

## Checks Bounced Daily

Written by Alex Baer

Thursday, 04 February 2016 17:36 - Last Updated Thursday, 04 February 2016 20:55

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Let me guess: You're short of breath, your palms are sweaty, and you're not sure where to run and hide. In fact, you suspect this could be the Big One, ala Fred Sanford's eternal get-ready warning to the previously departed Elizabeth. You imagine this must be how the first lungfish felt, when they heaved themselves out of the primordial ooze, and up onto the shore, trying to evolve workable lungs, right on the spot, while hanging out in a Darwinesque While-You-Wait Bait and Tackle Shoppe.

Don't worry about it. It's only one of a couple things -- or, maybe, today's combo platter. I mean, it could be your body struggling with a severe disease or sudden medical condition, but, I'd urge caution here. This is a year evenly divisible by four -- so, your symptoms could mean at least three different things:

1. It's an election year, so all bets on *Corralling the Crazy* are off.
2. It's a leap year, and your subconscious is launching you into that time vortex early.
3. You've just heard that Trump's VP will be Martin Shkreli.

*There -- feeling better?*

No, really -- what you're feeling is simply a normal reaction to modern life and to ourselves, and to Our Little American Fantasy World, where no one pays the slightest attention to facts.

We have a clear majority of news media members who believe their jobs concern entertaining the audience, pandering to the lowest common denominator for ad-revenue eyeballs, and they want nothing to do with informing a dazed electorate or watchdogging wielders of power.

We also have a clear majority of self-inflated politicians who are self-contained perfect vacuums of dark matter, dust motes, and absolute zero, who campaign based on the latest polls, and on the latest red-alert, red-phone calls from major contributors and PACs which are themselves in the throes of cerebral meltdowns.

We also have potentials voters -- and/or random party-hardy party-crashers and assorted camp

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followers -- all a-dither and a-drool, in various stages of emotional fevers and brain stem overheating, jumping into the fray like flailing mosh-pitters on doses of meth and steroids normally reserved only for intramural elephant-juggling.

Then, we cover everything in the major food groups (salt, sugar, fat, beer, and chocolate)... then we dust it all with trainloads of sparkly stuff and confetti... then we chop down its attention span to just under two whole seconds, making damn sure, along the way, that all memory functions of longer than a week or are definitely axed out with a hatchet, put through a stump grinder, and flushed out to sea.

\*

In many countries, there is a month or two of sedate, reflective campaigning, and many rounds of intelligent, merit-based debates of ideas, in many community facilities, fully attended by the public, then a vote is held -- without theatrics or histrionics.

*But, this is America, baby, so, bring every steamer trunk of suppressed emotion you have to the party scene for the Candidate Feeding and Stoking Program, and get ready to dump all your money into the Sewer of Possibilities, and all your hopes and dreams into the Hopper of Impossibilities.*

*... and be damn sure you drop off that little contact lens case of your still-functioning brain cells on the night stand, and grab up your What, Me Worry? ball mask from the Alfred E. Neuman collection of farcical opera masks, and leave that silly old Thinking part of you behind -- the adults and Democrats can clean up our mess later, when we've wrung every drop we can out of ... My ....Little ....Country!*

[applause, fade to black-out]

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Sorry, but you should know the truth about where you are. **Fact Checks** stopped being done around here a long time ago -- about when the **Reality Checks** started bouncing, come to think of it.

But, if you like, I can tell you to ease up on those Red-Bull-n-espresso hypo-spray-shooters from The Manic Panic Drive-Through, and to swear off The Cold Jolt 'n' Hot Juice Bar, but that'd be super-short-term advice, and not much good. We both know you'd go right back for a fix.

No, you need to come to grips with where you are, catch up to your times, and learn to relax -- even while the long, spiky part of the rhinoceros comes charging right at your crotch.

\*

S'OK, though -- this same sort of reaction you're having tends to happen all the time, when America slips its leash every few years and hands over the reins to the most berserk right-wing people we can find, and lets our future leaders play at crashing continents together as a warm-up sport of the rich, before we get serious, and hold a few more wars and crank out some sweet mountains of profit -- prophet or no prophet.

