

Twenty Years Ago Today

by H. W. Moss

Three met weekly at the same club where they played pool and drank alcohol. One Saturday night George walked in and ordered beer. He moseyed over to Steve and Carl who were already in the middle of a game and said, “Jeez. Steve. Hey, Carl. I haven’t seen you guys in twenty years.”

Carl was about to shoot. He did not bother looking up at his friend as he replied, “Last week. You were here last week,” and sank the nine.

“No, seriously, guys. I’m telling you I’ve been thrown back in time. I mean it. I haven’t been in this bar in two decades.”

Carl was not amused, but Steve seemed interested. “Ok. Then tell us who’s president in 20 years?”

“Bush. A guy named Orren Bush, grandson of the first president Bush, the fifth president Bush to be elected. The dynasty continues.”

Carl missed his next shot, so Steve took up a position in front of the cue ball. He waved his stick toward a pocket indicating that was his choice of where to sink the ball. Carl sipped from his rum and coke, said, “You’re full of shit.”

“No, listen, guys. I used to come here all the time, but I haven’t for years. Just this once I thought I’d stop in and see if anybody still plays pool here. And I find I’ve leaped backward in time. I mean, you guys are looking great. You don’t look like you’ve aged a bit.”

The ball went where it was supposed to go. However, Steve did not line up for his next shot. Instead, he rested the butt of his stick on the floor, held it by one hand and leaned in on it with an arm crossed over the other in casual pool player’s stance. He said, “So did you get rich or what? You still live on Mission Street? After all, it’s been 20 years.”

“I do, I do still live there,” George warmed to the subject. “I bought the building so long ago, the mortgage is down to nothing. What else can I tell you? I could talk about the stock market. I could give you tips on how to bet on the market for the next 20 years. I can tell you how the Iraq war turned out. What else can I tell you guys?”

“Something useful. What stock should we buy? Give me the name of a specific stock.”

“I can’t.”

“Why not?”

“Because I’m lying!”

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(11-20-05 This is the sort of thing that comes to my mind while I'm standing outside the Elbo Room waiting for Rick and Hugh to show up.)