

*What I Think of
Various Places
and People*

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Second Edition

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INTRODUCTION

Okay. I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, "I have opinions. You have opinions. My cousin Joe has opinions. And my ear, nose, and throat doctor has opinions. But among the four of us, you're the only one arrogant enough to put your opinions in a book. Do you have the nerve to think that your opinions are more book-worthy than everyone else's opinions? Who the hell are you?"

Here's my answer: Who the hell am *I*? Who the hell are *you*? You can't be coming at me at the beginning of my book, and giving me this whole speech about book-worthiness and the opinions of you and your cousin Joe.

Also, let me answer your other question and say this: Yes, I believe my opinions are extremely book-worthy. Let me tell you something about myself. I'm a professional opinion-haver. My opinions are of the highest quality. Let me give you an example to illustrate what I mean. One time I worked at an office where I had this boss named Gary. Now, me and my ten coworkers, we all had a certain opinion of Gary. And that opinion was, "Gary is a piece of garbage. I can't stand him. Someone should elbow him in the face." Now, here's what made my opinion superior to that of my coworkers. Of the 11 of us, I'm the only one who actually went ahead and elbowed Gary in the face. Furthermore, before I elbowed him, I distributed a 28 page memo throughout the office, in which I provided a

thorough and detailed analysis of Gary's personality and work habits, and I used such terms as "power-tripping," "compulsive complainer," "head up his rear end," "extremely dependable when it comes being immature and aggravating," and "is just like a carton of orange juice that was refilled three weeks ago with tap water that came out of a dirty hose."

The point is, I am in fact a professional opinion-haver. Most pundits and experts and analysts on TV—those people are amateurs compared to me. They've never elbowed Gary in the face. I'm more than qualified to write a book where I tell you what's what about various places and people. This is that book.

PLACES

Different Amounts of --- Formality

America is a vast and diverse country. I know. I've seen the country, and I've heard the songs. And here's what I've learned. In the US of A, we have spacious skies and purple mountain majesties. We got the Redwood Forest and the gulf stream waters. There's Detroit, Chicago, Chattanooga, Baton Rouge. We have drive thrus and corner cafes. We got a range, where the deer and the antelope play. We have all sorts of stuff, from sea to shining sea.

Now, let me ask you this. What's the most informal place in all of America? As in, what place is really not into a system of formalities and things of that nature? Pick one.

- (a) Venice Beach

- (b) Your divorced Uncle Barry's apartment living room, which contains two hammocks and a margarita dispenser, as well as 28 individual tube socks on the floor

- (c) A monster truck rally in Georgia

(d) A dorm room at Arizona State University

(e) Walmart

The correct answer is e. Walmart. There are 3552 Walmarts in this country—and every single Walmart location is the most informal place in America.

Here's the best way to describe the ambiance at Walmart. This should sum it up quite nicely. Nobody feels compelled to take a shower before going to Walmart. They do the opposite. They go through a multi-stage deshoweritization process. Because as we all know, it's socially unacceptable to go to Walmart, unless you look like a complete mess. Some 17 year old girl tells her mother, "Okay, mom. I'm going to Walmart." And the mother says, "Not dressed like that! A clean blouse and blue jeans is not an appropriate outfit for Walmart. If you want to go to Walmart, what you need to do is smoke seven unfiltered cigarettes, roll around in dirt for five minutes, and then go into the hamper and grab an outfit that consists of a pair of daisy dukes and a yellow bikini top."

That's how you prepare for Walmart. And you also do some stretching, in order to get ready for the fight that you're probably gonna have with the person standing next to you in the cookies and crackers aisle. Those are the social dynamics present in that store. I know. I'm basically a sociologist. And here's Superstore Sociology 101: "If one person at Walmart stands close to another person at Walmart for an extended period of time, it's only natural that the two people will get into a heated argument and lay the smack down on each other."

Here's a good question. Is it better to shop at Walmart or Costco? Pick a society to be part of. Do you want to be a Walmartian or a Costcorean? That's a tough one. On one hand, Costco presents you with a much friendlier and more civilized atmosphere. On the other hand, Costco has this thing known as a four hour minimum. You can't shop at Costco for less than four hours. I mean, that's not an official policy enforced by the store. But it's an unofficial policy that you yourself enforce for absolutely no legitimate reason. All Costco shoppers refuse to exit the store until they put in their 240 minutes.

