

Fighting Vainly the Old Ennui

by Dennis Payton Knight

I am never bored. I proclaim it loudly. It's not so much because I am a busy man, but because the last time I complained of boredom, some seven decades ago, I was promptly put to work at Mom's own version of wax-on-wax-off. Since then, I may sometimes be idle, unoccupied, uninspired, disengaged and disinterested to death, but I am never bored.

A fancy word for boredom is "Ennui" (pronounced *onwee*). Say it a few times. Ennui, ennui, ennui. If I had had a better vocabulary when I was ten and dropped an ennui on Mom, I would have been spared the sponge and floor wax while she went off to find the family Websters.

You might be familiar with the word. Frank Sinatra fought vainly the old ennui in "I Get a Kick Out of You." Ennui, ennui, how can such a musical word mean something so bland? But who cares? It makes me sound smart, and I can say it without being handed wax and a bucket.

Our present pandemic creates the predicament of nowhere to go and nothing to do as we learn and practice the fine arts of social distancing and sheltering in place. Ennui. It is pervading people of all ages around our planet, from the equator north and south to both poles, from the International Date Line east and west to whatever it is they call its opposite on the other side. Maybe it's the International Noon Line.

This morning I found myself in ennui up to my ears on the news and circumstances of our present pandemic, its cause and effects, its management and mismanagement. I thought of Mom and switched off the television, determined to put myself to work.

First, I made a nice big breakfast, dirtying up as many dishes as I could. No ennui there. Then, I planned, before I put the dishes in to be washed, to wash my dishwasher (and isn't it ironic that they've never invented a dishwasher-washer?) After washing and rinsing and drying my dishwasher, outside and inside and outside again, I would take a moment to celebrate my clean dishwasher, then load my dishwasher, close my dishwasher, start my dishwasher, watch my dishwasher wash, watch my dishwasher rinse, watch my dishwasher dry, open my dishwasher, empty my dishwasher, close my dishwasher, now dirty again, fix lunch, have lunch, and repeat. What fun would that be?

But, upon review, my plans rang a bit uninteresting. So, instead I set about composing, in the most scintillating and entertaining words I could assemble, the foregoing essay. Fighting vainly the old ennui. Ho, hum.