brilliant radiance ever so bright.*

*To me, I am the universe. Wonder
Of wonders am I. Others are not my
Compare. They can do no more than ponder
My glory, shake their heads and wonder why.*

*Alone, I love myself, so self obsessed.
No other claims me, I am self possessed.*

- Carl Fritz

Assembled by Steven V. Johnson