



## **O Frabjous Day! Callooh! Callay!**

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By John Ostrich, MD

ONCE AGAIN, WE HERE AT YOUR FAVORITE medical society's publication have been able to retain the services of the world-renowned British clairvoyant, Dame Elspeth Mallory-Weiss, who has agreed to provide us with her always accurate and pithy predictions for the coming year.

Dame Elspeth has always been famous for her remarkable ability to focus her mind on faraway locales and foretell with astounding clarity the future milestones and linchpin events in places a long distance from her charming, thatch-roofed home in Dormouse-on-Avon, a tiny hamlet a few miles upstream from Stratford.

After a great deal of wheedling, cajoling and obsequious canoodling, we of the Editorial Committee were able to convince your Executive Director (and resident miser), Bill Sandberg, to give us a few measly bucks so we could all fly to the U.K. to meet Dame Elspeth, interview her, garner her auguries, and personally thank her on behalf of our grateful membership, plus present her with a stipend for her services.

Her home is commodious, but like many ancient British homes, lacks a kitchen capable of turning out meals for more than two or three people at a time, so we took almost every meal out, mostly at the local pub, The Hound and Toad. Each evening after dinner, Dame Elspeth would join us, pull her crystal ball out of what appeared to be a battered and worn old Brunswick bowling ball carrier (Earl Anthony autograph model, I think) hoist it up onto the bar, and start reciting her divinations. We all scribbled furiously as she rambled on, and what follows is a synopsis of our notes. By the way, the steak and kidney pie at The Hound and Toad is to die for.

And here are Dame Elspeth's predictions for 2005.

**JANUARY** - After months of procrastination, the governor finally names a new Poet Laureate for the state of California. Her name is June Croonatoon who is a cocktail waitress from Barstow and who, in spite of her humble origins and unfortunate name (for a poet, that is), has had many of her poems published in The Kenyon Review. A strict vegan, she is most famous for her poem "Beans," which she dedicated to famous bean-lover Henry David Thoreau, which begins, as most of you already know, "I do not think I've ever seen / A poem lovely as a bean."

**FEBRUARY** - After a lengthy investigation, a bipartisan select task force appointed by the governor and legislative leaders concludes that it will be impossible to build even a "bare bones" new San Francisco Bay bridge without assessing every California taxpayer a surcharge of \$200 for the next three years. The alternative is to charge \$25 for a one-way toll, and \$50 for Hummers. The governor fails to find any fiscal or political wisdom in either conclusion, and lets it be known that he would veto either plan should it come to his desk. General Horatio Berm of the Corps of Engineers announces that his guys (and gals) could erect a serviceable 12-lane pontoon bridge in about a year for a tiny fraction of the cost of the planned high-rise bridge. He admits that such a structure would block shipping into the East Bay ports and that the speed limit would be 10 miles per hour, but "we could

work around those problems for sure." The governor says he will back such a plan.

**MARCH** - The Kings' Bobby Jackson, out of action for the past three months following treatment for an injured wrist, finally returns to the lineup but suffers what might be a career-ending and rather ignominious injury when, sitting on the sideline during a game, he is unnoticed by teammate Greg Ostertag who, as he exits the game, sits down on the relatively diminutive Jackson thereby collapsing the chair beneath them and crushing Jackson's pelvis. Following surgery, the plucky Jackson announces that he is determined to return next season. He does, however, seem upset with Ostertag who, he says, "should have at least taken a look to see if anybody was sitting in that #@!!\*\*! chair !!!"

**APRIL** - Buoyed by the success of SB 1520 in 2004 which will end the forced feeding of ducks and geese and secondarily put a big dent in California foie gras production, State Senator Parvo Pilkington (D-Santa Monica) authors SB 640 which will prohibit the importation of any animal product ("and that includes fish," says Pilkington) that derives from any creature that is "forced or provoked or wheedled or canoodled into eating stuff, or more stuff than said creature would ordinarily eat in its natural state even if that stuff is stuff that the creature really likes to eat." Pilkington admits that the language in the bill needs a bit of work, but is pleased to hear that the governor likes the general concept.

