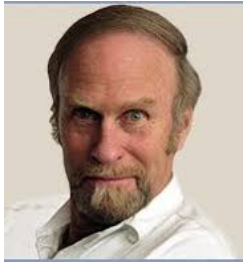


Margaritaville & I Left My Heart in San Francisco



By Frosty Wooldridge

September 4, 2023

Over the weekend, Jimmy Buffet died just short of his 77th birthday. He sang to us with his hit song, "Margaritaville." They said he lived his life like a song up until his last breath. Painfully, a part of me died with him. Additionally, this year, one of my all-time favorites, Tony Bennett died at 96 years of age. He sang, "I left my heart in San Francisco..." He took a part of my heart with him. Betty White died at age 99 twenty months ago. She caused endless laughter in all our Baby Boomer lives. Cloris Leachman, 94, the great character actor, died, too. Just broke my heart. The killer for me was when Olivia Newton John died. Who hasn't seen "Grease" at least a half-dozen times?

This year, NPR's anchor Scott Simon said, "The new life span of a Caucasian American male has been lowered to 76 years 3 months. As I sat there in my car seat on my way to the gym I muttered, "Dang, I've only got two weeks to live." Here it is September, and I'm still doing 100 sit-ups daily, swimming a half mile daily and lifting weights six days a week. I'm gunning for at least 85, maybe 90. I've got a lot of books to author, articles to write and miles to cover on my bicycle.

Back in 1977, I'll never forget August 16th, when I crossed the Canadian border on my bike, after riding to Alaska, I saw a front-page headline on a paper on the bench: **"Elvis Dead at**

42.” That just knocked me on my butt. I had danced to every song he sang. I asked my wife on the dance floor to marry me while he sang, “Can’t help falling in love with you.” I didn’t find out about his drug addiction and really tragic life until years later when I read about it in a book: **What Happened, Elvis?**

We baby boomers followed John Denver as he sang “Annie’s Song, Country Roads, Feather Bed, Rocky Mountain High, and Country Boy.” When he augured his plane into the Pacific Ocean, I just cried my eyes out.

Who remembers Bing Crosby’s “White Christmas”, or Doris Day’s “Que sera sera,” or Robin Williams’ gut-busting humor, or Rita Hayworth’s dancing, or Fred Astaire, or Marlon Brando’s “The God Father?” They all grew up with us, entertained us, and bestowed their talents to our delights.

Whether they entertained us on the Silver Screen, or we kissed our girl or boy friend at the drive-in, those special singers and actors were/are a part of our lives for our entire lives. I must admit: being a Baby Boomer has been the greatest era of American history. We created “Equal rights, Voter Rights, Title IX, Environmental Protection Agency and many more benefits for all our citizens. The past 58 years have been a great time to be alive. I’ve certainly benefited from all those boys in WWII who gave the “last full measure of devotion” to our country and to the world. If you ever visit a national cemetery, each one of those kids made your freedoms, your choices, and your life possible. I do visit Fort Logan Cemetery, Denver, Colorado gravesites on Memorial Day to give my thanks, personally.

As a matter of fact, during my bicycle trip through Europe from Nord Kapp, Norway to Athens, Greece, I camped out near a cemetery in Italy south of the Poe River. There were 500 American and British kids buried there. Ages were 18, 19, 20, 21. It showed their names, ages and ranks. I was so moved

that I spoke to them in the morning, "I want all you boys' spirits to get up out of your graves, mount your bicycles and ride into this fine day with me. Let's do it together." At that point, 500 young spirits rose out of their graves...they mounted their bicycles...and followed me out to the road. I looked back to see their bright eyes, healthy bodies and eagerness of youth. "Forward, HO!" I said. With that, all 501 of us pedaled south for the next hour. I swear I could hear their shouts of joy, their whoops and hollers as they pedaled with me down that beautiful highway. After an hour, I looked back, "Well boys, thanks for riding with me...I know you've got to go back to your final resting place."

With that, I turned and pedaled down the road on my own. My friend Gary who served in the U.S. Navy was waiting beside the road. "What took you so long?" he asked.

"Oh, I thought it would be good to ride with a bunch of kids from that cemetery where we camped last night," I said, with tears falling. "They gave their lives so we might enjoy our freedoms to ride."

"Gotcha' bro," Gary said.

Right now, I have to admit that Willie Nelson, 90, is on the short list for remaining on this planet much longer. I listen to his songs daily! How about "On the road again...City of New Orleans and hundreds more." Same with Clint Eastwood at 93! Who hasn't seen "The Good, Bad & Ugly or Dirty Harry" at least 10 times? I love Dolly Parton. She possesses a heart as big as the moon. I hope she outlives me, so my heart won't break if she passes while I'm still living. Same with Morgan Freeman...I love his work, his struggles, his triumphs. And that voice, Whitney Houston, right up there with the angels.

Every one of those actors, actresses, singers, and other entertainers, whether they are street minstrels, mimes, jugglers, acrobats, sports stars...or even high school theater

people...all of them enriched our lives. For their efforts, I am forever thankful.

One of the best films we've seen and watched it 10 times is "Forever My Girl." It's on Netflix and/or IMDB. You'll see why Sandi and I have watched it so many times.

In the end, American citizens of every color, religion, race and political persuasion have enjoyed the utmost finest opportunities in the last 58 years. Thank you, Jimmy Buffet and Tony Bennett and all the rest who entertained us. God bless America!

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