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Volume 20
Issue 2

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Some Thoughts on Easter and Passover



I will once again take this opportunity to say a few words in honor of Passover and Easter. I am repeating practical words that have been spoken to me, because people enjoy getting a gift they can use, *(continued on page 2)*

Carolyn See: How to Make a Living as a Writer



On Wednesday January 3, 2007 Carolyn See, author of 10 novels including, *The Handyman* and *There Will Never Be Another You*, spoke with me about writing. This is the second part of that interview.

PBP: How do you get to be a book reviewer?

Carolyn: Oh that's actually *(continued on Page 3)*

The Shabbatones: Big Band With all Vocal Instruments



The Shabbatones perfectly demonstrate the range and quality of a cappella music. Their music is delightful, rich and very complex. Using voice alone these musicians create a sound that has a depth many bands *(continued on page 10)*

Bejeweled by Gina : The Perfect Gift for Your Event



We all desire to make our events enjoyable and memorable, but as so many of our family and friends will celebrate the same important events as we will; unique and meaning keepsakes for participants become a challenge.

This challenge however is easily, affordably, and beautifully handled with *(continued on page 5)*

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Springtime Holidays: Spiritual Renewal and Celebrations

(continued from page 1) if they so choose. Passover is the celebration of a promise fulfilled, of a people freed. Easter is the celebration of a life that has been lived; a celebration because all that life promised is coming to pass. In the scheme of sacred times there are no other days that come close to Passover and Easter in the liturgy and hearts of believers.

However, the promises believers have made for the gifts received have not been fulfilled. It must be acknowledged that humankind has not learned all that it was taught or if mankind has acquired the knowledge we have not heeded the lessons taught by the givers of these gifts.

My belief is that these incomparable gifts were given to enable us to walk a path which all people can begin walking today to bring humanity closer to realizing the benefit of the lessons taught. At these family holidays we can begin at home.

Children: Be kind to your parents, they carry a heavy load and have the difficult job of raising you with all the distractions, inconveniences and perils of modern life. Approach all other people regardless of their age with an attitude of respect; some will earn it and return it. And those who don't will not be able to fault you.

Parents: Be understanding of your children; you know how difficult growing up is, because, you grew up not that long ago. Your children also suffer from being members of a group that is the focus of every form of temptation; now more than ever, leading by example is crucial. Treat your neighbors' children with the same respect that you should show your own and you will help them learn to be good neighbors and better sons and daughters.

Grandparents: Don't spoil your grandchildren or make it difficult for your children to raise them. Never belittle your children in front of theirs. Try to show both younger generations the value of experience while allowing them the freedom to learn as you did.

You who are fortunate enough to have grandparents: You live in a time when grandparents may live to be 100 years old, you may have their company and friendship well into your adult years. You have the opportunity to share yourself with people other than your parents who knew you from the moment you were born and have loved you for every minute of your life. Don't squander this magnificent gift by being too busy for grandma and grandpa.

Family: Be good neighbors, be good friends; the community you live in is only as good as you make it. You have ample opportunity to practice kindnesses of every type. In the modern world it is possible to live among strangers for your entire life; don't let those strangers include your neighbors.

Community Members: You belong to a community of the Creator's children, because we are all the Creator's children. Therefore you are expected to participate and to do so following a few simple rules. The primary rule is do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It is amazing how living this rule increases your sense of peace, reduces stress, and makes your immediate surroundings pleasant.

You can help the community by your example, stand up for what is right and stand up against what is wrong. Don't be one of the people who say, "things are bad, I don't like what I see or what I hear," but then sit down as a spectator and let the very things that are hurting our community continue unabated and without complaint. In this state and country you can do something powerful, you can speak up. If you do, you will fulfill your duty to your country, state, community and family.

Business Leaders: Yours are the engines that move the world, profit is your deserved reward for your efforts, but only if you trade value for value. No business can succeed without keeping an eye on the bottom line, but no business should exist that treats its employees unfairly, does not care about the community it exists in, and does not sell or provide quality services and products at a fair price. When workers are justly compensated they are more productive; when a business improves its community it gains respect and provides for the future; when it provides quality products and services, it becomes entitled to all the profits of its enterprise.

Elected and Appointed Leaders: Take your responsibility seriously, lead well, respect your authority and use the power entrusted to you by the community with care, deliberation and the knowledge that it is not just your constituents who are being effected. Above all remember that you represent the interests of the community, not your own interests; if your actions are at odds with the promises you made to the people who chose you, it is time to adjust your actions. Lead for the benefit of all of the community even those who disagree with you.

People: It takes less effort to smile than to frown; it is as easier to be kind than mean, and kindness feels a lot better; it is not more difficult to act than it is to complain, action is good for you. Do the right thing; it is usually safer as well as more fun.

A version of this message appeared last year, I have freshened it with help from Rev. Raymond J. McNally, LSOTPA. I hope you will pardon my republishing it.—Jerry O'Brien

Once again I thank: My parents, my brothers and sisters, all of my in-laws. Most importantly my best friend and wife, Hollis, and my three sons Sebastian, Jeremy and Henry O'Brien.

