

The Alternative Line

by Joe Holzer for Publication in CNY-PCA Redline Report Copyright 2008 <http://www.holzerent.com>

Where have all the flowers gone...?

If you are reading this you probably have some idea what you want to be or achieve before the inevitable sands of time drain from your respective hourglasses. I have long since ceased claiming, on the basis of empirical personal evidence of its improbability, that I am "living proof of immortality". While the numbers are still valid, ie I am one of a small percentage of all the people who have ever lived who are still alive today, my aches and pains (yes, that includes editors demanding articles and governments demanding everything that's left ; -) have come to convince me that the trend is not promising.

Perhaps in the past ten years more so than in any other period in history, our ability to predict what and who we will be when the next generation arrives has diminished to the point of IM-probability. During the pre-Christian days, people could pretty much be certain to either be a) dead, or b) doing whatever their fathers were, or decided they would be through the servitude process. Even being born to the king, were you so fortunate in the genetic game show, had little likelihood of changing your lot; only your financial outlook. And if history has been any indicator, you frequently traded relatively good living for a generally violent, early end. Not that the peasants around you had an easy life. Perhaps many of them would have traded their miserable longevity. Prince & The Pauper. Who knows?

Thankfully, for most of us anyway, today's choices are to be found on far more multi-faceted coin tosses. With the variety of societal safety nets, few of us receive absolutely NO "second chances" to make right the mistakes we made earlier. Yet, clearly, there are many who squander even those. Funny thing; natural selection when viewed from a group perspective tends to favor those who make the FEWEST mistakes, even while obviously tolerating some aberrations. Keith Richards, for example.

I like to delude myself into thinking I have made better choices than many. And the existence in your wallet of a PCA membership card means you have also done pretty well on the "shit-o-meter" scale. Ego reinforcements like that can be deceptive, though. I am certain almost all of us know personally someone who made every bit as good decisions as we, and yet came out wrong in the "sucks to be you" lottery. The saying "There but for the grace of god..." readily comes to mind.

However, I am equally so reminded every time I hear someone describe their surviving some horrific circumstance with "The Lord was watching over me...". My only response has to be; they should fire your High School logic teacher for incompetence. Why does "The Lord" give a damn? If (s)he is watching you, what about everybody else? How about the infant who just got blown away by a suicide bomber? If your faith convinces you that some "Lord" actively adjusts your fate, why should it not follow that the same "Lord" caused the misery just to screw with your head? And if you believe the Bible to be literal, does that same "Lord" not seem like a vindictive and cruel bastard with little sense of balance and justice? How else to explain Columbian drug kingpins, OJ, Paris Hilton, Britney Spears, Larry Flynt, or the guy who shot him. Or Dick Nixon?

The past seven years has done nothing if not convince me of the "Golden Rule"; him with the gold, rules. Except that it has also shown me that certitude of belief is never the equal of reasoned skepticism. Yet "The Lord" certainly seems to favor the former over the latter if EVIDENCE is any indicator. POWER seems to be more and more centralized in the hands of fewer and fewer people, who use that power to ASSURE that the rest of the people remain as ignorant as possible. So much for democracy. Yet what do we get as alternatives? I once participated in a planning committee for the Liverpool Central Schools. Our task was to examine how best to use the existing facilities. However, it quickly became evident that the demands on those facilities were shifting, not such that we needed MORE of them, merely that we needed them to be better utilized. What sense, for example, did it make to have school not open until an hour after parents had to leave for work, and close two hours before those same parents could return from that work, which was necessary so they could pay the costs for the schools and the child care? Then I had the audacity to ask why we didn't consider making the schools more like the parents' jobs; ie a real year instead of a 100 years out of date agrarian model, and pay teachers for a full schedule like the parents? Masters' prepared teachers could earn like a masters' prepared engineer or nurse (most of the latter of whom had to work at least one out of three weekends). I could go on. But it would be pointless. Because the makeup of the committee was such that those who benefited most from the status quo made up more than 2/3 the total committee, and so EVERY workgroup was "democratically" made up of that same ratio. Which meant that the sole dissenter in each group had no ability to move that group in any way. A complete waste of time, for which the district patted itself on the back and pronounced its job "well done".