When you walk into a Costco, that's the start of a Homeric shopping odyssey in which you explore every nook and cranny of the store, you buy enough stuff to fill up your car trunk and your backseat and your front passenger seat and your glove compartment and your cupholder—and then later when you unload your various purchases at home, the other members of your household look at you like you're out of your damn mind, and your family and friends start up a group text where they plan an intervention whose main objective is to make you do all your shopping at your local Piggly Wiggly and Dick's Sporting Goods. Just those two places.

I'm a former member of Costco. I cancelled my membership a while ago. I've been Costco sober for the past eight years. But, I still have a relationship with Costco. What I do is, I hang out in the Costco parking lot, and I watch people pushing their carts out of the store. It's quite an experience. Some guy enters the place, and he thinks, "Oh, I'll just go in, I'll get some batteries for my clicker, and I'll also eat a few hundred calories of free samples. And maybe I'll buy a thing or two that tickles my fancy." And then four hours later, that guy is walking out of the store with a cart containing 48 batteries, 4000

toothpicks, a humidifier, a dehumidifier, a rehumidifier, two karaoke machines, two pounds of green Jolly Ranchers, three bottles of Johnnie Walker Blue Label, two gazebos, three dozen roses, a Kirkland Signature African dashiki and Japanese sashimono, 30 pounds of Kibbles ‘n Bits, an engagement ring, eight bottles of Flintstone vitamins, 24 ping pong paddles, two elephants, two Goodyear tires, one Goodyear blimp, and a machine that simultaneously makes beef jerky and espresso.

The people who buy stuff at Costco are not shoppers. They don’t shop in the proper sense. They get high off of purchasing quality merchandise at low prices. These are individuals who, when they buy a dashiki for \$15, there’s a marked increase in their brain’s dopaminergic activity. I’m not 100% sure what that means. But I do know this. When people do drugs, there’s a marked increase in their brain’s dopaminergic activity. Check the brain scans. I’m not making this up. It’s a chemical and neurobiological fact. Scientifically, Costcoans are not shoppers so much as they are a large group of highly addicted individuals who wander through unlabeled aisles and fill up an average of 27.4 cubic feet of shopping cart space per session. They’re there to get high, and that’s pretty much it. The Costco business model is based on the business of models of predecessors in the field, like Pablo Escobar and Tony Montana.

This next example should really illustrate what type of so-called shopping takes place at Costco. I was hanging out in a Costco parking lot the other day, and within a span of two hours, I saw three people walking out of the store with two liters of Preparation H in their shopping cart. I asked each one of them, “What do you do for a living?” And only one said, “I’m a proctologist.” That proctologist is the only one who needs

massive quantities of Preparation H. As for the typical Costco shopper, he's some schmuck who brings home a discount liter of hemorrhoid cream, along with various breakfast foods and karaoke machines and elephants. You ask him, "How are you gonna squeeze those elephants through the doorway of your 1100 square foot apartment?" And he tells you, "Simple. I'm gonna lubricate the elephants with the Preparation H."

Here's a picture I drew of a Costco shopper leading an elephant into his apartment.



Superstore shoppers come in three main categories. You got the aforementioned Costcoreans and Walmartians. And then you got the Targeoisie—as in, people who shop at Target.

Have you been to this place Target? Holy mackerel! Target stores are incredibly upscale. Very organized. Very well maintained. Very clean. It smells really fantastic in there. There's nothing like it. I go to Target mainly for the smell. I

don't even bother spending time outdoors anymore. I'm not interested in fresh air. I want my lungs to take in pure Target all day.

Target is great for your lungs. That being said, it might not be so good for your personality. And here's what I mean by that. Nothing makes you snobbier than shopping at Target. When you're there, you think, "I am a Target customer. In other words, I'm not one of those Philistine savages who 'shop 'n' fight' at Walmart, and I'm not one of those Kirkland Signature addicts who pay \$55 a year for the right to buy gazebos and dashikis at Costco."