Mother's Day, Graduation, Memorial Day, and Father's Day are all just ahead. Now is a good time to plan your Party Calendar with Parties By Panache (714) 572 2190

Carolyn See: Conversation with the Author

(continued from page 1) pretty simple in a way, because it's like the lowest, I think it's the lowest rung in the ladder of literature outside of maybe teaching in a community college, teaching freshmen comp in the community college. You just write to an editor and you give him an on spec review of a book. Tell him these are my interests, you know whatever, you have to be sure to have an interest, you can't just say, I'll do anything, because they don't believe you.

You say I like ostriches, Australia, and osmosis; or I like Harry James, Henry James, and Jesse James. You just name off some things, three things and he'll reject the review and then you write him back and send him another review.

You always say I never miss a deadline. That's the magic sentence - *I never miss a deadline*. And then they'll assign you a review and you'll do it.

PBP: My interest is in part because I spend way too much money on books already, so this would enable me to get more books without the capital outlay.

Carolyn: Yeah, well, you just figure out what you're the most interested in and it could be catering, my first crazy wife and how that happened, jazz, the more obscure the better and one more.

PBP: And angels.

Carolyn: Angels, there you go. You're all set.

PBP: And it's a well paying job?

Carolyn: Oh sure.

PBP: Just what I've been looking for. What doors are opened by being a book reviewer for a newspaper?

Carolyn: What happens, you can join something like the National Book Critic Circle and then you meet people in the East and that's kind of important. Another thing, if you're known well enough as a book reviewer, then people will think twice before they give you a bad review, that's one of the main benefits. So if you're a writer, it's a very good thing to be a reviewer as well.

PBP: Oh alright, because they're afraid of you.

Carolyn: Well, they'll think twice. They're not as sleazy as they would give you good reviews if they hated the book, but they'll think twice before they murder you, which is always good.

PBP: When you are reviewing books do you read the whole book?

Carolyn: Absolutely. It's a sin not to read the whole book if you're reviewing it. Because, if you make a mistake and you're going to make a mistake even when you do read it; even if you're very, very careful, you'll make a mistake. If you don't read through as carefully as you can, you're just bound to make some horrible, horrible, mistake and then they'll be all

over you.

PBP: And that will probably end your career in that lucrative business?

Carolyn: It may.

PBP: I don't want to do that. I plan on reading them.

Carolyn: But if you're going to send a review, be sure its no more than 850 words and review a book that just came out so that there's a real chance that they will use it.

PBP: Okay that seems easy enough. I also notice that you've had your books very favorably reviewed by writers that are, the big guns as far as I know, Studs Terkel, William F. Buckley.

Carolyn: Bill....I can't even say it, sent me a bread maker once and actually I was at his house for lunch and Studs Terkel and I were very good friends. I was lucky enough to spend a great evening with him. He had a radio show and I was going around on tour being interviewed and was interviewed by him. Then we went out for drinks and then it turned into dinner and then he was so great, he had a stack of about ten copies of *Working on the table* and people would come over and say, "Oh Mr. Terkel, I just love your work, and he'd say 'here, have a copy,' and he just gave away copies of *Working* all night long. Then we were out to about 2 in the morning and you know, he was just nice, one of the great nights of my life. And funny, you know, just the funniest guy in the world. Nice. Still alive of course, he is a class act.

PBP: So what is he now, about 92 or 93?

Carolyn: I think he's about 3000 years old.

Death By Community College English

PBP: Now the thing with being a freshmen comp teacher at a community college, how do those people get there?

Carolyn: Oh, well...

PBP: Do people rescue them eventually?

Carolyn: No, not usually, it's a hideous world they live. I think its one step up from hell or it may be one step down and that again is something that happened to a lot of women unfortunately. I know two or three that are doing it right now, where they'll have two courses at Santa Monica City College, one course at Dominguez Hills and one course out in Northridge and then they just spend their lives driving and correcting freshmen comp classes, you know, and hire on a year-to-year basis, they're not on a tenure track and there's nowhere to go. You can't go up in that job; it is a dead end job. It's another reason not to be an English major unless you know something else and it's certainly another reason never to go into an MFA program.

PBP: Okay, that's good. That just saved me \$45,000. I've got a certificate to be a cook so you know...

Carolyn: Well, at least you know (continued on page 8)

It's good to be me. By Jeff Fliegler

For those of you who don't know Jeff is Hollis's world traveling nephew. In a time honored fashion he is paying his way by cooking in restaurants. On this particular trip he and his friend Chloe, started out in New Zealand and have slowly worked their way up and into Australia. Oh to be young and carefree.

So I have to say-- it's good to be me. Chloe and I rented a van in Sydney and have traveled to Cairns the past two weeks. Now let me fill you in with all the exciting details.....

The first day and night was a little dodgy, we drove a lot in bad weather and slept at a truck stop. After that it was all good. We stopped in Byron Bay next, a real cool little travel/hippie town. Scored good waves and stayed in a nice caravan park.

Soon we entered "The Motherland," as my chef from Aqua would call it. Better known as Queensland. Those of you who have never been here or don't know about Queensland, Australia, it holds the Gold Coast, Surfer's Paradise, the Sunshine Coast, the Great Barrier Reef, and tons of acres of rainforest. My Chef from Aqua is from there and the whole time I worked there he told me to be careful, because things eat you in Queensland and everything is a lot bigger. He's right!!!!!!

