

Pursuit of Daily Bread - Part 1

Written by Alex Baer

Friday, 09 March 2012 21:23 - Last Updated Friday, 09 March 2012 21:24

Some thoughts arrive slowly, bogged down in the sticky dough of our daily distractions, and some arrive without any preparation or warning, not needing them, especially, not teasing or kneading them along, but appear, allied to the search for daily bread, a task in which we can all surely relate.

While shopping at the, *uh, The StaveWay*, we shall call it, this store -- a place within 20 miles of us, out here in the country -- an overheard snippet of conversation caused a long and lasting spark in the oven of the mind. The unavoidable eavesdropping has given rise to even more thoughts, just as quickly as the first one popped up, too. Here's how it started:

In the goodies department with the shopping list -- *doughnuts were on sale, and it has been a while, so, what can I say?* -- two bakers clad in white clothing were lamenting their lots in this life, with one of the pair especially rising to the occasion, very animatedly so.

"They told me I had to come in right away," the man said, pretending to hold the phone, having a conversation, "and I told them no way!" The man hung up the invisible phone with a flourish of pretend-anger, his voice flexing to show how much outrage he felt over the telephonic request. You and I, right here, we know how these kinds of conversations among outraged colleagues tend to go: There is some patient lending of ears by one party, then the roles are reversed, allowing the earlier listener to take a turn, chewing through life's burned toast, and the new listener's ears, getting a chance to spout off and feel heard and cleansed by the process, too.

The first baker concluded, "I might as well fall down onto the floor and start twitchin' all around the place, have some kind of attack, you know, for all it means to them, and you know I'd still have to come in!" The baker pantomimed, standing up, how it would look if anyone observed him, during the call, while in the height of his telephonically-triggered seizure and work-avoidance attack. Even done standing up, the demonstration was highly effective, showing how much twitching there would actually be, with him on the floor. It was an impressive piece of fresh, made-in-store theater, and portrayed well the herky-jerky way it would go.

The second baker chimed in with sympathetic noises here and there, but was not the main act

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in this duo. The star-power presentation had already been made, the best show already given. Shoppers came and went, all this time, during the performance, the players not caring who saw any part of the show. I wheeled my cart away as the two bakers were switching hats, and the less-impressive second speaker swapped his listener role, taking up his turn with the trusted baton, or egg-beater, of camaraderie and complaining.

Now, disgruntled bakers in the vicinity of buying fresh-made doughnuts can make you more closely examine many things in your life, and not just the doughnuts -- although, checking for any sign of baked-goods monkey business, any signs of doughnut sabotage, seemed a prudent and appropriate caution at the time, given the fireworks in conversation and theatrics previously witnessed.

After stumbling onto this impromptu tableau of earning one's daily bread, as performed in one act by two bakers, it made me think again about the tentative nature of life, the parts we all play in other's many roles, and, about the unquestioned main event of all this spontaneous play: *Money*.

Money: The nature of employment, and all the connective tissues that are attached to this subject, too. Time is in there, too, along with money: Time of any quality at all simply flies, evaporates, dissolves -- simpler, even, than yeast into bubbles of bread subsequently popped during baking. As someone long unemployed without any social-safety-net benefits for almost a decade now -- some health reasons and such -- I confess one unmindful thought baked itself in my hot head: "***Must be nice to be employed, so you can have something to freaking complain about!***"