Target is pure snobbery. Any time I'm driving to or from Target and I need to stop and get gas, you know what I do? I fill up my car with 91 octane. That's a tremendous amount of octane, considering how I drive a Honda Civic. I go with upper echelon octane. Because that's the Target lifestyle. Luxury all the way. Do you think I eat Chicken McNuggets on the same day that I shop at Target? Forget about it. At the bare minimum, I go to Ruby Tuesday's and I order the Crispy Popcorn Shrimp for \$13.59.

Shopping at Target gives a real boost to your ego. Then there's this other place where, if you shop there, it can be quite degrading. I'm talking about the 99 Cent Store. Over there, they're busy offering discounts that you don't even want. Even if you're a bargain hunter, you are not hunting for bargains of that magnitude. You're in there one day, and you see a five pound sack of potatoes for 99 cents. Then the next week, you go back in there, and the store is like, "Good news. We now have a *ten* pound sack of potatoes for 99 cents. We upped the ante to ten pounds." What exactly is the point of that price change? It's not like when they were selling the five pound sacks for 99

cents, people thought, “I like the concept of eating potatoes—but this price is a little too rich for my blood.” 99% of shoppers never even thought of buying potatoes for less than 99 cents per five pounds. But the 99 Cent Store—their whole angle has got to be something like, “You know, we’re not particularly interested in our customers and the prices they will and won’t pay. In fact, we don’t give a flying monkey about none of that! Our pricing objective is simple. We just want to make it so that we sell potatoes for less than the price of dirt and manure. We’re not competing against Walmart and the Piggly Wiggly. We’re competing against Home Depot. If they sell ten pounds of manure for \$1.00, we sell ten pounds of potatoes for 99 cents.”

Yeah. They sell ten pounds of potatoes for 99 cents. What’s next? “We’ve got packets of magic beans, 3 for 99 cents. When you plant one packet of the beans, they grow into 24 three-liter bottles of Shasta Strawberry Soda. You can yield 72 liters of soft drink for 33 cents.”

Do you know what’s really fun? Going to the 99 Cent Store, and doing the opposite of bargain hunting. As in, you shop within the four walls of that store, and in doing so, you find a way to be a snob. This can be accomplished. Just go about your 99 cent business in an aristocratic manner. I do that every once in a while. I go into the store, and I get the medium bottle of California red wine for 99 cents. I also go for the can of salmon for 99 cents. One time some guy saw those two things in my basket, and he remarked, “Listen, bro. If you’re trying to get drunk and eat seafood, this isn’t the cheapest way to do it. Don’t buy a can of salmon for 99 cents, and a medium bottle of California red wine for 99 cents. What you need to do is buy four cans of tuna for 99 cents, and a big bottle of North

Dakota blue wine for 99 cents.” And then I told him, “I am the great grandson of John D. Rockefeller! And our family tradition is, when we shop at the 99 Cent Store, we do it in a way that demonstrates our superior social standing.”

Here’s a picture of me wearing a top hat and holding a cane as I shop at the 99 Cent Store with a bottle of wine and can of salmon in my basket.



The American

Media's

Misrepresentation of

America

Here's a good experiment for learning what this country is like. Go to the South and track down some guy who won the lottery. Ask him what he bought with his lottery winnings. How do you think he'll respond? Will he say, "Well. I've built myself quite a portfolio. I've invested \$20 million in real estate. And \$20 million in stocks and bonds. And I've got \$10 million in fine art, including three Van Goghs and four Cezannes. I'm also planning to take a trip to Europe. I hear Croatia is quite breathtaking this time of year."

Will a Southern lottery winner say that kind of stuff? Heck no! Here's what he'll say. "I bought a white F150, and I also bought a grey Silverado, and a blue F150, and a red F150, and I bought a black F150 for my brother Billy, and a green Dodge Ram for my cousin Bobby, and a blue F150 for my

grandma Billie Jean, and a grey F150 for my other grandma Bobbie Joe.” Then ask him, “Did you also buy a house?” And he’ll tell you, “Right now I’m homeless, and I got 700 pickup trucks parked on Flatbush Avenue. And most of those trucks is F150s.”