Anyway day three we came to Kirra Point, a suburb of Coolangata, a surf destination I've wanted to go to at least once before I died. This is also where they were having the WCT, a surfing event at Snapper Rock, another famous spot.

The largest city in the area is Surfers Paradise, which has the gaudiest display of tourism that we've ever seen. I tried to surf but wasn't too successful, so we just watched the contest. Chloe fell for Kelly Slater and that was all she talked about for the next three days. He's on her list..... inside joke.

We met up with another Californian, Johnny, a friend we made in New Zealand and have kept in touch with.

Off to Brisbane--a pretty city, but nothing special. We went out with another American friend we just had met along the way, Sarah. We danced and had fun, but the next day was hard.

We spent it at the Steve Irwin Zoo.....Crikee for all my Aussie mates (they used to hate it when I said that in my sad Aussie accent.) We saw crocks and roos and Chloe got to pet a Koala Bear. AHHHH how cute.

Then off to Nossa where I surfed a right hand point break that went on forever and made me look like I had style.

Angus Waters, town of 1770 was next, the last surf spot before the reef. There were heaps of jellies/stingers but nothing got me and the surf was pretty good.

Next we headed to Airlie Beach and the Whitsunday Islands. It was then that I realized how big Australia really is. Everyone said it's a big country, but driving that day really made me feel it.

When we arrived at our destination we went for some Mexican food, well, a poor example of it anyway. Mexican food in this part of the world is horrible. My amigos back home would be pissed off and disgraced if they tried it. We chilled out at the lagoon that day (you can't swim in the ocean because of the jellyfish.)

The next day we went to the Whitsunday's, which is a 74 island archipelago off the coast of Airlie. We were on a cruise ship that took us to three different islands. Beautiful beaches, a little snorkeling-- great day. We stayed in a hostel that night, because it was starting to get HOTTTTTT!!!!!!

From there we went to Mission Beach. We got lucky and ran into a really cool hostel, Scotty's. (For those of you who may be passing through.) We got in late, so they let us use the facilities and we slept in the van for the last time. It felt like 40 degrees C, actually it probably was. For my friends back home that's a lot of Fahrenheit (104°).

The next day we saw a cassowary bird, which is a cross between a ostrich, a turkey and a peacock. Also a kangaroo we almost ran over and some freaky lizards and plants. Queensland has some plants in the rainforest where they eat you too.

Then off to Cairns. That's where we took a snorkel trip to the Great Barrier Reef. We went to the Agincost Reef, which is in the far north and outer part of the Reef. It was like "Finding Nemo" but the real life version.

We did a rainforest trip the next day that took us to Cape Tribulation (part of the World Heritage List.) This area is where two places on the WHL meet--rainforest and reef.

The highlight was a boat ride down the Daintree River, very murky and creepy, to see some crocks in the wild. We did and it was SWEET DUDE! That's how the Aussies make fun of our accent.

Now Chloe and I are off to WA, the Sunshine Coast. Wish us luck.

Hope all is well whatever you're doing or where ever you are.

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The views expressed here are Jerry O'Brien's and reflect only his point of views. Think multiple personalities.

Over the years Jerry has experienced more than the normal wear and tear that most people go through and sometimes this affects his writing. Parties By Panache, Inc., does not intend to offend anyone and to that end Jerry is fairly heavily censored and adequately medicated, nevertheless adult supervision is recommended, adults with fairly thick skin, because young minds need not only to experience the written word they occasionally need to be protected from it.

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(continued from page 1) jewelry designed exclusively for your bridal party, (but don't forget the family of a Bat Mitzvah, Quincineria, etc.) These are keepsakes that the recipients will treasure and wear for years to come. The beautiful photographs taken by Lena Ringstad show the craftsmanship, diversity, and original styling that Regina Davis aka Gina, brings to her creations. Bejeweled by Gina evolved from a hobby of Regina's which she started while a student. Gina says, "I have always been an art lover," and she has been expressing that love over the last 25 years by beading. Constant questions about the resulting jewelry and subsequent requests for pieces led Regina to do what she has helped so many others do: Make art and bring that art to an appreciative market.

Gina says, "Jewelry is an expression of self," and following that thought one of a kind pieces for the people in your wedding party will allow you to express your one of a kind feelings for the people who will share in and help make this magical day with you.

To view the sensational selection of one of a kind designs and learn more about the stones, beads and metals used in creating these one of a kind art works go to www.bejeweledbygina.com, you will definitely want to spend some time looking around. To speak with Gina call 626-376-4241.

Remember mother's day, anniversaries, and birthdays are all good times to express your affection with for the unique women who are part of your lives.

To speak with Gina call (626)-376-4241.

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An Excerpt from “Angels in Brooklyn®” by Jerry O’Brien

This is an original work of fiction and all copyright protections apply. Jerry has long wanted to try his hand at writing a novel, so with the encouragement of his friend and mentor, Seamus “the Giant” O’Brien, Jerry has woven this tapestry of comic terror for your entertainment. If you see yourself in this work of fiction, you really need to examine your conscience and perhaps see a psychiatrist because you are not there. It’s all made up, everything and everyone.

WARNING: There is some adult language and this story is intended for adults or children whose parents approve of the content.

