

Title Page

Noise Pollution in Rowan County

Salisbury Rowan Senior Games

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Noise Pollution in Rowan County

Attacking CIA Drones

The August afternoon was muggy, so I pulled a lounge chair into the shade so that I could, well, lounge. Suddenly there was a droning noise like, well, a drone. Fifty years was abruptly stripped away from my life and I was in Naval Intelligence in 1969 Vietnam. Was Air America or the CIA sending a drone to settle a petty grievance with me?

A petty grievance or, well, maybe two. In fact, if someone at the CIA was keeping track of such petty details, then they might have five on their list of pettinesses. For those of you who wish to verify that I am not exaggerating (or making up false facts), my petty (or maybe not so petty) differences with the CIA are well documented in that famous quadruplelogy *A Shadowy Passage*.

For those of you not acquainted with the word quadruplelogy, you are not alone. For some strange reason, even my spell checker doesn't recognize the word. A quadruplelogy is exactly the same thing as a trilogy, except that it has four books instead of three. And in case you are one of the few English-speaking people who has not read the quadruplelogy, you can find it on Amazon Books (search for the title).

But I digress. We were talking about the attack of the CIA drones when I mentioned a few very minor disagreements that I had with "The Company." Oh yes, you can find these disputes (or misunderstandings) enumerated on pages 84 and 85 of *Part III*. Op. cit.

And that brings up an important consideration. Why do English teachers end up teaching Latin? I thought good old King James English should be good enough. Instead, you have to learn "id est" and "ibid" and "op. cit." This is probably part of a papist plot.

But I digress. We were talking about the flagrant attack by the drones on US soil, in bald-faced violation of international and federal statutes. Oh yes, for those good old boys who didn't learn their Latin, I should mention that "op. cit." means "in the book previously cited."

But I digress. It turned out that the droning wasn't from CIA drones.

Non-Attacking, Non-CIA Drones

As I lay lounging in my lounge chair on a muggy August afternoon, I think I first realized that the drones were non-attacking; at least, the drones were not attacking me. There were no explosions wracking the otherwise oppressive mugginess of the afternoon.

Now I'm not just anyone's fool, so I first evaluated whether the drones were CIA drones. I quickly realized that a half century had passed since I last saw and heard CIA drones. Drones today fly silently so they can sneak up on unsuspecting enemies of freedom, niceness and the CIA. The drones overhead were belching out loud dronings that certainly removed them from the "Sneak Up On" Category. This was definitely unlike the furtive deviousness of the CIA. And besides, would the CIA wait fifty years before eliminating bothersome individuals? Probably not. Ergo, my first worry that the drones were CIA drones was dismissed.

However, I was not able to lounge in my lounge chair in the shade and sip my mint julep. By the way, "julep" is not "julip" even though it is pronounced as though it is "julip." And mint juleps are called mint juleps because mint is a necessary ingredient and the drink is served in a julep cup.

But I digress. The word "julep" comes from the ancient Persian word "gulab" that is a sort of sweetened rosewater. And mint juleps aren't that good for you because it is supposed to be served in a pewter cup. Pewter, it turns out, is a metal alloy of tin and lead. It would be much better for you to drink out of a tin can rather than a pewter cup, since lead can leach into your drink and do bad things to your body and brain (Google: Lead Poisoning).

But I digress. Modern day "pewter" is now an alloy of tin, antimony and copper and so it is somewhat safer to drink your mint julep from a fake pewter cup.

Drones or Non-Drones?

I was lounging on a muggy August afternoon in the shade and sipping my mint julep while being attacked by several (or at least more than one) ear-splittingly noisy drones.

Except I wasn't exactly sipping my mint julep. As I pointed out, mint juleps are intended to be drunk out of a pewter cup, and pewter as Paul Revere knew it was made from a mixture of tin and lead. I suppose you could call it a mint julep even if it were served from a modern-day fake pewter cup made from a mixture of tin, copper and antimony.

