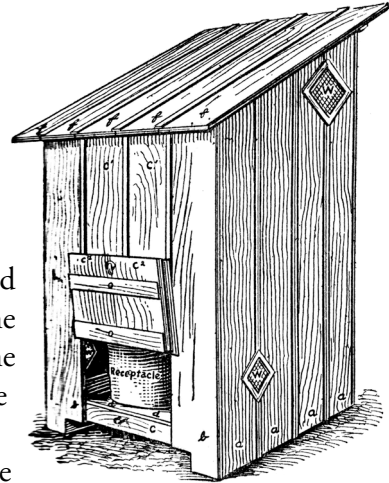


The Outhouse and Scrounge the cat or Monsanto and lapdogs

By J.D. Rogers

When I was 18 years old, I had my first business that required a city (shakedown) license in Moab, Utah. The business was called the “Outhouse.” No, this wasn’t a crapper out back in the woods. The Outhouse was a coffee house, an establishment that never sold one cup of coffee in its short life.



I was a partner with Kelly Cambron and Rob Day. There were two other outlaws whose pursuits were always imprinted with the Outhouse: Ricky Lee Costanza, a sometimes bouncer or enforcer, and Ken Hoffman, a chick magnet and maker of buckskin shirts.

Police chief and Mormon Church bishop Mel Dalton once referred to the Outhouse as a “den of sin” on one of his many visits to check out us evildoers.

The Outhouse had become a hangout for people mainly under the age of 21. We may not have sold any coffee, but we moved gallons of Dr. Pepper and Coke. One could also purchase, if you dared, a food-like substance called Steward Sandwiches. These unpalatable burgers with or without cheese had a flavor that I can’t describe to this day. I did like the ham-and-cheese offering.

We had the most rockin’ jukebox this side of Los Angeles, with records by Frijid Pink, Bubble Puppy, The Blues Magoos, The Music Machine, Count Five, Blue Cheer, and Ricky Lee’s favorite Paul Revere and the Raiders song, “Indian Reservation.” That’s the song that influenced him to launch his megapunk rock-star career in Cisco, Utah.

We offered multiple pinball games. There was a red felt pool table and a music stage where I got to be the house band.

There wasn’t much money to be made in this business so we all lived together over in Clark Apartments, a two-story eight-unit structure built out of gray sump blocks. Ours was a furnished one-bedroom unit on the ground floor.

Although Ricky Lee did have his own place, most nights he could be found going down for the count on our floor. He was one of many you’d have to step over on any given night.

Living in the alley behind us was a gray-and-white cat with matted, Rastafarian hair caked with dirt. He is the only cat I’ve ever known who never cleaned himself. He was the epitome of filth.

Kelly took a liking to him and named him “Scrounge.” With this name he also got an upgrade from dumpster-diving to his own bowl with fresh cat food.

I had a puppy, Doo Doo the Wonder Dog, who Scrounge took great pleasure in beating up when their paths crossed on a daily basis. “C’mon, Doo Doo. You can take on this dirty little Scrounge pussy,” I’d tell him. But Scrounge was streetwise and definitely the boss.

Scrounge was not allowed in the apartment, not because he inflicted mental agony on Doo Doo, but because he liked to sneak into the closet and intentionally pee in or on Kelly’s shoes. (The few possessions of our closet-floor dweller, Sammy Garcia, were pee free.) No amount of cologne poured onto those shoes could disguise that stench. With so many people coming and going, Scrounge snuck in many, many times.

Kelly made an appointment with the local veterinarian for Scrounge to have a checkup, shots and a cleanup. On the appointed morning of our pilgrimage, we climbed into Kelly's oxidized red Datsun 510; Kelly was driving, Ricky Lee sat shotgun, I was in the back seat with Ken, who held Scrounge.

We'd traveled only a couple of miles when Ken frantically said, "I can't hold him," as Scrounge bit and clawed his way free. Ken was thrashing around next to me holding his now bleeding arm and spouting words I'd never heard before. Scrounge had leaped onto the back of the driver's seat and lit into Kelly, planting his front claws into the top of Kelly's head while raking Kelly's neck with his back claws. Both Kelly's and Scrounge's screams were of the same frequency: piercing.

Kelly's hands were both off the steering wheel and flailing wildly in the air. With one hand, Ricky Lee grabbed the steering wheel and the other reached for his 45, thinking he might have to dispatch the psycho cat before we crashed and burned.

Scrounge was faster on the draw, though, and he bailed out the driver's window that was open only three or four inches while we were still traveling 30 to 35 miles an hour.

We immediately stopped the car, but Scrounge was nowhere to be seen. He must have hit the road running.

Back at the apartment, we couldn't find any Bactine to apply to our two wounded warriors. Thus ended our relationship with Scrounge—or so we thought.

A day or two later, there was a meow at our back door. Scrounge was back.

Besides our alley cat, the term "scrounge" brings back other images to my mind today, such as the company called Monsanto. And with good reason.

Earlier this year when the Farm Bill was passed by congress, Monsanto's very own I-sell-my-services-cheap-lapdog Roy Blunt, a senator from Missouri, inserted (I love that word) into the 587 pages of this welfare legislation, a rider that essentially prohibits the Department of Agriculture (a revolving door department for those large welfare agriculture consortiums) from stopping production of any genetically engineered organism (crop) once it's been planted and—here is the best part—even if there is evidence that that crop is harmful.

There's nothing like corporate legislation to be able to override the American judicial system.

Is it time to change the words to the Star-Spangled Banner? Like, "Oh, say can you see from Monsanto's factory lights."

But wait, there's more. Monsanto spread six-million slimy lobbying dollars (are those dollars tax-deductible?) around Washington, D.C. and the US Senate rejected (71 to 27) an amendment to the Farm Bill now strips states of their right to require GMO labeling.

According to Debbie Stabenow, a sorry senator from Michigan, state rights (requiring GMO labeling) would interfere with the FDA's science-based process to determine what food labeling is necessary for consumers. In other words, shut up and eat what we tell you.

I'm quite certain that Scrounge the alley cat had a higher level of morality than those political lapdogs in Washington, D.C.

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