

Maddog Unleashed

Can't Find a Column? Rhinoceros Fan Broken? Try Fetching the Rhino

One day, Yanguan called to his assistant, "Bring me the rhinoceros fan."

The assistant said, "It is broken."

Yanguan said, "In that case, bring me the rhinoceros."

— the title Zen koan from "Bring Me the Rhinoceros,"
by John Tarrant



BY PATRICK O'GRADY

I've been having a tough time writing columns lately, probably because I get out and about as often as Zacarias Moussaoui. Denied the opportunity to rub up against other members of the cycling community, I find myself constructing and then abandoning jeremiads on various well-worn topics, like an ADHD dog scratching the same itches, over and over again.

Going into the Memorial Day weekend it was the same sad story. There I was, standing by the side of the rhetorical trail with an conceptual flat, no spare, and goods to be delivered by close of business Friday.

As usual, I was mildly irked by a variety of things, and truly pissed off by a select few, but the topics felt as fresh as a microwave burrito from a 7-Eleven Dumpster. I couldn't even take any pleasure in kicking the Republicans while they were down. The Grand Old Party had become both demented and double-jointed by its electoral pummeling last November and was crazily kicking its own ass from coast to coast. As an act of hysterical self-abuse it was positively Democratic in scope.

The Rhinoceros Fan Is Broken. There was some potential in a media boycott by a petulant Lance Armstrong, who seems to have forgotten that he would be enjoying all the wealth and fame of the house band at the Lubbock Holiday Inn if there had been no inquisitive reporters to chronicle his jaunts around France. But he wasn't talking, and I don't follow him on Twitter, so that was a non-starter.

A *Daily Camera* story about a cyclist-pedestrian collision on a Boulder pathway had spawned a torrent of vicious comments from both factions about their rights to this, that and the other. But since it seemed clear that each side felt entitled to do as it deemed fit, whether on foot, astride a bike or in a motor vehicle, delivering yet another lecture on Darwinism seemed pointless and counterproductive.

A recent visit to Santa Fe briefly put me in contact with a series of hikers who were astounded and said as much when I, a hated mountain biker, yielded trail to them. I sympathized, having recently had a few too many of my own close encounters of the turd kind with lesser primates on full sussers.

But it was the Darwinism thing again. The body-armor boys invariably sound like asthmatic winos pushing rusty shopping carts full of aluminum cans, so anyone who's not stone deaf or plugged into an iPod can hear them coming in plenty of time to snatch up a walking stick, frame pump or downed tree limb to use as an impromptu board of education.

OK, Bring Me The Rhinoceros. When all else fails there's always the weather to complain about, and it being Memorial Day weekend, meteorology did not disappoint. The local climate had been worse than daytime TV. If it wasn't unseasonably hot or raining sideways, windblown tree pollen was turning everything yellow.

But I've been pointedly warned against writing weather columns. So instead of bitching about the weather, I went out into it, during a brief lull between storms, in search of a few hundred salient, salable words.

I had no reason to ride well, but somehow I did. For an undertrained, overfed fat bastard I was positively athletic, whether climbing, cornering or cleaning the nifty little technical bits that normally baffle me. For an hour, I forgot myself.

And then I had a sudden understanding. "I don't have to write a column," I thought. "I'll let the column write the column." And so it did.

I'll be cashing the paycheck, though.