Where is this going and how does it involve you or Porsche? Well, first and foremost; because it reflects the reality "on the ground". And sooner or later that same approach to real issues will inevitably have the same outcomes; excess effort in ways which have no possibility of resolving real problems. The difficulty is we are not serious about anything. Whenever an important issue arises which

deserves some real consideration and for which there are not yes/no answers, but only shades of gray, we instead are pandered to with sensational meaningless drivel. Who cares what color, or even if she HAS any, are some entertainer's underpants? If that is what matters to you, then for all means PLEASE do not go near a voting booth, because you have no idea what you will inflict on the rest of us from your stupidity. But if you have paid attention, then please explain to the rest of us how you can allow to continue the repeated removal of your own protections in the name of protecting you?

By declaring the personal automobile "public enema number one (no typo)", those in control (mind you, you will NEVER hear me refer to them as "leaders", except to refer to their "followers" as "sheep") would blame you for everything that is wrong. "9/11 showed us we needed far more State Police". Why? How would another blue and yellow have reduced any of what happened that day? Was there ever any evidence that another speed trap would have caught one or more of the 19? HAS the existence of that added police presence resulted in any fewer shootings in Syracuse? How about thefts at convenience stores? Burglaries? Now; let us consider traffic. The NYS Thruway tolls increased 10% because the cost of gas has reduced traffic (ask if THAT makes any sense to you; to increase the number of customers, we will increase the prices ?!) But the state had to do SOMETHING with those added cops. I know that I feel 100% safer for knowing that I am being protected from myself on the second safest roads in the world, by CREATING tickets which were unearned, simply because the SYSTEM is designed to generate money, not to actually improve ANYTHING.

It is said that people eventually get exactly the government they deserve. Well I deserve better, and so do you. But until YOU stop accepting that what we are told must be truth "because they say it is" and instead start asking WHY, you will likely get more "design an insult" names like "Driver Responsibility" and "Scofflaw" fees from a system where your constitutional rights are non-existent. Driving is a "privilege", which the king can remove at a whim. So you had better guard the second amendment rights you still have.

Do I sound like an anarchist? GOOD! Because that is EXACTLY what Ben Franklin, George Washington, John Adams and the rest of the founding fathers really were. I am tired of people who are anything but wrapping themselves in the flag and referring to themselves as "Patriots". Anytime two parties get together to spend the money of a third is a crime, and YOU are the third.

If you are still reading, you have doubtless thought I have lost my mind. Far from it. And while it may not seem to have anything to do with PCA, I would urge you rethink that seriously. Ask yourself WHY anyone would want a fast car if they cannot actually use it? Why did Ferry and company make the 356 in the first place? Even in the ashes of war which was Europe in the late 40's, the need to achieve, in spite of obstacles, was as present and necessary to the human spirit as ever in history. Maybe even more so. So some people with a vision of something better put their own personal finances at risk for an idea, and from that the 356 was born. And like every entrepreneur, and the PCA is disproportionately represented by them, they continued to improve and reinvest in their business. Along the way they made both good and bad decisions. But they learned from their mistakes, as well as their victories. Along the way, some "Lord" looked out for them. Max Hoffman comes to mind in the US. As does Bill Scholar. And some other "Lords" hurt them. The VW/914 debacle, for example. Which makes Porsche's 1/3 ownership of VW today even more sweet ;-)

They survived, thrived and today are certainly considered dominant. Lucky? Certainly. But not in the "oh, I won the lottery" sense. Rather in the "if we do the best we can, and catch a few breaks, maybe we can get there" meaning. Not because "God" wanted it (though some of us believe he could have it no other way ;-), but for the same reason that most of us are Porsche Owners today; when it came time to make a tough decision, we made the best one for the long haul. We postponed instant gratification. We learned; our trade and our tools; that education is never cheap, but ignorance is more expensive; and that price and value are not necessarily related. That risk earns reward, and that reward demands risk. And I truly believe we as a group share at least one other universal belief; that it ain't gonna happen if we ourselves don't make it happen. It is why we bend toward substance over style, which creates a style all its own anyway. Why even the most ardent concours enthusiast can share a beer with me, a guy who couldn't win a concours in his own garage, and will never worry about it either. We each, in his or her own way, earn our dignity on the field of life competition, as ethical but spirited competitors. Will we always look for that "unfair advantage"? Of course. We see rules as "guidelines", but we READ the rules, then interpret them as liberally as possible. Heck, if we all followed the rules, we'd be politicians, right? ;-)