Prologue

January 5: The Spirit Plane

One angel only was created in this universe, and he was not made from the dust of creation or from the rib of an angel, but was created by the union of an angel and human. This angel grew up on Corlear Beach and played in Jamaica Bay and of late had been making art in Brooklyn.

Ray McNally, a throne, an angel of the third rank said, “I think I know what you’re going through, Alastar, the events of the past few days must seem alarming....”

“How could you possibly know what I’m going through? Have you ever awakened believing you’ve caused the deaths of three or four people, and then had your hand turn into a claw and not much later your foot into a hoof?”

“You have me there, that’s never happened to me in all the eons I’ve been in this universe. I have had to beat common sense into more than a few people, but I’ve never killed a human. I guess I could assume a goat-like form with cloven hooves ...”

“This wasn’t my choice; I didn’t ask to be an angel. This sucks.”

“If you turn out fallen I have to concede you’ve a point,” said Ray who spoke with an Irish tinged New York accent. “But if you remain in grace, a million years hence you will be as happy as any angel. Now it’s time for some true catechism.”

Alastar’s jaw dropped and Ray could almost hear his brain seize. It took him a moment to say “A million years? I was hoping for eighty, possibly one hundred years like an actual person.”

“Well you won the sweepstakes: immortality. J.R.R. Tolkien wrote a walking song with a title that sums it up, *The Road Goes Ever On*.

“In a hundred years everyone I know will be dead.”

“Nonsense, you’ll meet more people, you’ll meet angels, you may even have offspring,” said Ray.

“Can you see the future, do I have kids, with Sheila, come on man, what do you know,” asked Alastar?

“Nothing like that, but as you were born, I am assuming you can sire a child.”

“Oh, I thought you might actually know something.”

Ray gave Alastar a look that had it remained would have spoken a volume or two, but he had work to do and said, “But to get back to what you need to know. The religionists do not know the truth about the angels unfallen or the fallen angels. They have little bits and pieces, but they are always joined together incorrectly. For instance, Dionysius the Areopagite, a fraud and false oracle, said

there are seven seraphim and they spend all their time intoning praises to the Creator. Other traditions hold that there were twelve and still others seventy-two.”

Alastar was fidgeting with his sun glasses and cap. He was pacing one minute, sitting the next and then pacing again. It was making Ray tired watching him. He thought Alastar was an angel not yet done with being a man, and this lesson is going to be quite long.

“There were thirty seraphim who came with the Creator, and twenty-seven of them have always been hardworking angels managing projects in all areas of the universe. So you can see how the truth gets mixed up with myth. Dionysius gleaned from extensive reading a little bit about a few angels, and things that we do and thought he knew the whole story...”

Alastar didn’t like the spirit plane, to him it was just cloudy space with lights that appeared and disappeared like in those eye tests for peripheral vision. It also was unsettling when he looked down; it was the same as up or to the sides, cloudy space. He could feel his stomach begin to roll.

Ray said, “Let me make you feel a bit more at home.”

Instantly it seemed they were back on the Rockaway Peninsula, New York. They were sitting on the beach.

“Is that better?”

“Yes! Why didn’t we come here in the first place,” said the earth angel as he stood up on the sand, saw and heard small waves lapping at the shore under a bright sun, smelled the salt air, and heard the gulls calling. His shoulders dropped and he smiled as he sat down next to Ray.

Ray continued with his lecture, “Consider the size of the universe. At present you cannot, it is too vast, it stretches for billions of light years in every direction. Earth’s not the center; it’s closer to the frontier, currently four billion light years from earth to the edge of nothing. If you left Earth at the speed of light when you got to where the frontier is now, it would be gone. It would still be four billion light years from where you are. Its expanding at the speed of light in every direction and since the law is that no being can travel faster than the speed of light you can’t catch up with the frontier.”

“What, no speeders in space?”

Ray didn’t respond to that remark. Ray’s lecture sounded like he was channeling Carl Sagan, patron saint of pop astronomy. Alastar appeared bored, Ray imagined he would rather be back with Sheila, Quinn, and Liam. Alastar stood up and walked over to the water’s edge where he stooped and picked up a sand dollar. It felt damp, porcelain-like, and cold. He skimmed it side-arm across the water of the bay, which caused sparks to fly from the water’s surface every time the sand dollar skipped on it.

“Please don’t do that, this is an illusion, you could hurt someone throwing things blindly.”

“Whoa, I thought you took me home.”

“Sit down and don’t throw anything,” said the throne. “The Creator knew as far as travel went this universe is too large. He steps out of His universe and reenters where He wants to be. This way He can travel a million or a billion light years in little time. Maybe the time it would take you to think up an intelligent question,” explained Ray in most professorial tones.

“Thanks for the vote of confidence, Ray.”

“Think nothing of it. Hyper-luminal travel is the primary function of the spirit plane. The operative mechanism is a tesseract.

An Excerpt from “Angels in Brooklyn” by Jerry O’Brien

There are angels who can explain it; I'm not one of them. I know however that it works.

Alastar was looking down at the sand and then out the bay and the ocean beyond. He started pushing sand with his foot, looking at the trench it made.

Ray asked, "Did I tell you that when I discovered that you were the earth angel I told Marvin I was glad it was you and not Rafferty. I always believed you would make a better student and ultimately angel?"

"No, you know you never told me that."

