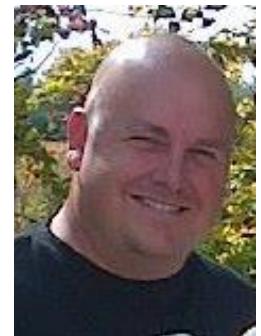




CASS' CORNER



Twenty-five Years and a Few Weeks

It must be a quarter-century back, now that I think about it.

I have done well, for myself, through these many years.

Even in the more recent years, well . . . I have been married to the angelic lady who I am proud to call my wife. We only recently celebrated our tenth wedding anniversary. Fourteen years in an exclusive relationship. She is my one and only, my love divine.

As I continue, I have a feeling I am going to be working in reverse, chronologically. Looking at where I currently am, then moving backward a step (in time) and analyzing that period, in turn. Something happened in group today, however, and it struck my fancy.

I then thought of another individual, whom I witnessed, outside, only a few weeks ago, and it hit me as something eerily similar.

Some twenty-five years back, I lived in Phoenix, Arizona. I had completed high school and college studies, and I am proud to share that I have earned several university degrees.

At the time, I was in the midst of a seven, eight-year stint, working with Blockbuster Video. Yes, I am and was highly-qualified, as per my educational background, but a job at the video store was easy to land, too.

I do not know if it is best, in hindsight, to say that I was 'proud' to own a house, but I did. On any given day, I would come home after a full day on the job and, living alone at the time, I would strip down to my T-shirt and skivvies. It had, as I said, been a long and sometimes challenging day.

I carried on this way for a couple of years, never thinking anything negative or bad about it. "This is my house and, if you don't like it, you can get the (heck) out!"

Not so fast, though, Mr. Cass.

See, my grandparents were signed on as co-owners of my property. Just the same, I lived alone. "This is my house."

Unexpectedly, my grandmother decided that, as I lived alone, there was room in the house for two additional tenants, a couple. Being my house, though, I saw no problem in continuing in my skivvies.

Before long, I listened to and paid heed to my grandmother's 'suggestion' and began to wear full garb. Shorts, shirt, the works.

Just the other day (or was it a couple, few weeks ago?), I was going to the bank, down the block. Perhaps it was the store. Not certain.

Regardless, only a block or so west of here, I know the fellow who lives in the house on the corner. Known, or have been familiar with him, for several years, now.

Never quite in this clothing selection, though. He sauntered out of his house, he, TOO, wearing only his boxers, along with a shirt of some sort. Made his way to the mailbox a bit down the block and opened his 'mail niche.' Following that, he returned directly to his residence.

Does he, perhaps, or has he, maybe, suffered a brain injury of his own, and had his own social inhibitions altered some? Is it, could it be the fact that he is in his 60s or so, I would guess, and he 'is allowed' to wear what he wants, in public? Suppose it could be either, as I consider the possibilities. . .

We had a regular meeting, this morning. A typical and regular HBIA meeting. We each took our turn as we proceeded about the circumference of our meeting table.

One by one, we would share our stories, our recollections, perhaps thoughts on the past time period since our last meeting.

Each of us took our turn, before it came to the gentleman I speak of.

I do not remember the words, precisely, but the story we had shared with us was incredibly similar to the tale I shared at the beginning of this piece.

"This is my house, and, if I wish to stroll about in my boxers, this is something I can do! It is my wife and I; my wife's sister (?), and. . ."

I thought about it and took it into consideration. Because he does the same thing that I used to do, does that make either of us right or wrong? Should we preserve a modicum of modesty, around others?

For that matter, could it be the result of the brain injury we have each undergone or endured? As I said, though, I am not certain about 'Gentleman No. 2.'

"This is MY house. . .! If you don't like it . . ."