You know, you're still looking a little pale. Lemme go to the bar and get you a "Hot Arrow Through The Head" -- jalapeno schnapps, tequila, vodka, hot sauce, triple espresso, and lime, in a nasal spray -- get you right up on your feet and climbing the ceiling again in no time at all...

\*

Well, for those of us who are utter failures at surviving in this medieval bedlam of a nation, let's see what *else* is going on in the world today to distract our attention from the feisty parade of jubilant, festive, and highly festooned -- *and mentally marooned* -- campaigners...

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Paul "Stop Calling Me Eddie Munster" Ryan -- *whom I still cannot think of as House Speaker without feeling an overwhelming urge to explode in laughter, convulse with toxic spill and Legionnaires' Disease side effects, or simply flee to a more modern country, like Haiti* -- told a gathering of conservatives that they couldn't afford to let another progressive get into the White House.

(Since President Obama governs from the far center-right, similar to Bill Clinton -- *the two best Republican presidents the GOP ever had, I say*

-- I can only assume Paul Ryan is still really ticked off about FDR's run, as he was the last *progressive* to occupy the White House.)

Ryan also told the group of opposably-thumbed, *allegedly* human beings that it was time to "unite the clans." This could either signal another round of Confederate flag-waving as earnestly-proposed solutions to America's complex problems, or it might simply be an all-clear for pointy-headed hoodwear to *come on back* into fashion.

It could also mean, of course, that Ryan will be appearing in blue-face soon, maybe in homage to The Blue Man Group, or perhaps, as part of an effort allowing his own late-blooming embarrassment, for himself and his party, to help morph his visage from Playskool *Braveheart* to red-faced, *Yankee Doodle Dandy* wannabe.

\*

Is anyone else noticing a ringing echo of childish chants and taunts at hotel pools, which starts *MARCO!* and ends with *RUBIO!* all the time, and which goes on for hours and hours, like from mind-blitzed bikini-squadrons from *The Night of the Boxcar Bimbos* or something? (Life on the campaign trail is no tanning bed, not if you're looking for more than

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40 minutes of sleep a night... or a week.)

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Some of the details for the Super Bowl half-time show have leaked. In a combined effort to stay current, and relevant, all the GOP presidential hopefuls for the past 30 years will be donning costumes and re-enacting scenes from Mario Brothers, Super Mario Brothers, and Donkey Kong, to the music of the Partridge Family.

"Hey, if Lego can be a movie, and wild popular, then anything can," said a GOP spokesdroid, "and you know how every single American yearns to be on TV and in the movies, right?" The PR unit added, "Hey, have you even counted up how many movies have been made from video games? Wait a minute! You there! Get back here! I'm not done with you yet," it continued, trailing off in the distance as I limped toward the bar, trying to mock-saw my wrists and neck with the blunt edge of the press kit.

\*

OK, let's cast around and see what we can find to keep us distracted and calm...

Luxembourg to support asteroid mining... new "purple sock" beast discovered... Jeb Bush follows in family tongue-tangling.... Europeans, rest of world confused why Americans are so angry... Thai dolls get holy treatment... woman gets waferless candy bar, wants to sue for a lifetime supply of Kit Kats.... Super Bowl pizza to be topped with a hundred bucks of edible gold for diners with more dollars than sense.... Pentagon won't demote Petraeus for giving out classified information -- however, Pulitzer-prize-winning security expert can't get White House clearance..... meanwhile, Powell and Rice staff received classified emails on private servers, GOP insists it's nothing like Hillary's atrocities with U.S. secrets....

.... Neil DeGrasse Tyson sucked into rap battle with flat-earthier.... ... nobody knows who covered up nude statues in time for Iranian President's visit to Italy, or why.... Hindu god's statue head returns to Cambodia.... picture of a potato sold for a million Euros... Texas mom

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makes money with breast milk jewelry... New Zealand posts multilingual crash-site reminders of left-side driving in roadside rest rooms.... fashion firearm accessories for women latest marketing gimmick....AK-47 plant opening up in Florida....

Ahh -- here's one: *Copenhagen gets musical ambulances...*

I'll take seventeen of *those*, barkeep.