"Yes, that's correct," said Ray unable to lie.

"Alastar, you need to know the number of our adversary; the number of angels that fell and the number of angels that remain true to the Creator. Ten percent of the Creator's angels were corrupted and benighted by a seraph who likened himself to a new and unequalled star. He liked to call himself the new light. You have heard his sobriquet translated as Lucifer.

"More often Satan, you seldom hear a moron state 'I'm a Lucifer worshiper,' although I'd want to kick his ass just the same. Those idiots don't bear enduring," said Alastar.

"Yes. There were thirty seraphim who assembled to form a perfect sphere around the Creator."

"So that means three fell."

"Good I didn't think you were paying attention. Their assemblies began with the reciting by each seraphim of an oath of fealty. Each oath would be followed by the chanting of the oath by every angel in attendance."

"That could easily be corrupted into circling constantly, sort of in a permanent holding pattern, as it is reported more than one jet is, over Kennedy -"

"Would you please let me finish?"

"Oh... Right... Sorry."

Alastar leaned back, supporting himself with his hands behind him on the illusory sand, the faux sun warming his face. After a short time he felt something nestling under his hand. He pulled it up in his hand and held it up in front of him and said, "What the-"

Ray grabbed the creature and tossed it into the bay where it immediately sank.

"Fallen Guardian, no worries, they like to get near anything that is animate because they tend to get lonely. Don't worry about him."

"Oh shit! My hand..." Alastar was shaking, as if they would fall off, some very nasty looking claws and scales halfway up his forearm.

"Maybe you should wear gloves, you seem to be allergic to guardians," said Ray as he took Alastar's claw between his big hands. It took well over a minute for the change back to a human hand to be complete."

"I am going to have to get some advice on this reaction you have to guardians. But now Lucifer - we'll call him that for convenience - fomented the rebellion and deceived two of his fellow seraphim so they would join him. They were Belilyn and Caliphius. These three unlike all of the other seraphim, had a latent defect. In Lucifer it was his enormous pride in himself. In Belilyn it was her estimation of her intellect and beauty, and in Caliphius it was greed. Together they took all of the eight ranks which they had commanded in the service of the Creator.

"That would mean that 333,333,333 angels fell."

"I think that is about right, let me see, yes. I think you're right."

"I take it you weren't an engineer before you got to look after me."

"There are no angels who are engineers, per se-

"Just some who can count?"

"Very well, may we return to this lesson? The angels, who were under the direction of the errant seraphs, fell as well."

The fake beach was getting hot under the similarly unreal sun, so Ray reached into his pocket and extracted a beach umbrella.

"Where'd you get that," Alastar asked?

"We all keep a personal portal with us at all times. It allows us to get things that we need without having to carry a lot of luggage. You put things into your storage space and you can pull them out wherever you are."

"No way."

Ray lifted and opened the umbrella putting it between him and the illusory sun. The umbrella stayed where it was put.

"Yes, way. The rebellion failed. As if that were a big surprise. Failed rebellion led to exile in the area of the universe where the earth eventually formed.

Lucifer had convinced Belilyn and Caliphius by a lie, that they would rule creation. No one to my knowledge had ever lied before, so they never saw it coming. This is an example of invention as opposed to creation. The Creator created perfection, Lucifer invented distortion of perfection."

Alastar's nose got itchy and he raised the hand that had touched the fallen Guardian to scratch it. His hand had a lethal reek. It smelled like a well-aged and charred cadaver. Alastar heaved.

Ray quickly pulled a wipe-n-dry of sorts out of his pocket, grabbed the slightly green angel, and cleaned him up.

"The fallen guardians smell as bad on the spirit plane as they do on earth, the reek just stays much closer to them out here, I think it has something to do with gravity. Feeling better?" he asked.

The slightly green angel held his hand up and shook his head up and down.

"We better move," said Alastar as he started to rise.

"Stay put," said Ray, as he refreshed their illusory surroundings. "The lie would have been a truly formidable weapon, but inventions can be used by anyone-"

"Not here on earth they can't-" Alastar was silenced by Ray putting his hand over his mouth.

"One liar can't stop another from lying so the lie became much more common than the truth. The fallen have lied about the Creator and His universe for tens of thousands of years. They are stuck near or on earth so they have the time and the numbers for a lot of misinformation and rumors."

Alastar was now compulsively sniffing his fingers.

"Getting used to this new life is flippin' difficult," said Alastar.

"Perhaps the first days, but you'll get the hang of things. Now where was I? There are two things that you should always keep in mind. First: the Creator is still creating the universe; it'll be a work in progress for eternity. He's busy, not sitting around with a bunch of eternal worshipers. The Creator brought us angels to help with the work of creation. When you look at the size of *(continued on page 9)*

Carolyn See: Making a Living as a Writer

(continued from page 3) somebody can teach you how to cook, but I don't know about the whole writing thing. I think those MFA programs are a disgrace and on the other hand, they keep fiction writers alive and so that's probably a good thing.

PBP: That seems similar to teaching jazz. There are all these musicians who otherwise would have to do something completely wasteful, but because they can teach, they can also play. That's a blessing to everybody. You don't think the MFA programs are as much of a blessing.

