

Miscellaneous

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I am glad there is a word "miscellaneous." I use it in my Quicken program, where I record all the checks I write and organize them by categories so that when tax time comes I will know what I spent on OFFICE SUPPLIES and MEDICAL/DENTAL. But when I spend money on an umbrella or a leg of lamb or a plastic kazoo, or anything the IRS doesn't think I really need professionally, I categorize it under "miscellaneous." It is a word that serves me well. And this post is in that category.

First of all, it is about Woody Allen movies. In New York last week, I had four hours free, and I very much wanted to see a movie called "Take This Waltz," and I walked in 95-degree heat 14 blocks to the theater where the NY Times had told me it was playing, only to find that it no longer was. But I needed the air conditioning so I went in anyway and sat through "To Rome with Love" and watched Woody Allen once again, for the 112th time, play a balding neurotic nerd of a man. The Roman scenery was lovely but it was not enough to redeem the experience for me and I came away vowing never again to sit through a Woody Allen movie.

This post—"Miscellaneous"—come to think of it, is also about vows. Because I made another vow just this week. A little history here: it seems to me quite unusual, maybe newsworthy, that over the course of my adult life I have TWICE found myself in a bank in the middle of a bank robbery. Once would be unusual. Twice, I think, qualifies as downright spooky and maybe related to the way the stars are aligned.

And now I have...this has nothing to do with banks...found myself for the SECOND time (and one was quite enough) sitting in a pleasant restaurant, having a pleasant meal, with a pleasant friend, when we became aware that nearby, a couple at a table with a banquette was actually changing their baby's diaper on the banquette. I had this experience years ago at GREENS in San Francisco; and three days ago at THE BLACK HORSE TAVERN in Bridgton, Maine. I'm not publishing those names in order to accuse or embarrass the restaurants...both of which I love...but just because as a writer I know that details bring a scene to life. The other details, those of the diaper, are unpleasant and I am bypassing them.

So where is the VOW in all of this? Well, I am taking a vow to cease being dumbfounded and silent when I find myself in such a situation. Dumbfounded and silent is the way I reacted in both bank robberies. (In the second one, actually, I was shoved and told "Get out!" and so I got out of the bank before I entirely realized what was happening. Still, on realizing, I remained silent. But someone else had already called 911 and seven police cars arrived as I stood there mutely.)

Next time I am in a restaurant and someone lifts a baby out of a highchair, sniffs it, and then lies it down and reaches into a diaper bag while I am sitting with my fork in a Caesar salad, I (solemn vow) am going to say, loudly: (what?) (Insert suggestions here.)

How about: *"Excuse me, but I am the Acting Chairman of the Health Department, and..."*

Tags: Untagged