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Frontiersman

Facing the truth, however great the cost.

August 2009

Remembering Mere Keep

Sam Aurelius Milam III

Back during the 1980s, I established Mere Keep. The name came right out of a dictionary. In the distant past, a mere had been a boundary or a border. A keep had been a sanctuary for the protection of precious things. Thus, Mere Keep was a sanctuary for the protection of precious boundaries. The boundaries that I'd intended to protect at Mere Keep were the boundaries between ideas. I'd had in mind the boundaries between such ideas as freedom and slavery, rights and privileges, sin and crime, God and religion, diversity and complexity, law and legislation, and anarchy and chaos. Such boundaries exist only as the understanding of the differences between the ideas that they separate. They're expressed by the differences in the meanings of the words that represent the ideas. The disappearance of such a boundary represents the loss of understanding of the things that ought to be separated by the boundary but that are no longer recognized as being different from one another. Such a loss of understanding is revealed by confusion in the use of the words that ought to express the differences between the ideas. Mere Keep was intended as a place for the discovery, exploration, and protection of such boundaries.

In October of 1996, the gestapo thugs forced me to leave Mere Keep forever. However, I didn't abandon the objective that Mere Keep had represented. To this day, I continue to be an advocate for the distinctions between the meanings of words, and for the understanding that's expressed by those distinctions.¹

Anarchy is order achieved without coercion. Chaos is lack of order.

¹ See, for example, *Milam's Dictionary of Distinctions, Differences, and Other Odds and Ends*. It's available at http://bouvier-law-dictionary.ismywebsite.com/Milam-s_Dictionary.pdf.

May denotes permission. *Might* denotes likelihood or probability.

"Mother, may I go play with Sally?"

"Yes Johnny, but be careful. She might get pregnant."

It's so easy that a cave man could do it. Nevertheless, I frequently see advertisements for some product or another that should be avoided by "women who may be pregnant". The statement that a woman may be pregnant, if it made any sense at all, would represent permission for her to be that way. The phrase "you may get pregnant" makes more sense than the phrase "you may be pregnant". The correct phrase for use in the advertisement is that the products ought to be avoided by "women who might be pregnant", indicating a likelihood, not by "women who may be pregnant", indicating permission.

When I was young, I ate butter or margarine. One day, some people decided to sell a product for which they didn't have a name. Since it lacked a name, they decided to call it by how it's applied. However, spread isn't something that you eat on toast. The stuff isn't spread. It's yellow stuff. *Spread* is how you apply it.

Concrete is a construction material made of sand, gravel, and cement. You don't make driveways and sidewalks out of cement. You make them out of concrete. Cement is part of the concrete.

Blocks are made with concrete. Bricks are made with clay.

A home is where somebody lives. A house is a structure. Real estate people don't sell homes. They sell houses. The people who live in the houses make homes of them.

A star shines. A light bulb shines. You don't shine your shoes. You polish them. When you polish them, they don't shine. They reflect.

A child is a minor who hasn't achieved puberty. An adolescent is a minor who has achieved puberty. Pedophilia doesn't have anything to do with adolescents, but with chil- →

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dren. A man who has a sexual attraction to children is a pedophile. A man who has a sexual attraction to adolescents isn't a pedophile. A 15-year-old female isn't a child. She's an adolescent.

Animals don't feed. They eat. You feed them.
Birds aren't born. They hatch.

The shade is the unlighted portion of an object from which light is blocked by the object itself. The shadow is the unlighted portion of an object from which light is blocked by a different object. The umbra is the region between the shadow and the shade. Depending upon the arrangement of the relevant objects and the light source, there might not be a shadow but only a shade and an umbra. Whatever the case, you cannot stand in the shade of the old apple tree. You can stand in the umbra of the old apple tree, with the shade above you and the shadow below you.

An object is slippery. A surface is slick.

May denotes permission. *Can* denotes ability.

"Mother, may I go play with Sally?"

"Yes, Johnny, but only if you can avoid getting her pregnant."

