We Begin, Again, Constantly



Once again, Immune to Boredom begins.

A load of bosh, I hear you say. How dare this Unreliable Narrator come along and pretend he will provide regular content for his small-yet-largely-indifferent readership? Haven't we been fed this horse pucky once or thrice before?

Well, yeah. Hard to go head to head with that assessment.

Seven years and two months ago, I launched this blogswamp to give myself a reason to write. I figured if I committed myself to regular, on-time postings, I would break out of an illness-induced torpor and sharpen my writing skills. That was about as far ahead as I could think about things. I had no justification other than this: I needed it.

Things went pretty well. My traffic was never going to break the internet, but there was steady appreciation and growth. It was encouraging and confidence affirming. Within a year, I had my first real-life writing assignment from The Bitter Southerner. This kicked off my second career as a features writer. Lots of work for Bitter Southerner, some features for Flamingo Magazine (one of them scoring me a major award!) and occasional bits and pieces for a few other publications. And all through that, I kept the blog up and running, more-or-less regularly.

And then I started feeling shitty. Like really, incredibly shitty, unable to concentrate or sleep or write. I had zero interest in playing guitar; my best friend and longest musical

collaborator had to browbeat me into what turned out to be my last gig. We played in October, 2018. Every note was a labor, the evening interminable. I went home and put my gear in a closet. I barely played so much as a note for the better part of three years.

Turns out I was suffering the front end of an aggressive lymphoma. <fn>Angioimmunoblastic T-cell Lymphoma for the medically curious.</fn> By the time I was diagnosed, I could barely walk across the room without needing a nap.

And yet: With Stanwyck's help, I flayed myself through the 2019 Big Ears hoolie, conducted a few interviews, and posted several pre- and post-event articles. Two days after the music stopped, I gave myself over to the tender mercies of the medical-industrial complex at the University of Florida cancer center. I was given a 60% chance of surviving the treatment. If successful, I had a 40% chance of remaining cancer free for another year.

I managed to keep regular posting through seven months of deep chemo and, in the end, a stem cell transplant. I was awarded my major award for my George Clinton profile while in hospital. I interviewed filmmaker Ken Burns by phone from the hospital lobby the day before my transplant procedure began; I wrote and filed the consequent article with Bitter Southerner late that night.

The next day began three weeks of pure torment. And as with my 2014 medical mystery, I remember one specific moment where I was dead certain I would not make it to the next sunrise.

That was a little more than three years ago. And still, I persist.

But not without some hiccups.

Treatment left me depleted: zero energy, no muscle tone (I had been pretty much prone for 7-8 months), and scattered

concentration. I managed a few posts and was planning my return to Big Ears 2020 where I hoped to recapture my zest for writing, music, and, well, living.

And then COVID. Talk about your demotivating factor.

Pretty quickly I adopted a routine: sleeping late, reading all day, afternoon cocktails on the lawn with Stanwyck. What else was there, aside from waiting for the zombie hordes to come breathe on us? Homebound, my physical therapy foundered. Over time, I lost interest in just about everything except beer.

I squeezed off a handful of posts, but those felt like grim obligation, feeble gestures to prove I was other than a depressed, out of shape, drunken lump with a nagging wonder: Is this what I survived for?

But the time was not right. Nor was the writer right.

That was then. This is now.

Nine months ago, I swore off alcohol. Not a drop since. I took up yoga, four or five times a week. I resumed meditation. I began walking long distances again.

Three months ago, my erstwhile musical pal Jeff Crompton visited. I plugged in a guitar, and we gave it a go. It was shabby and glorious. Within an hour, I was so tired I could barely lift my guitar off my body. But I was alive. Again.

Since then, I have had guitar in hand every damned day by 6 a.m. for an hour or two of mostly callisthenic exercises. When I began again, I could not sustain an exercise for more than 15-30 seconds. Neither my hands or my concentration could bear it. Now, I am running complex patterns for five to ten minutes at a time. I've begun moving into re-learning material. And RoboCromp may step out for a few gigs this Spring, COVID willing.

Along with sobriety, flexibility, and gigability, this regimen

has re-sparked my writer’s itch. And so, Immune to Boredom begins again. Again.

And again, there is little justification for this other than: I need it.

But atop that, I like to think I will bring something to the fetid swamp of the internets that others need, too.

For starters, I want to share the best bits of the mountains of music and books that I’ve been marinating in. There is a banquet on the table, but so much of it is buried by an algorithmic flood of junk food that it can be hard to sort out the worthy from the worthless. So expect plenty of recommendations about cool stuff I’ve found that you might otherwise never hear about.

Back in the day, many of my high-traffic/widely shared posts touched on politics and history. Expect some of that. I hold hope that you will find it more useful than the workaday rantings and received wisdom oatmeal so prevalent on the interwebs.

Another somewhat popular aspect of before times i2b was the occasional personal essay. Again, these would go weirdly viral from time to time. I’ll be going back to that format, as well.

Mostly, i2b will be a sandbox for me to play in, to explore ideas that grab me, to tout the wondrousness of the arts that set my feet on fire.

And I will be opening up a comments section where I truly wish for your feedback, either praise or brickbats, corrections, and other such like. I hope we can keep it free of viagra and CBD peddlers. Still figuring that out.

Please drop by and give my ramblings a minute of your time here and there. Follow me on the various social media hellsites. If you are so moved, sharing and retweeting and all

that social media jazz will be greatly appreciated.

To be or i2b? That is the question. To which I say: Why not both?

PS – This post hits on the evening of Jan 20, 2022. On Friday, Jan 21, I once again surrender myself to the fine people at UF Shands Cancer Center for my regularly scheduled poke and prod. I expect this to be routine and uninteresting. If not, it will give me something to write about. I can’t lose.

PPS – Poke and prod says nothing to worry about. Thanks for all your good wishes.