

# **HESTER AND THE HYDRANGEAS**

**MARCH 12, 2006**

Well, its been a quiet week on the Island. The row out by the trash bins where Old Festus sowed a number of glads appears to be developing consequences. We all thought, as he raked through a shellmound of glass fragments, old tin, sand, cellophane wrappers, beer cans and unmentionable decay before laying in the bulbs under a lavish coverlet of cedar chips that radioactivity would prevent anything from germinating. And for many weeks not much happened while Karen's tulips have erupted across the way by the Old Decrepit Fence.

But now that shoots are shooting up over there between the Recycles and the Offals, old Festus got as chipper as a jaybird and he went and got a six-pack of Colt 40's and in the rain drank them all down with a vodka shooter or two or three while singing something which very might be poetry -- if only anyone could understand the words erupting from his toothless beard.

Whatever makes you happy. Bukowski would have approved.

Father Morales of the Church of Many Holy Names and Pastor Svenquist of the First Stern Lutheran Church remain on good terms in this weather and are seen walking about the Grand Street block of churches, alternatively clockwise and anti-clockwise. Father Guimon, of the Basilica, seeing so many of his faith appointed to the Supreme Court, feels the time has now come to supplant Pat Robertson, and so he has been sending sermons to the White House religiously, each with little "pearls of wisdom" in which he offers solace, consolation and recommendations to the President, who does appear to be in severe need at this time.

The subject of Father Guimon's sermon today before the multitude was, "God doesn't mind if sometimes you change yours - as long as its purely material." We have no word from the Oval Office regarding these matters.

Reverend Rectumrod, who feels Pat Robertson is too much a Moderate and also would like to supplant him in his position, is on bad terms with Reverend Alonzo Smiley, both of various Baptist denominations, on the matters that combine the Sacred and the Profane. Rev. Smiley, who hails from Metarie, Louisiana, is most concerned these days with channeling his efforts and those of his flock to caring for people in the Gulf Coast and has no time for Rev. Rectumrod's incendiary denunciations of liberals, gays, bunchgrass, tuplips, Volkswagen Beetles, secular humanism, pink chiffon, communists, Venezuela, the lambada, tapas, and any number of other casual pursuits which lead to mingling of the sexes, anarchism, and improper reflections upon improper things. Rev. Rectumrod is of the opinion that the Democrats are all responsible for the

current troubles of the GOP; he insists that certain Dems have built an Amorality Projector Device which is stimulating so much scandal -- which is of course quite outside the nature of the Conservative -- and he is terribly put out at Rev.

Smiley's refusal to assist with a petition for a commission to look into the matter.

The City had a Commission once. That was way back before they lost the jail, due to improper party-times in the cells. The Commission was formed to study the effect of music upon the growth of hydrangeas. Well, it was the '60's after all, and the plan had been to plant hydrangeas all along the side of City Hall. Well, that had been the plan, but the local chapter of the Native Californian plants objected, desiring a study be done to determine the origins, paternity and suitability of such a growth beside the symbol of Our City.

Mayor Corica's memory is to be commended for refusing summarily the request to line the austere brick of City Hall with bunchgrass. His immortal words are remembered to this day. "Bunchgrass! Outside my window? Get the hell out of here!"

In any case, hydrangeas appeared to be better to some than azaleas, however no one knew how they would do along the well trafficked -- according to Island standards -- Central Avenue. So the Commission was formed to see what they could do. Most members of the Commission were decent responsible folks with day jobs, so it fell to the looser end of the spectrum to formulate a plan that would in turn formulate a suitably weighty document that everyone, Mayor included, would refuse to read, and so be filed in a suitable file cabinet reserved for the purpose of suitable documents. This is how Hester Pratt, she of the First

Communicable Baptist of Santa Clara Avenue, came to be sitting day after day on an aluminum cafeteria folding chair in a garden plot, sometimes partially shaded by a red and white striped umbrella, while a portable tape recorder performed such works from the likes of King Crimson, the Beatles, Steeleye Span and the Philadelphia Philharmonic Orchestra from a mix tape made by Jose Devonshire, a man of mixed heritage and curious musical taste.

Hester sat with her book by George Eliot, the one about the duties of a proper provincial wife and which no one ever seems to finish beyond the First Book, gamely struggling to get past the difficult moment when Fred simply must speak to Mr. Balstrode because of a certain rumour day after day with a great floppy broad-brim hat doing the duty the umbrella failed to accomplish.

Fred? Balstrode? What ever had happened to Dorothea? Whatever. She was well supplied with lemongrass tea and writing implements with which she annotated the changes among the hydrangeas, their watering and their accomplishments. Jose brought the tea and the change of tapes, which became a welcome distraction.

The job paid \$1.75 per hour. She had incentive for staying on.

Hester was prim, proper, and full of great inculcated rectitude, but she was also very bored.

One day Jose dropped by with an alternative book, seeing as she was making little headway with the library-supplied entertainment.

What's this, inquired Hester. Oh, well, its something new called "Dharma Bums." See if you like it. Also I have new music a friend gave me. It has an

interesting use of these percussion instruments called "bongos." It's all something they call "jazz".

There is a particularly erotic aspect to hydrangeas to which some fail to pay sufficient heed. There is also the notorious effect upon the senses when subjected to extended bongo sounds, which produces distinctly animalistic tendencies. Spring arose in full flower and inflammation set in. George Eliot was cast aside, returned to the concrete bosom of the Carnegie Free Library.

Well, no one knows exactly what happened after that, except Jose got to staying later and later in the company of Hester and unruly sounds emitted from that garden plot.

One day, a member of the Commission dropped by the little garden so as to see how things were progressing and was dismayed to find no one there. Only a solitary white garter left upon the chair. Inquiries to Hester's mother revealed the girl had not returned to her room for weeks and had not been showing up at services in church.

Much put out, the Council dissolved the Commission to Investigate Allomorphs, resulting in a refusal to this day in the Council to ever form another Commission again. Local Government is never without resources to generate more ponderous reports without the aid of Commissions appointed for the purpose. And as one can see, decently chaste hedges border the City Hall to this day. Go there and see for yourself.

That's the way it is on the Island. Have a great week.