There you go. That statement says a lot about what America is like culturally. If you want to know what this country is, don’t turn on your TV and watch *Good Morning America*, *Modern Family*, *60 Minutes*, *Friends*, *Grey’s Anatomy*, *The Big Bang Theory*, and *SNL*. Those shows combined represent 1% of the country. As for that lottery winner who won’t stop buying pickup trucks, he represents 37% of the country. That guy is America. Granted, America is a diverse country of 50 states and 330 million people. America is a lot of things. But if you were to make a one word summary of the entire country, that word would have to be F150.

By and large, we have an F150 culture in this country. The majority of US cities feature that culture quite a bit. You go to those cities, and you see plenty of people driving F150s, or you observe people doing or saying things that make you think, “This person probably drives an F150, and he has little to nothing in common with Ross, Monica, Joey, Phoebe, Rachel, and especially Chandler.”

That’s what you come across in most of the United States. F150 culture. Now let me ask you this. When you turn on your TV, what do you see? Do you see a plethora of pickup trucks? Not at all! There’s the opposite of a plethora. Go to your thesaurus, and look up the antonym of plethora. That word is a good description of how many pickup trucks are on TV.

The American media presents you with almost no pickup trucks, and plenty of people like Chandler Bing.

And let me just add this. George Clooney, Rob Lowe, Ryan Seacrest. They're from Kentucky, Virginia, and Georgia. But do they act like a trio of good ol' boys? Absolutely not. I mean, if George, Rob, and Ryan were to move in next door to you, would you think, "Well, I guess the hillbillies have arrived. It's only a matter of time before this entire neighborhood starts smelling like fried chicken and Funyuns." You definitely wouldn't think that. After all—those three "Southerners" have the personalities and voices of three city slickers who are from New York or Los Angeles. The media wants that. You can't be on TV or in movies if you don't seem like you're from New York or LA. There are only three exceptions to that rule. Miley Cyrus, Steve Harvey, and Britney Spears. You look at everyone else on TV and in the movies, and you think, "This person is an F150-phobe."

This media of ours, they really want to filter out 99% of America. In fact, they don't even give you New York and Los Angeles, so much as they give you one minor segment of those two cities. The real New York and LA are hardly anything like the ones the media presents to you.

Let me tell you something about the real New York City. It's basically a city in Puerto Rico. And when I say Puerto Rico, I don't mean Pore-tuh Rico. I mean Pwehrrto Rrrico! Say it with me, amigo. Pwehrrto Rrrico! You gotta roll those r's and get in that ultra Hispanic "pweh."

New York is authentic Puerto Rican territory. It's true. If you don't believe me, go conduct this experiment. Go to New York, approach 100 random men there, and ask each one the following question: "Is your name Luis Rivera?" The survey says, 11 of the 100 men are in fact Luis Rivera. Luis Rivera is the most popular full name in New York. And do you know

what other name is in the top ten? No—not John Smith. Jennifer Lopez. You might have to dig around in order to find a John Smith in New York. But there’s a Jennifer Lopez on every block. New York has plenty of women with that exact name. On any given weekend in New York, you can find a Puerto Rican wedding where a man named Luis Rivera is marrying a woman named Jennifer Lopez.

That says a lot about New York. It’s a city where white people are not a majority. They’re the antonym of a majority. And by the way, you don’t have to consult with your thesaurus and look up the antonym of majority. I’ll give you that antonym right here. The antonym of majority is... wait for it... minority. In New York, white people are a minority. The city is mostly Puerto Rican, black, Jewish, and Chinese.

Now, let me ask you this very relevant question. On the show *Friends*, how many people know more than five words of Spanish? The show is set in New York City—but nobody on that show hablos a damn thing in espanol. And keep in mind that I’m not just referring to the six primary characters—who, by the way, are friends, but are definitely not amigos. I’m also referring to the extras in the coffee shop, and the extras on the street, and all of the friends’ coworkers and boyfriends and girlfriends and whoever. Everyone on that show is a non-Spanish speaker to a very extreme degree. Nobody does any habloing, except for the time Rachel utters the expression “Tu madre es loca.”

Friends ran for 236 episodes, and only one episode has a Puerto Rican guy. Season 10, Episode 3 - “The One with Ross’s

End of 20 Page Preview

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