Now antimony has an atomic number of 51 and is denoted by the symbol Sb. Why Sb for antimony? Sb refers to Stibium, which is Latin for antimony. Again you see evidence of a communist plot among scientists to use Latin instead of good old King James English. After all, we use the letter "I" for iron. [For those who don't recognize intellectual satire, let me explain. I is the symbol for Iodine. Ir is the symbol for iridium. Iron has Fe for a symbol, for that non-American Latin word "ferrum."]

But I digress. I have a pewter cup, but I don't drink out of it for fear of lead poisoning. I don't have a fake pewter cup made with antimony, but I wouldn't drink from one if I had one for fear of antimony toxicity.

But I digress. Did you know that at the Kentucky Derby you can get a mint julep using Woodford Reserve bourbon for only \$1000 per cup? Now the cup is either silver or gold so you don't have to worry about lead poisoning (or antimony poisoning).

Now I may have digressed a little, but I was lounging in the shade drinking a mint-non-julep (since I don't like the taste of bourbon – but I do like the taste of mint). There were two (or at times three) drones circling high above me, but they were not getting any lower, so I concluded that they probably were drones of the non-attacking variety.

Not Drones but Droning Planes

As I was lounging on a muggy August afternoon in the shade and sipping my mint non-bourbon julep while being attacked by several (or at least more than one) ear-splittingly noisy drones, except they didn't attack. Upon further inspection using my excellent eye-sight (correctable to 25/20) I decided the drones were perhaps regular single-engine airplanes. Since they were circling my jungle-infested flood plain along Crane Creek at different altitudes and directions, I think I should be forgiven for jumping to the conclusion that they were drones (attacking or otherwise). After all, why would

regular airplanes want to circle my quiet, law-abiding property.

And then it struck me! The planes were observing our nationally-recognized stand of tall, straight sweet gum trees.

Now I understand that sweet gum trees have often gotten a bum deal. For example, my father tried to split a sweet gum log around 10 inches in diameter. Daddy drove the wedge completely in and the log swallowed it. Being determined, he turned the log upside down and drove a wedge in from the other end. After all, the log was only 16 inches long so the wedges would almost meet in the middle. Unfortunately, the log remained in one piece. By golly, Daddy wasn't one to give up, so he drove his third (and last) wedge in from the side and the log absorbed that wedge as well. Finally, Daddy had to burn the log in the fireplace to recover his wedges. Daddy didn't have good things to say about sweet gums after that.

But I digress. I know that sweet gums are fine trees because of a legal stipend added to my title of the property. When I took possession of my property it was explained that I could not cut any of the trees in a certain block of the property. When I checked it out, the trees were some tall and mighty sweet gums.

Planes Droning to Spy on My Sweet Gums

While lounging on a muggy August afternoon in the shade and sipping my mint non-bourbon julep as two or three planes circled my precious copse of legally-protected sweet gum trees, I digressed before I fully explained why anyone would want to legally protect a healthy, straight dense stand of sweet gums.

It turns out that the previous owners of my property signed with the University of Georgia Forestry Service to protect the trees as part of an experiment to see whether sweet gums can be grown as a profitable commercial enterprise. I kid you not! I lack to imagination to concoct such a scenario.

But I digress. I was trying to figure out why anyone would fly in circles over my lush sweet gum experimental-quality trees. Suddenly, all was crystal clear. At least one of those circling planes was

from the North Carolina State Extension Services for Forestry. They obviously were jealous not to have seized the crown jewels of Rowan County. They let those Georgia Bulldogs get the prize, and all they could do was observe the trees from above.

The second plane was probably the Rowan Tax Assessor trying to increase the property value because I had the fortune to buy the pearl of great-price sweet gums hidden in my jungle giant water oaks and other trashy trees like my black walnuts that litter the property.

