

Chicago Tribune

The anxiety caused by President Trump



President Donald Trump puts on special glasses to look at the Solar Eclipse on the Truman Balcony at the White House on Aug. 21, 2017, in Washington, D.C.

(Mark Wilson / Getty Images)

Garrison Keillor Special To The Washington Post

Anxious times in America. There was a news story a few weeks back, "Interrupted Sleep May Lead To [Alzheimer's](#)," and next to it, a wine review with the line "Vivacious and well balanced, with chewy tannins and flavors of fresh red fruits." You know and I know that a vivacious beverage will not compensate for losing your marbles. And now, driving to California, I find that I must enter a password in order to change the time zone on my laptop clock. Evidently, someone is out to mess up my schedule and my clock must be secured.

I go to concerts by old folk singers with long thin ponytails and see burly men in black, "SECURITY" on their shirts, protecting these oldsters from interaction with their aging fans. The only danger the fans present is that when they stand waving their iPhones and singing "We Shall Overcome," they might fall and break a hip. As the president would say, SAD.

I grew up in an America with no passwords and many fewer warning signs. Now we buy coffee in cups that say, "Caution: Hot Beverage." Someday I will drive by a sign, "Turn On Wipers In Event Of Rain."

Most anxiety is fairly harmless, my fear of water, for example, which I inherited from my mother. If you needed a man to ride a horse leaping from a high platform into a water tank at the thrill show, I would not be that man, but I take a daily shower, I drink water, no problem.

We authors experience high anxiety as a book goes through proofreading: you imagine that somewhere in those 150,000 words are "insouciance" and "precocity" and "Her and me went through a lot of anxiety together." We 75-year-olds feel the dread of dementia, especially in those moments when the name of the movie Warren Beatty starred in with Natalie Wood escapes us, the movie we saw in our teenage years, the title comes from a poem by somebody, a poem we read in 10th grade English class — taught by Lois Melby? Helen Story? — and that, young people, is why we are wandering aimlessly through the produce section amongst the lettuce and tomatoes, because we're waiting for that dazzling moment when ("Splendor in the Grass"!) the name pops up in our brain.

And now, a new anxiety that our history has not prepared us for, a fear that we have elected George III to the presidency and we may not survive three and a half more years of his madness. For the first time in our history we are looking to generals to save us from democracy.

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We Democrats bear some responsibility. Hillary Clinton was a symbolic candidate with a nice resume who lacked the ability to connect with voters. This is a fatal flaw. She was almost beaten in the primaries by an elderly Vermont socialist. The party, bitterly divided, stuck to symbolism and tried to elect the First Woman President though most women were not enthused about her. The party apparatus assumed she had to win. Who could possibly lose to an invincibly ignorant blowhard New York developer with a peroxide ducktail? As it turned out, she could.

And now we think about the man picking up the red phone instead of Twitter and ordering fire and fury like the world has never seen and the death of 10 million people. We trust the order will be disobeyed, a de facto military coup, and the man will be packed off to Walter Reed and what then?

We've never been here before. A fourth of the population will approve of anything the king does, including my cousin, a godly man who believes the king will safeguard Christians against a liberal elite that is out to confiscate their Bibles. On the paranoia spectrum, this is just below the

fear that invisible beams from the microwave may force you to eat toilet cleanser. Evidently my cousin is not getting the uninterrupted sleep he needs.

I hope I am wrong. On Monday I was in the midst of people with protective glasses all excited by the so-called solar eclipse and what they actually saw was a brief celestial dimness. Any Midwestern thunderstorm is vastly more spectacular. Maybe George III is that sort of phenomenon. The mad king turns out to be the Queen of Hearts who is able to believe six impossible things before breakfast. The rabbit is there and a little girl named Alice. Enjoy the show.

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<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-donald-trump-anxiety-20170822-story.html>