Carolyn: Well, I think they implicitly promise something that they can't give, which is that after you get your MFA you will be published. You'll have a life as a writer and that's just absolutely not fair, I mean, it can't be done. So that's why you have MFA's who end up teaching freshmen comp in East Oregon Junior College. Then they are 41 years old or whatever and they think what happened to my life?

PBP: Let's leave the junior colleges for some sunnier terrain. I saw that you are going to be at the Santa Barbara's Writers Conference this year?

Carolyn: Yes.

PBP: I am going myself.

Carolyn: You do pick up interesting stuff and if they have agents, you know it's very good for you to poke around and talk to agents about your book and stuff like that.

PBP: I also hear it is a great learning experience.

Carolyn: Well, let me just say something, you didn't ask but it is sort of implicit in some of your questions, I would call it "How do you make a living as a writer?" How do you put it all together?

I think you really need to do a little bit of teaching; a little bit of reviewing; and a little bit of magazine work. A lot, or more, of magazine work and you apply for grants and you do your work.

I mean your "real work," but the main thing is, you can't really put all your eggs in one basket. It really pretty much does have to be a combination of stuff to keep you floating as a writer.

When you do have a book out then you have to spend a lot of time touring or you know, you saw me blabbing to the ladies, I spend an awful lot of time blabbing to the ladies.

I had an e-mail today from a wonderful guy Hugh Nissenson who is a novelist, but who is not very well known. He wrote an amazing book called *Days of Awe* which is a post-9/11 book, but it's really about how scary it is, the world and of dying no matter what we do to avert that, you know, we're all going to die. And he just wrote me to tell me about his new book and wish me a nice Christmas.

I had been off blabbing to some ladies and was asked what were some good books and I mentioned *Days of Awe* and of course, they didn't listen, they were just out on the town, but

the woman who ran the MasterCard thing, who was selling the books, I saw her later at another group of maybe 400 ladies who weren't there even on the pretext of books, it was something else, and she came over to talk to me.

She said, "Oh my god, I forgot to tell you, I went out after I heard you talk about it and I bought *Days of Awe*, and oh my god, what a book that was!

Then you think, well, that's how you make the connections. It's like one out of every hundred people you talk to listens to one hundredth of what you say and then maybe they get it. Here's this woman who never would have read that book if I hadn't been ranting on about it.

Hugh Nissenson, the author, was very, he was a little bit, to my mind, a little bit snippy, he said "I'm 73 and I'm going to be 74 and I choose, I don't to go out to talk to lunch groups, I choose to stay at home and be with my wife and my children and do my work, to live productively."

I thought, well that's great, that's why you sell one copy of your book a year. You know, if you don't go out and sell, nobody will buy and trying to get people to buy a hard cover novel is like trying to get them to eat worms, you can do it but it's difficult.

PBP: I think what book sellers need to do is to examine me and find out what gene I have because I just buy books constantly. So it may be a genetic thing.

Carolyn: I think you're a sick man.

PBP: Well, I've known that for a long time. I remembered what slipped my mind earlier, and that was I'd taken your advice and started writing letters to authors and even if it turns into nothing I will have one great collection of author's signatures. I've had Koontz, I wrote to him and he sent me back a letter and Ursula K. Le Guin sent me back a letter and I can't think of who else.

Carolyn: Well, that's it and it's very sweet and what it does, it just breaks that little membrane between you and them, you know, it brings people in the "literary" world just right over into your mailbox. And then you can write them back and when your book comes out you can say, I wrote you on the occasion of this, this and this and now I want to ask you for a blurb.

PBP: I read a lot of the things on your page and what other people have printed. I wanted to talk about some things that haven't been covered, which I have done, I think. You are a great person to interview because you did most the talking. I've had some people who I've had to try and pull words out, but that's just very hard, it doesn't work.

Carolyn: Yes, Time magazine had an interview Robert De Niro and he was just a notoriously terrible subject so they sent out its most talkative editor to see if she could pry something out of him and then she would ask these long questions and he would say "yes" "no", but I mean she had set it up so that it worked.

PBP: That doesn't work for me because no one wants to hear what I've got to say. They want to read about (continued on Page 9)

Carolyn See: Conclusion

(continued from page 8) the people I interview. And that brings me to my forgotten question; this guy's name is Hugh Nissenson.

Carolyn: Yes, and he wrote *Days of Awe* which is just a terrific book, I think you're going to find it very hard to find, but he doesn't care about that stuff I guess, he just cares about doing the work and he's just, you know, he knows he's very, very good and that's about it. It was published by somebody in the mid-West, I can't remember, but a mid-West publisher.

PBP: And am I correct you have been and returned from India? Are you going to be writing anything about that?

Carolyn: I did. If they do publish it, there's a little thing that might be in West Magazine over the New Year, I haven't heard from them yet, it's a little bit cranky, so I don't know if they'll publish it.

But I don't think I'm necessarily going to be writing about it because, it's so over the top that I wouldn't even know how to get into it. I went back and read *A Passage to India* and it still holds up after oh, 70 or 78 years. But he was there for years, or a couple of years and he was private secretary to a Maharajah, so he had a real ways to get into the society, but if you just look at the surface, it's extraordinary, it's just beautiful, crazy, but you don't, I didn't know what any of it meant, I just didn't have a clue about what any of it meant. But boy, I loved it, it was just incredible.

