

Digger Dan, the Generic Man

I saw Digger Dan the other day. Hadn't seen him around for most of the summer. Asked him why and he just said he couldn't spend all his time in Saguache. Said he had some business to attend to in Bosnia. Didn't have to ask him what. He told me anyway.

"Just checkin' on some old Nazi stuff. These new cats are calling it ETHNIC CLEANSING, or some such nonsense. Same Old World crap. Of course, you got some of them kind over here running around in their hoods. Guess there's a few of them everywhere. Have to keep them away from guns and power though, or you'll have body and soul raping going on."

He looked at me like no one in Saguache had an interest in Bosnia.

"What's been happening here in the land of blue earth or is it Buluu Water," he said. "I keep forgetting. Seems like people who occupy a place for a short time are always changing its name. Before the Ute came, I seem to recall the people they pushed out called it Sucking Mud. I can see why the Ute changed its name. Mud looks a lot different if your up there ridin' a horse instead of puttin' one foot in front of the other. You either have to adapt, move on, or get out. Anyway Sawatch sounds good even if you don't know what it means. I heard some tourist I hitched a ride with call it Sagoochie. I just smiled and told him he was lost. I said Sagoochie was a town outside Autsugi at the base of Mount Fugi where they mined Blue Talcum powder that the Nipponese stole from the Druids of Stonehenge eighty five thousand years ago.

He looked at me kinda' funny like, his mouth dropped open and he says, "Really? He turned to his wife and in all seriousness says, 'Cutesy Pie, lets go there on our next vacation. Let me tell you, I nearly barfed. I said 'Now wait a minute Son. You mean you haven't heard of what's happening there. Why the Serbs, Croats, Croaks, and Crooks are committing genocide against the Druids, the Dramamine, and those who drink Daiquiries.' Now, he knew about Daiquiries. Let me tell you the vacationing feeding frenzy dropped out of his eyes like a monocle in a Mountain Valley basketball game."

Digger Dan Paused, then continued.

"Then this guy got a real sober look on his face. 'This is serious,' he says. 'If Bush and VP Clinton can't do anything but sit on their buns in a crisis like this, they need to be recalled.' Well, I just looked at him in a pretty serious way and said, 'Son, we already got a recall of Bush and Clinton going. Turn right here. The Saguache County Court house is just a couple blocks down the street. You can sign it there. I got out of his yuppie-mobile and headed down to the park where a Native American Pow-Wow was gettin' ready to take off. Even from down there I could hear the whole court house staff guffawing when he tried to sign that petition. I asked myself, where did this cat get his education. Then I suddenly realized, he didn't."

I must have looked at Digger Dan in a funny way. I didn't realize he had such a sense of humor. But he wasn't being funny, and he was on me like a flash.

"How long have I known you," he asks.

"Twenty years, I guess, maybe more," I said.

His eyes drilled into me.

"Let me tell you Son. That fellow I hitched a ride with is the result of an educational system that's behind schedule in building a Maginot Line for a war that's already lost."

"Maginot Line."

"Like the Great Wall of China," he says.

"The Great Wall?"

I could see his neck getting red.

"My God Son. Can't you figure out anything. How about the British guns pointing out to sea at Singapore in forty-one."

"Ah!" I said, "Battle ships and Billy Mitchell! What we need is a Billy Mitchell! Right! "

"Right. You got it. A little foresight," he says.

"Let me tell you Son I've seen it all. Years ago I knew a bunch of scribes. Acted like they'd been lost in the Qattara Depression ever since man got booted out of the garden. Think they were from Thebes or Memphis. Egypt that is. Can't remember which. Funny lot they were. Absolutely convinced that the only people who needed to know how to write were themselves. Said the only way good teaching could take place was if students heard it from the mouth of the scribe himself. You know, that 'From the horses mouth bunch.' I always considered them to be the jack ass bunch. Asses for short. It hasn't changed. You know Gutenberg wasn't too well liked. Why the idea he had of making a whole lot of copies of the same book was like firing the first shot of a revolution. And it was. Wouldn't you know it, the common man sort of liked the idea of reading and finding out things without having to bow to a scribe. But let me tell you, the powers that be didn't fancy the idea. I see the same thing going on now. You got a lot of, well, er, lets say horses mouths, shootin' their necks off about the use of computers in schools. Kind of the same bunch who didn't like books back in Gutenberg's time. You say something about every kid having a computer in school and they go into a spin like a howlinhg dervish. I walked into one of them English schools for the common folks back when Queen Victoria was a girl. You know, back before your Blue and Grey mixed it up back east. The old headmaster there was railing against books. Said each student didn't have to have a book. Too expensive he said. Said the purpose of education was to teach them what was known, not teach them how to ask questions, and find out for themselves. You know, didn't like the idea of thinking for yourself. Said students who asked questions, disagreed with their teacher, and who set out to learn from books on their own, were too young to handle the knowledge left laying around in books."

He paused and looked me squarely in the eye.

"If you don't get those computers in the hands of the common people, and that means in the hands of those who learn young and easily, they are going to be used by those who would control you, your kids, your friends, your future. I wasn't trying to be funny with my story about the tourist. That tourist was a watcher not a doer. You know the key hole-kind. A voyeur. There are too many people on this earth who are tourists. They came to earth for a free ride. You know, take pictures of the natives. Like to have a steak flopped into the frying pan while they sit on their haunches and complain about flatulent cows, cowpokes, and environmental pollution. Heavens I seen more gas at your Democratic and Republican convention than I've seen when two-hundred million buffalo got up to stretch on the Great Plains at first light before the Old World crowd, crowded in here. Sorry, I got a little side tracked there. When these key-hole watchers are gone they leave nothing, have learned nothing, and have given nothing. There not good at books, except tour-aids, not good at listening...think computers are only good for making airline connections. And you know what's really the pits, some of them are educators, rich ranchers and farmers, middle aged business men, and by golly I hate to say it, but some are little old ladies and gentlemen who signed off the world when they retired. You know, when you have to work for a livin', like most common folk do, you can't afford the likes of them, I been talkin' about. Their the ones that spend the common man's money and have been puttin' a mortgage on you kids future."

Digger Dan didn't even look back when he left. He kind of left me in a lurch. But I heard him mutter as he walked away, "I MIGHT SEE YOU AGAIN IF YOU HAVE A MIND FOR IT!".

Now I had a hard time comprehending all that he said. I had to think it over again. Dan's that way. Like most generic men, you know he's saying far more than meets the eye.

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