The sun is the star around which the Earth orbits. You don't get a suntan by standing in the sun. You get vaporized by standing in the sun. You get a suntan by standing in the sunshine, at a safe distance of about 93 million miles.

A girl is a young female human. A young female canine isn't a girl. She's a bitch. The word *girl* designates a young female human, not a young female dog, goat, bird, or whatever. Also, an adult female human isn't a girl. She's a woman. She can also be a bitch. Now that's **really** confusing.

Will denotes cooperation or intention. *Can* denotes ability.

"Johnny, will you come over for a visit?"

"Yes, Sally, but only if you can avoid becoming pregnant."

Victor Borge noted that we park in a driveway and drive on a parkway. He commented that it's our language and that he was only trying to use it. In fact, he used it better than some of us do. I have a friend in the Netherlands who uses it better than many of us do.

Without a doubt, it's a difficult and even an ir-

rational language. Many of its rules and usages don't make any sense at all.² However, it's important that we learn to use the language as well as it can be used. Also, it's our language. We can do whatever we want to do with it.³ We can improve it. We can avoid letting it get any more irrational than it already is. Above all else, we shouldn't let its irrational quirks confuse us. The confused use of language both reflects and encourages confused thinking.

A while back, I was riding somewhere with a friend. I commented that, in this country, there are very few things that we can do without permission. He announced, "I don't need permission to drive this car!" I tried to explain to him that he's likely to be punished if he drives the car without permission. I tried to explain that his driver's license is permission to drive the car. He didn't reply. I don't know if he understood me or not. Maybe to him, the words *rights* and *privileges* are synonyms. If both words mean the same thing, then the concepts that they express will be the same. There won't be any difference between rights and privileges. In such a case, when two different concepts become the same, one of them will eventually be forgotten completely. Rights will turn into privileges. Currency will serve as money. Brainwashing will replace education. ¶

By 2050 — earlier, probably — all real knowledge of Oldspeak will have disappeared. The whole literature of the past will have been destroyed. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron — they'll exist only in Newspeak versions, not merely changed into something different, but actually changed into something contradictory of what they used to be. Even the literature of the Party will change. Even the slogans will change. How could you have a slogan like "freedom is slavery" when the concept of freedom has been abolished? The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact there will *be* no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking — not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness.

—from *1984*, Section One, Chapter V
by George Orwell

2 For some good examples, see my essay *The Ravings of a Mad Man*. It's available at http://pharos.my3website.net/Ravings_Essays/Ravings/Ravings.html

3 That's a good reason to not allow the government to usurp control of the language by declaring it to be the "official" language of the country.

Traveling Angels

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by BLA, of Schertz, Texas.

Two angels, traveling incognito, stopped to spend the night in the home of a wealthy family. The family was rude and refused to let the angels stay in the mansion's guest room. Instead, the angels were given a small space in the cold basement. As they made their bed on the hard floor, the older angel saw that some plaster was deteriorating at one location on the wall, and repaired it. The younger angel asked why. The older angel replied, "Things aren't always what they seem."

The next night the pair came to rest at the house of a very poor but very hospitable farmer and his wife. After sharing what little food they had, the farmer and his wife slept on chairs and let the angels sleep in the bed. When the sun came up the next morning, the angels found that the farmer and his wife were in tears. Their only cow, whose milk had been their only source of income, lay dead in the field.

The younger angel was furious. After they had resumed their travels, she demanded an an-

swer. "The first family had everything but was greedy, yet you helped them," she accused. "The second family had little but was willing to share everything, and you let the cow die."

"When we stayed in the basement of the mansion," replied the older angel, "I noticed that some previous owner had hidden gold in that wall and had covered the hole with plaster. It was inferior to the plaster on the rest of the wall, and was deteriorating. Soon, the wealthy owner would have noticed it and discovered the gold. Since he was so greedy, and unwilling to share his good fortune, I repaired the wall with plaster that's identical to the original plaster. He won't find the gold. Then last night as we slept in the farmer's bed, the angel of death came for the farmer's wife. I gave him the cow instead. Things aren't always what they seem."