PBP: Now I know there's a book that I read your review of, that I have to go out and get and that is *Amazing Disgrace*.

Carolyn: Oh, that's a swell book.

PBP: It sounded very funny.

Carolyn: And very well written, just a unique idea for a book. Just crazy and he is very worldly and well, he's just worldly, and doesn't conform to the boundaries of a regular novel. It's good.

PBP: Sounds great. Talk to you again soon. Bye.



How to Fix Yourself and Change the World: The Short Form

The following ten rules for fixing the world were put together in 2000 by Angela Bischoff and Tooker Gombert and published in their article *Ten Commandments for Changing the World*, which was published in *Alternatives Journal*. Volume: 26. Issue: 4.

The article is well is worth reading. It suggests making bold statements to accomplish your goals. Their goal is to stop pollution and other dangers caused by the automobile. To memorialize the 100th Anniversary of the first automobile caused death, on September 16, 1999 they buried a car complete with all the funeral trappings. Their statement received national coverage and brought attention to their cause.

Their rules could be applied to fixing yourself as well as fixing the world.

1. **You Gotta Believe:** Have faith and trust yourself and your purpose.
2. **Challenge Authority:** If you and your purpose have merit, press the issue.
3. **Know The System:** You can't work it in ignorance, but with knowledge comes the ability to be heard.
4. **Take Action:** It gets things done, energizes you and your friends and you'll both lose weight.
5. **Use The Media:** Help solve the problem of "slow news" days.
6. **Build Alliances:** Look for collaborators, they exist and they are looking for you.
7. **Apply Constant Pressure:** It creates diamonds, changes minds and is very hard to resist.
8. **Teach Alternatives:** Change is easier when your audience can see their goal and how to get to it.
9. **Learn From Your Mistakes:** A mistake that teaches is valuable; a mistake repeated is a waste of time and energy.
10. **Take Care of Yourself and Each Other:** Changing the world requires better care of people. Without you, you can't effect change for good or ill. Make yourself your priority.

I'm going to try these out on myself and see how they work, I'll report back.

Jerry O'Brien: *Angels in Brooklyn*, excerpt

(continued from page 7) the universe you can see why he needed to bring the number he did. Three billion angels were to be stationed throughout the universe to do the chores that such a dynamic creation needs. The number is hardly excessive.

Second: The Creator's two greatest desires are to have sentient and sapient life in his universe and to have those living beings appreciate the majesty of His perfect universe.

"That doesn't sound too difficult, we're already here and I dig the universe."

"That's true. He is pleased that man can understand a bit of

His perfect work."

"Understand 'a bit' of His perfect work? The Discovery Channel says we're a step or two away from the theory of everything."

"Human pride: take a first little step, and think you have just won the New York City marathon with a record time. No, you're not there yet. The Creator formulated every detail of the laws of the universe and using the same materials that have been employed for eternity to create universes; He created the only one that is perfect. Man is beginning to understand how some of these laws work, which pleases the Creator greatly. So if they don't disappoint Him by

Shabbatones: Jewish A' capella Jazz

(Continued from Page 1) using traditional acoustic and electrical instruments can not equal.

I had the pleasure of seeing the group perform at Temple Beth Sholom in Santa Ana and speaking with the group's music director Rachel Fried.

Jerry: How did you first find out about the Shabbatones?

Rachel: Shabbatones. When I was in high school I came Penn and to the Hillel and I took a tour of it and was told about all the different things that Penn had to offer and one of them was the Shabbatones and actually at the time I thought are you kidding me. My dad thought this was the perfect thing for me and I said, "No, I could never do it, much too Jewish," but it ended up it being a huge part of my life once I got here.

Jerry: So you're in your 4th year now; you've been singing for 4 years. How long have you been leading the group?

Rachel: I was the music director in my sophomore year and now I am again this semester, I took a hiatus. A large part of my being involved has been advising. We have pretty substantial group of past members who end up advising current leadership and this is important in terms of continuity.

Jerry: The Shabbatones just came out of the studio recording the new CD? What will that be called?

Rachel: We're going to call it *From Philly with Love*, but we had an amazing recording session. We recorded half of the CD last year and we did half of it this semester and we're going to be coming out with it Thursday, April 12th, 2007.

Jerry: Your spring show, is that something you do at Penn?

Rachel: Yes, it is and it will be at Heyer Space, Harrison College House (High Rise South). In addition, we are doing gigs in the local area and all over the country. We go on tours, but we do one big show in the fall and one big show in the spring for the Penn community. They're where we showcase all of our new music and it is a pretty big deal, we get a few hundred attendees and family. It's where we premier our new material.

Jerry: How do you decide your tour schedule?

Rachel: There are a few factors, first of all we have to figure out where we think there would be enough people who would be interested in hearing us; so those are generally areas where there are a large number of Jews in synagogues and also ones that have enough money, so they can afford to bring us in. Also part of it is where we want to go, it's fun for us to go to California or Florida during the winter when we're stuck in cold Philadelphia.

Jerry: How do you choose the music? Some of it's traditional; some of it's pop. How do you work that out?

