



In our last issue, I copped out and reran a four-year-old column. I'd written it right before the 2016 election, and was stunned by how well it'd held up. It felt very 2020, a God-send for yours truly, since I was in no mood to write.

I'm still in no mood to write. As I stare at this (confrontational) blank page, it's Friday morning, November 6<sup>th</sup>, and we don't yet know who won the presidential election. Surely by the time you read this – we publish on Wed, November 11<sup>th</sup> – it will all have been settled. Surely.

Oh, who am I kidding? No matter who ends up president, nothing about this crazy country will be settled.

But back to my plight. I have writer's block from hell, y'all. The mere thought of conjuring a coherent essay – complete with a thesis, supporting paragraphs, a conclusion, and a soupcon of style – is giving me the vapors. (Yeah, I don't quite know what the vapors are, either, but I'm pretty sure I have them.)

It seems the most I can muster these days, writing-wise, are brief little thought bubbles that invade my brain when I least expect it, and never when I'm actually *trying* to write. If I'm near my computer, I tend to slap them up on Facebook, just to get them out my head. Sometimes, they get people talking, which can be fun. Or not. In light of my aforementioned writer's block, I've decided to share my most recent thought bubbles on this page. They may capture your fancy or go over with a resounding thud. In any case, they're all I've got. For now.

**October 24** – I have spent my early morning hours reading up on my one of my favorite

subjects: Evolutionary Psychology. My research suggests that most people have their political orientations "baked in," that the two major orientations we recognize today – liberal and conservative – are both necessary to our survival as a race (that's the human race, mind you), which is why they're both still very strong, and that "moderate" is yet a third orientation that tends to balance the other two. My research also suggests that it's practically impossible to change a person's political orientation – particular ideas may shift over time, but not so much orientation – and that instead of trying to change people, by arguing with them or shaming them, we must learn to accept them, respect them, and – most importantly – we must learn to compromise with them.

**October 26** – I am rewatching 60 Minutes this morning because the entire episode felt like the Twilight Zone to me last night – not just the Trump part – but nobody's saying that online. So I'm fact-checking myself.

"Perhaps a lunatic was simply a minority of one."

– George Orwell, 1984

**October 26** – Sick of the virtual. Missing the actual.

**October 28** – Real live friendship tonight. Actual, not virtual. Pure joy. (with photo of out-of-town friends, after dinner at Saltus)

**October 30** – My dual obsessions, truth telling and peace making, are increasingly at odds lately. So I keep posting articles, then deleting them. Then posting, then deleting. Rinse and repeat. But please note: While I may be keeping my own counsel, I have not stopped paying attention. I am still reading widely and thinking for myself. And nobody can make me stop. So there.

**October 31** – "I got a rock." – Charlie Brown

**November 1** – Y'all, believe the hype. 'The Queen's Gambit' is mesmerizing from start to finish.

**November 2** – A great sadness is upon me tonight. To be honest, the thought of tomorrow fills me with dread. I've always loved Election Day - standing in line with my neighbors, doing my civic duty, exercising my right to have some small voice in the shaping of these United States - but this year feels so different. I have dear friends and family members on both sides of the divide – the 'wound,' as I now think of it – all so deeply invested in tomorrow's outcome it might as well be their religion. Whatever happens, people I love will be crushed for a good long while. It's hard to imagine the wound healing. And then there are the rumblings of violence; the boarding up and shuttering of our major cities; the FEAR that would have seemed far-fetched – ludicrous, even – as recently as last year. This is not the America that raised me. I'm heartbroken that my daughter will be casting her very first vote in a country I barely recognize. But she is excited about it, and we will go to the polls together, and our neighbors will be there. Socially distanced, wearing masks, but there. Maybe my old Election Day thrill will bloom in her heart, and a new generation will find a way to repair what we've broken. Come what may, we must love each other through it, y'all. As corny as it sounds, love is still the way.

**November 3** – Her first election is on the books! (with obligatory photo of my daughter and me wearing our "I Voted" stickers)

**November 4** – Well, this topic has been the main drumbeat of my Lowcountry Weekly column for at least a decade, but I'm thrilled that some famous writers are taking it up now. Better late than never, the more the merrier, etc. etc. (Linked to article by Mitch Albom, entitled "Election will be meaningless if we don't change our ways.")

**November 5** – The people who always get everything wrong are now telling us what it all means. And getting it wrong. (eye roll emoji)

**November 6** – Observation on America 2020: If you do the work – and most people don't have time to do the work – you begin to see that we're all living in a landscape of clashing false narratives. Some will be more obviously false than others, depending on your personal cocktail of nature, nurture, and newsfeed – and they all have enough truth sprinkled in to keep your allegiance, if you don't look under the hood – but the deeper you dig, the flimsier the narratives become, the more inconsistent their claims. Which false claims – okay, lies – we accept without question may be a function of our personality, our upbringing, our life experience, our favorite news channel... But we are all embracing certain lies – while vigorously 'calling out' others – in order to maintain... something. What? Our sense of self? Of purpose? Of ultimate meaning? I'm asking this question sincerely. I have very little doubt, anymore, about the WHAT of my above observation. But I am very curious about the WHY. The WHY seems important. Maybe the answer is something like this: Human beings NEED a story to inhabit. It's

like food or water to us. A necessity. And the "facts" of the story don't matter to us, as long as the story "feels" true.

Then again, that's just one more narrative, isn't it? No doubt, it'll fall apart under scrutiny.

Happy Friday, y'all. Get outside at some point, if you can. Nature is true. (smiley face emoji)