All (or almost) Mysteries of Drones Solved

As I was lounging on a muggy August afternoon in the shade and sipping my mint non-bourbon julep from a non-pewter cup while two or three planes circled my precious copse of legally-protected sweet gum trees, I pondered the mysteries of life. In particular, I wondered why two and sometimes three airplanes would drone above my property.

Now you may have wondered why I would use the word “copse”. No, it has nothing to do with policemen and no, it has nothing to do with dead bodies. Copse was first known to be used in 1587. More properly, I should have used the word “brake” that means “rough or marshy land overgrown usually with one kind of plant” (like sweet gum trees). However, most of my friends think of a brake as something that stops a car (if it is working properly) and the question of drum-brakes or disc-brakes would occupy minds as they read my opus.

But I digress. I have figured out that one of the droning planes was piloted by an NC State Forestry agent, and the second was an agent from the Rowan County Tax Assessor’s office. The third plane puzzled me for a while, but then all became crystal clear! The third one was a man who as a young driver used to cruise Main Street in Salisbury on Saturday nights before whatever the police did that caused cruising to stop.

After the cruising stopped, those young hooligans still cruised the country lanes and bashed mailboxes with baseball bats. But I digress.

The third plane’s pilot probably got stopped some Saturday night for having a glass pack muffler. Now Wikipedia says that “Glass packs are an old, simple, and relatively inexpensive muffler

design that are effective at reducing back pressure, but not very effective at muffling noise.” { i.e., op. cit., ibid. e pluribus unum}.

“Duh!” is the only proper response to the author of the description of glass packs. Glass packs were used **because** they didn’t muffle well **and** would let the deep, throaty roar of power escape from the car’s souped-up, supercharged, finely-tuned engine that challenged all other wimpy means of transportation to a drag race at every stop light.

Final Solution for All This Droning

On a muggy August afternoon, in the shade and sipping my mint non-bourbon julep from a non-pewter cup while two or three planes circled my precious forest of legally-protected sweet gum trees, I completely solved the mystery as to why three single-engine airplanes would circle my humble estate incessantly on one occasion.

NC State Forestry agents and Tax Assessor agents could account for two planes on one particular occasion. A third pilot who lost his automobile driver’s license for driving a car with glass packs and for drag racing while cruising Main Street accounted for the third.

Indeed, the third plane droned so loudly I am convinced that the plane’s engine had an amplifier to mimic a Boeing 737 Max aircraft in takeoff mode. In this way the American public will be convinced that the 737 Max is no longer grounded so news services don’t feel obligated to mention it every news cycle without having new information on the grounding.

Having solved a koan that has frustrated Zen Buddhists for generations, I settled back in my lounge chair on a muggy August afternoon and sipped my mint non-bourbon julep [not julip] from a non-pewter cup and listened to the restful tinkle of the ice cubes shaking against the side of the cup from the noise vibrations from the circling planes.

A koan, by the way, is a paradoxical anecdote or riddle, used in Zen Buddhism to demonstrate the inadequacy of logical reasoning and to provoke enlightenment.

But I digress. Having achieved harmony with creation and being retired, the next August afternoon I settled down in my lounge chair to, well, lounge, being an appropriate thing to do on a

muggy August afternoon when suddenly the peaceful afternoon is rent by droning single-engine airplanes.

This time I am prepared for the drones since I spent the better part of the previous evening composing a haiku to express my deep, inner-feelings. A haiku is a traditional Japanese poem that consists of three lines. The first and third lines have 5 syllables and the second line has 7 syllables. Haikus rarely rhyme and the fixed format often restricts the depth of expression – and usually focuses on simplicity and purity of thought.

But I digress. Having prepared my haiku, I calmly set my glass down on the ground (since I fear the noise vibrations would shake the glass off a table, and I proceed to move to an opening in my yard and yell my haiku at the offending droning planes while using appropriate hand gestures.

Koan: What was the haiku that I shouted at the circling, single-engine, droning planes?