

**November, 2004**

**Parking in the Fire Lane Revisited**

Who are these people that have to stop in the fire lane to go to the liquor store? Can't they be nailed for illegal parking and drinking and driving and endangering the lives of others?

**Bentz Street Rawbar Goes the Way of the Chesapeake Bay Oyster**

I have written about the Bentz Street Rawbar before. This past weekend was their last weekend as the Rawbar. They have been around for more years than I know of and have gone through good times and bad. Ironically, last Thursday marked the four year anniversary of my move to downtown Frederick just three blocks from the Rawbar. On that first evening, I headed into town reveling in the thought of all the good bars I could walk to. Coming first upon the Rawbar, I decided to check it out. I had past it numerous times leaving downtown returning to my mundane existence in the burbs.

If I remember correctly, Marcy was working that night...meeting her and seeing her in action was most entertaining. Over the past four years I have seen staff come and go...Marcy, Ann, Bob, and others to numerous to name (or remember). Others, like Mary and Brenda, are still there. I have seen many entertaining bands there like the Bobby Flurrie Band, the Nighthawks (who I first saw at UVA in 1980!), Black Magic and the Last Dog Standing, Roger "Hurricane" Wilson (who did backup for the likes of the Allman Brothers and Stevie Ray Vaughn), and Magic Red and the Voodoo Tribe.

Sadly, the passing of Rick late in the winter of 1993, left his wife, Maria, the sole owner and manager of the Rawbar. From then on, it always seemed like Maria was just going through the motions of running the place. Mugo, the full-time manager, ran the day-to-day operations and worked himself to the bone in the process. The Rawbar has been up for sale for some time and apparently a sale was to be completed effective Sunday night. From then on, the establishment will be known as the "Bentz Street Sports Bar."

I will have a hard time adapting to that. I will miss the opportunity to listen to, with almost never a cover charge, live blues seven days a week. Sports bars are okay. They frequently do well in neighborhoods where many people walk (thankfully) to the bars. But I really am not a sports aficionado. I love music and I particularly like the blues. I can watch sports at home...I can't listen to live blues bands. The Bentz Street Rawbar will not likely be replicated anytime soon in this area or any area for that matter. So the new place will have a bunch of TV's tuned into sports I don't care about and probably a few pool tables that may or may not attract a somewhat unsavory crowd. This section of Frederick does that anyhow.

Saturday night I had planned celebrate what is and what will never be again by heading out to the Bentz Street Rawbar to listen to Cathy Ponton King work her magic. Unfortunately, I fell asleep and missed it. I hope that I will be able to keep track of the bands that I have seen at the Rawbar over the years to follow their careers and check them out when they are in the area. I feel sorry for the people that have been going there for many more years than I have. They have much more past to dwell on than I do. People say we should not dwell on the past but without the past we are nothing.

**Passing On**

I need to get more details on this but it is my understanding that my good Navy buddy, John Warrix, who retired and settled in Pensacola, Florida, a few years back, passed away in his sleep on October 31st while visiting his parents.

**AG Ashcroft Flaunts Checks and Balances Implemented by Our Forefathers**

In this Washington Post article dated 13 November 2004, Ashcroft Decries Court Rulings, AG John Ashcroft basically ignores the notion of Separation of State as defined in the U.S. Constitution by stating that "federal courts have endangered national security by ruling against the Bush administration on issues related to the war on terrorism." He goes on to note that second guessing the executive branch endangers the security of our nation.

According to the U.S. Constitution Online, "The Separation of Powers devised by the framers

of the Constitution was designed to do one primary thing: to prevent the majority from ruling with an iron fist. Based on their experience, the framers shied away from giving any branch of the new government too much power. The separation of powers provides a system of shared power known as Checks and Balances. Three branches are created in the Constitution. The Legislative, composed of the House and Senate, is set up in Article 1. The Executive, composed of the President, Vice-President, and the Departments, is set up in Article 2. The Judicial, composed of the federal courts and the Supreme Court, is set up in Article 3. Each of these branches has certain powers, and each of these powers is limited, or checked, by another branch."

It is my believe that the executive branch in recent years has used its power without the agreement of the American people (and the people of the world) and with very limited restrictions. I applaud the judicial branch for exercising its rights and responsibilities to "check and balance" the powers of the executive branch!

### **The Last Samurai**

I watched The Last Samurai last night. I thought it was an entertaining movie. If you have read Shogun by James Clavell, you will notice similarities to many parts of the book. While it is endearing to see an American warrior shed his past life of killing the natives, in the protagonist's case, American Indians, for a live of fighting with the underdog, the Samurai, I was disappointed to think that Hollywood would have to glorify the struggle of an ancient Japanese cultural phenomenon by making a round eye the hero.

Nonetheless, the scenery was beautiful and the action stimulating. I found myself thinking of the mountains and fields of Korea where I lived for years and those of other Asian countries I have visited. Life has been somewhat upsetting recently. Watching the lifestyle of the Japanese country folk in this movie made me envious of the simplicity of their life. Yes it was hard...you got up early and you worked late. When your day was done, you had little to think about other than a good meal and a good night's sleep. Sometimes I wish my life were that simple.

### **Whoa!**

I had a dream I was eating raw oysters. I woke up choking on my tongue.

### **Car Pool Tunnel Vision**

Have I done this one before? I asked a friend in the office who commutes from Hagerstown how he liked driving back and forth to work in the dark (I hate it). He said, "I feel like I am living in a tunnel and, if I do not go out for lunch, I might never know any different."

I can sympathize. The drive from Frederick to Sterling and back is done in almost total darkness but for the red lights I follow and the white lights coming at me. Thankfully I have a decent sized window in my office, albeit one that faces north. It is much more natural light that most employees at my facility see every day. The added benefit of the mating hawks and of other wildlife activity out my window is a pleasure I could not have asked for. After 23 years of working in kitchens, secure spaces, and computer rooms without a view to the outside, I finally have an office with a window. Thankfully, it is not a Microsoft "Window."