**MAY** - Sonoma Foie Gras, the only California producer of (you guessed it) foie gras, announces that, with the help of Genentech, it has created a race of geese that are in all respects normal except that they spontaneously consume vast amounts of cornmeal laced with sugar and eschew water but love to wash down their food with bourbon whiskey, and do not at all have to be forced to do so, thereby rapidly and "naturally" developing huge fatty livers. In fact, if they are not given free access to such a diet, they appear depressed, lose their feathers and become unnaturally aggressive towards each other and anyone who happens to be close by. Sonoma Foie Gras CEO Hans Liebeleber, admits he can tell by tasting the foie gras "which of the birds preferred Jack Daniels and which ones Jim Beam."

**JUNE** - Barry Bonds hits his first home run of the season into Balco Bay (formerly McCovey Cove) at SBC (formerly PacBell) Park. After arguing successfully in federal court, it is ruled that Bobby Jackson must be allowed to play in the NBA during the 2005-06 season even if he is still confined to a wheelchair "or otherwise significantly crippled" by his injury in March. Writing for the majority, Judge Charleton Pringle writes: "Just because Mr. Jackson may be wheelchair bound does not mean that he should be denied the right to pursue his profession. The team and the league must accommodate him."

**JULY** - Barry Bonds hits his second homer of the year. In a related story, Henry ("don't call me Hank") Aaron admits to a reporter that he frequently used stimulants such as caffeine and supplements such as Wheaties and Cheerios when he was pursuing the major league home run record. "I coulda hit 800 homers if I'd eaten more Wheaties," says Aaron, "but my doctor told me I had to cut back because it was making my irritable bowel syndrome act up." Plus, Aaron says, his resultant flatulence so irritated many umpires that he is sure he got a lot of bad calls.

**AUGUST** - Preliminary reports from an international study suggest that even occasional use of ibuprofen can lead to increased risk of stroke, heart attack, furunculosis, sleep apnea, unsightly ear and nose hair (in both sexes) and dandruff, often all at once. The giant pharmaceutical company, Ortho-McNeil, the maker of Motrin says, that "we are giving up and moving our headquarters and manufacturing facilities to Shanghai." Because of the continuing volatility of the pharmaceutical industry, many Wall Streeters call for replacing Pfizer and Merck on the Dow Jones Industrial list and instead placing Denny's and Martha Stewart, Inc. on that hallowed roster.

**SEPTEMBER** - The governor asks for the resignation of California State Poet Laureate June Croonatoon after he returns from a trip to the East Coast during which he and Maria and the kids were motoring from New York City to Philadelphia along the

Garden State Turnpike, and stopped for a breather at the Joyce Kilmer rest stop. There, the governor moseyed over to the modest memorial to the famed poet who died in France in 1918 and whose poem "Trees" made his a household name in post-WW1 America. It was then that the governor realized that Ms. Croonatoon's poem "Beans" was a knock-off of Kilmer's "Trees," and he called her and asked her to resign. She at first demurred, then admitted that she had probably read "Trees" as a child, but strenuously denied she had consciously copied it.

**OCTOBER** - The New York Yankees, after a spectacular 125-win season, polish off the Dodgers in the World Series in four straight games with a total of 44 runs to the Dodgers' 3. Bobby Jackson says he is ready for the new season, and NBA commissioner David Stern decrees that he can use a motorized wheelchair during play. A new report in JAMA links ingestion of green leafy vegetables to increased risk for hairy cell leukemia, plantar warts, and E.D.

**NOVEMBER** - After 10 consecutive days of constant rain, downtown Sacramento is awash and the governor is once again blamed for flooding in the basement of the Capitol because of his tented pavilion that was set up to provide a haven for him and his cigar-smoking cronies. A press release from the governor's office apologizes for the fact that the pavilion had been inadvertently once again placed over a main water drain site and from now on the governor would go up to the roof of the building to smoke "unless it is one of those god-awful hot Sacramento days in which case you can find the governor in the men's room."

**DECEMBER** - Bobby Jackson makes history as the first wheelchair player in NBA history and, better yet, the first wheelchair player to make points in a regular season game, as he swishes a three-pointer from 'way beyond the arc. He then becomes the first wheelchair player in NBA history to be ejected from a regular season game when he runs over a referee's foot while arguing a call. Under pressure from church-and-state separatist groups, the governor names the big decorated tree on the west lawn of the Capitol the Holiday Tree. But, he says, he has a "real Christmas tree in my office" and lets it be known that he will share one of his Cohiba Esplendidos with anyone of legal smoking age who wants to sit with him on the roof of the Capitol on Christmas Eve to see if reindeer really know how to fly.

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