Rachel: The leaders of the group have a vision and they say that this is what we want to accomplish this semester. It may be to do more classical stuff, or more Jewish music or more Israeli pop and American pop and that kind of comes

through. But once we have that general stage set for the group, then we suggest songs that we like and we compile a lot of music. The leaders go back and they rip into all the suggestions. They think about all the ones that they have in their mind and they try to pick a certain number for the semester that they think is a good grouping, that has good variety, is interesting, has more different kinds of solos, different styles. Most of the songs are songs that the group has suggested. I think that the things that are suggested reflect the leader's vision.

Jerry: Now the gentleman who sings like a drum machine, is he just considered bass?

Rachel: No he is a vocal percussionist or beat boxer. His name is David and he is awesome.

Jerry: I saw him at Temple Beth Sholom and for the first two or three songs; I thought you were using a drum machine.

Rachel: Yes, he's incredible. You can talk to him for hours about how he developed this skill. Did he go into his whole spiel?

Jerry: Yes he did.

Rachel: That's pretty interesting just hearing about him and his background and we're so lucky to have him. He was a great addition. I think he brings us to a whole new level.

Jerry: Is there normally someone in the ensemble who sings vocal percussion?

Rachel: There is, there always is. But he's the best one we've had. I think it adds a lot to our music to have that, it adds the whole beat. He does symbols and the whole thing, it's pretty amazing.

Jerry: The Shabbatones require an audition. It is a competitive program, you have to compete. How many people normally come out?

Rachel: It really varies. Usually we have 30 to 40 people audition a year and then based on the year they usually take somewhere between 2 and 5; something like that. It depends on the year though. It is hard to get into and its getting harder. When I first auditioned I don't think it was nearly as competitive as it is now. I'm really excited that we can require that high level to gain entry.

Jerry: Also I understand none of you are music majors. A lot of engineering majors though. Have any of the alumni gone on to make a career in music?

Rachel: No. Everyone has done different things, doctors, lawyers, business people. We're a very super special school. One alumnus has his own business and he does some professional music stuff on the side. He records albums for people, he's a sound engineer. His name is Peretz Cik. But he's the only one really who is still in the music scene which I guess is good and bad.

Jerry: The alumni, they still participate.

Rachel: Yes, in the spring we have a big alumni weekend in New York where a lot of them come in. We're all going in and it should be fun to spend the whole weekend together and hang out. Former members still come to our shows; we're a tight group of people which makes it so fun. Most of my best friends from college are from this group and I still keep in touch with most of the

Shabbatones: Jewish A' capella Jazz

alumni.

Jerry: Now do people other than Jews ever try out? Or is this something where it is that popular?

Rachel: We've had a few. To be honest, we always wonder what would happen if someone was great who auditions and wasn't Jewish. If they're comfortable singing this music, yes, for sure, they'd be in.

Jerry: The Shabbatones have only been around six years?

Rachel: Yes, it's very new. I think that's why we have been able to see so much progress, we're still in our infancy. When I started my freshman year the leaders of the group were the founders. My friend Kate and I who were the next group of leaders were the first leadership that wasn't from the founding group.

Jerry: You transitioned successfully; it's like transferring the family business almost.

Rachel: True, we had to put systems in place, so it isn't a huge transition every time someone graduates or leaves a position. Now we do an annual turnover of leadership and we are always priming new people. We have people do smaller leadership activities, we have concert managers and tour managers and CD managers, so that everyone takes a part in the group's management.

Jerry: Are some of the people who are in the group in graduate school?

Rachel: Not right now, we're all undergraduates. But in the past we have had graduate students. So it kind of varies from year to year. Most graduate students don't have a lot of time

and we do require a lot of time you know. We rehearse for six hours a week and we also have, performances all the time, it's a lot to give to an organization when you're focusing on specific goals, you know PhD candidate or whatever.

Jerry: I was wondering about the people who make up the group?

Rachel: Just in terms of the diversity, which is one of the things that makes us really unique, people come from such different backgrounds in terms of academics, but also religiously. We have orthodox members and reform members and non-affiliated members and conservative members and everything in between, you know. And I just think that working together is a great example of pluralism in this world right now which I don't think you see so much of that. I think that's what is great about Hillel in general. On campus it does promote diversity, but I think the Shabbatones is a great representation of people working together and spending time together and respecting one another and learning from one another. I think that's what great about music and performing arts and art in general, that it does create that bond, that brings people together, so I think that's what makes it so powerful.

Jerry: My understanding is that most people who are in musical groups together stay in touch for the rest of their lives.

Rachel: I hope that happens. I think that we have the workings of that so we shall see. Its only been six years so right now its working but who knows.

Check Out the New Crew At www.partiesbypanache.com



Above is one of our new avatar greeters that you will find on many of the Parties by Panache web pages. The avatars, each of whom has his or her own personality will tell you what is new on the web site in general, or on their specific page. Since the current avatars are learning about the pages themselves you can expect quite a few of changes, so please stop by

the site to see what's going on.

The majority of the voices are currently text to speech and are understandable, accented, but a tad robotic. Within the month of April all of the voices will be replaced by actual Parties by Panache staff members. The members will have the ability to present on site any new developments at Parties by Panache that they think will be of benefit or interest to you.

The avatars lip sink better than Millie Vanilli (or Ashley Simpson if you are too young to remember MV) and will follow the motion of your cursor with head and eyes, so they are quite life like.

If you do not wish to hear the avatar speak there are options on each one for volume and mute.



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