Sometimes that's what happens when things don't turn out as we think that they should. We need to have faith that every outcome is always for a reason. We just might not know what that reason is until some time later, if ever. ∞

Letter to the Editor

Hi Sam,

Thanks for the article on Comcast's downgrade. I do not have cable or any other paid TV stuff. I have a big antenna on the roof and an old TV. My VCR (play/record)/DVD (player only) is about 8 years old. I too was happily recording things which interested me both when I was home and programmed for when I was not.

I'm not super techno savvy but I got what I wanted on tape. Creating the copies I sent to you was a learning experience for me on taping a tape.

I chose to go with a HDTV converter box rather than buy a bunch of new stuff. I don't watch a whole lot of TV; so the investment just didn't warrant it. However, I learned real fast that I couldn't copy anything coming through this little converter box. I tried different connections. I talked with techno guys at big electronic stores. (They clearly had no interest in servicing my needs with info as it didn't mean any sale for them.) I got nowhere! So when June 12 came along, no more copying for me. Sad I was.

But hope! I receive your newsletter and sit down with some iced tea to enjoy your latest.

And low and behold! There is the answer to my questions, the solution to my problem. I try it your way. Yes, I have to be home but at least it works! Thank you so much for writing all that you do. Keep up the great service.

With love and appreciation,

Millie; Baltimore, Maryland

Stray Thoughts

Sam Aurelius Milam III

Naval Intelligence — A ship can be named after a man but it will still be referred to as *she* and *her*.

Until Then Do We Part — A marriage can be established for any term that the prospective spouses regard as appropriate. There isn't any reason why it has to be a lifetime commitment. Our expectation that it should is nothing more than a widely held assumption. It isn't a law of nature. Indeed, it's foolish for us to expect that young people are capable of successfully selecting a companion for life. As I noted in *Another Compendium of Wit and Wisdom*, good decisions come from experience and experience comes from bad decisions. ¶

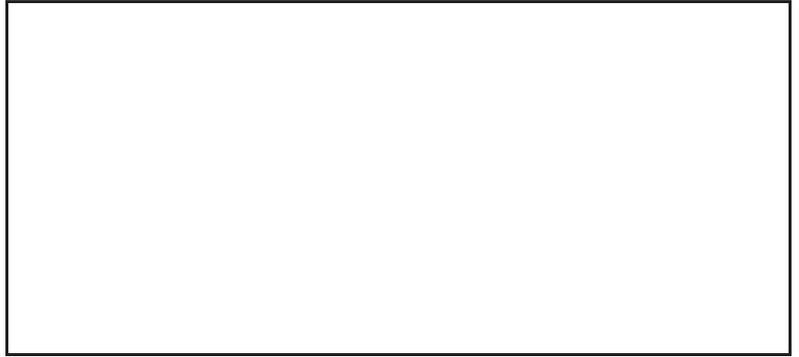
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Nation in Distress

A government which robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul.
—George Bernard Shaw



Acknowledgments

My thanks to the following: SantaClara Bob; Lady Jan the Voluptuous; my mother; and Dewey and Betty.
—editor

Court Quotes

From *Humor in the Court* and *More Humor in the Court*, by Mary Louise Gilman, editor of the *National Shorthand Reporter*. Forwarded by Don G.

Q: Sir, what is your IQ?

A: Well, I can see pretty well, I think.

Q: What was the first thing that your husband said to you when he woke up that morning?

A: He said, “Where am I, Cathy?”

Q: And why did that upset you?

A: My name is Susan. ∞

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Doctor’s Goofs

Actual statements that doctors wrote on patients’ charts. Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Don G.

- The skin was moist and dry.
- Occasional, constant, infrequent headaches.
- Rectal exam revealed a normal size thyroid.
- She stated that she had been constipated for most of her life, until she got a divorce.
- Skin: Somewhat pale but present.
- Patient was seen in consultation by Dr. Blank, who felt we should sit on the abdomen and I agree.
- Patient has two teenage children, but no other abnormalities. ∞

ment or publication in which you reprint my material.

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—Sam Aurelius Milam III, editor

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