

Artisanal Irony

By G. Murphy Donovan (September 2017)



Rhode Island Barred Hen

Irony serves as an alibi for a fetish.—Nathan Wing

My wife is a curator of the odd or unusual. The other day she sent me an article about a golden retriever litter where one of the puppies was green, a rare but genuine canine mutation apparently. Without a photo, the green puppy story might have

been dismissed out of hand. Such is the nature of data and fact. When new facts on the same subject do not conform to old facts, we tend to reject the newcomer.

Indeed, for too many folks, new news is seldom good news. Donald trump takes a bow here.



The puppy story got me to thinking about the latest news from our chicken coop, a small covey of Rhode Island Barreds. Our favorite hen, Hilary, died suddenly the other day from unknown causes. Hilary was the runt of

her litter, so she occupied separate quarters. The other hens tried to do her in on several occasions so Hilary had to live, literally, outside the box.

When you separate one hen from the flock, ironically, the loner never strays far from the coup—or her fratricidal kin. Hilary survived several encounters with a Red Tailed Hawk too as a free-range gal.

Freedom is just another kind of irony.

Given the drama of her short stay on our street, we were surprised when Hilary succumbed to alien microbes not the usual family mayhem.

Hilary's demise got me to thinking about irony and another outsider, Donald Trump. President Trump might be the Prince of Irony, a chap who got what he wished for just as surely as Washington got what it deserved. A pair of Arkansas hucksters got out-hustled by a Brooklyn barker in 2016.

Irony is the mother's milk of political life. Politicians seldom say what they mean or mean what they say on either side of the political divide.

Just to be clear. Irony is not a lie. It's more like unintended consequences or the blowback from loose talk. The Donald is an example of situational irony, an outcome that may not have been expected by even Trump himself.

Rhetorical irony is intentional—or not.

When Shakespeare says "the Prince of Darkness is a gentleman," the irony is intentional. The bard was probably thinking of lawyers anyway. All laws and rules are pregnant with irony.

When Mrs. Bill Clinton, an iconic ironic lawyer, remembered "landing under sniper fire," she dropped a litter of ironies. The false facts were intentional, but the subsequent ironies are still on tour. Mrs. Clinton's presidential potential was the first casualty but the Bosnia victim myth was even more consequential.

Muslim Bosnia, thanks to the Clintons, is now one of the primary exporters of jihad in Europe. Blowback is often irony's first born.

Ironies abound in legal/political professions where shysters dominate often pontificating about truth, justice, and the American "way" under an ethos where billing hours are true north. Irony in the legal profession often wears a Latin burka. Pro bono is an example.

A phrase like "legal ethics" elevates irony to oxymoron.

The English language lends itself to irony like few other tongues. The American dialect has raised Shakespeare's game to new levels. Most irony is entertaining, words or phrases that have several, ambiguous, or contradictory meanings.

Sarcasm is the evil twin of irony. Nevertheless, most irony is

still just idiosyncratic fun.

Consider that a hot dog has little to do with dogs unless you drop your wiener. A hamburger has nothing to do with ham except when it's a bacon cheeseburger. A Coke is not an opiate. Coke is. Weed is not necessarily a nuisance. It's a cash crop. Tube steak, aka sausage, has little to do with beef and everything to do with mystery meat. A catfish doesn't really have whiskers either. Fish have little in common with felines. Corned beef hash contains no corn, but does feature diced spuds. And alas, a "slim" chance is the arithmetic and ironic equivalent of "fat" chance.

Whilst we're on the subject of culinary irony, we would be remiss not to discuss Spam.



The kale side of the cultural divide (and California) is far removed from potted meats, the tinned treats of Middle America. A Spam brick is a simple amalgam of flesh, fat, salt, and extra naughty nitrates. Spam jelly is a product of cooking.

What's not to like?

The Hormel Corporation invented Spam just in time for the last world war where pink meat loaf became a kind of manna for Allied armies worldwide. Spam, Hormel and Uncle Joe Stalin don't get the credit that they deserve for the allied victory in 1945.

Lend-lease was Spam in a can, the calories and protein that allowed the Red Army to pull allied bacon out of the Nazi fire. And it may not be a coincidence that the Pentagon hasn't

won a real fight since Spam was excommunicated from the American GI diet.

As irony would have it, Spam is still one of basic food groups on many third world menus, a kind of luau in a can. Indeed, when you sauté a few slices of Spam, your house smells like pit-roasted pig or the Royal Hawaiian lobby at sunset.

The origin of the acronym is still a closely guarded Hormel company secret. Educated guesses include spiced meat, spare meat, or shoulders of pork and ham. A favorite guess is “specially processed army meat.”

Withal, Spam is now the victim of cultural appropriation and a host of other micro-aggressions, most of which originate on the Left Coast. The acronym has been plagiarized by Silicon Valley nerds to describe electronic junk mail, clearly implying that America’s premier mystery meat is some kind of sinister junk food.

If justice was a lady, the polite pork purveyors of Minnesota would sue California digital dorks for slander, defamation, libel—and bad manners. Junk mail, Facebook and the National Security Agency are rude violations of your personal space. Spam is a polite, heroic, yea historic, welcomed guest in many Yankee homes.

Hormel aficionados buy 122 million cans of Spam a year in the US alone, a jellied can for every third soul in America. Spam is as American as apple pie and sells better too. You can’t keep an apple pie in a glove compartment, in a man cave, in a fall-out shelter, in a tank, in a cock pit, or in a foxhole either.

The Spam calumny is the twisted sister of the digital revolution. If truth be told, Spam slander may be the godfather of the “fake news” epidemic. Trashing survivalist foodstuffs may have been the opening salvo from the eco-enviro-globalist Left. The Millennial, politically correct,

college graduate who majored in Gender Studies yesterday is today the ironic equivalent of unskilled labor.

When Goreites fashion the next American coup, potted meats will probably be converted to carbon credits anyway. Pound for pound, Spam pigs pass more greenhouse gas than hamburger cows.

Spam trashing is consistent with two other mainstream tropes; Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, two examples of artisanal irony—hand made by college credentialed idiots. Trump is demonized for loose talk about lady parts by political, press, and academic demographics that can no longer distinguish between pussy and cats. Indeed, Trump critics are the same gender benders who believe that progress is a liberal lassie who pees standing up in a sex neutral, translucent, no-flush toilet.

Russians are running a close second in the political irony sweeps. In days of yore, Hollywood and American media swooned over Stalin and the various Communist utopias. Putin comes along and jettisons the totalitarian Animal Farm and America turns on the Russians.

WTF and SNAFU too! Uncle Sam can't take an ironic yes for an answer.

Cold war with Moscow is the kind of irony that fuels political camp followers socialized by one or more small screens in their mother's basement. The best ironies are ruined by over thinking, so let's end here with a proletarian brunch, a recipe for Spam gourmands.

Uncle Spam Surprise

Whip (aerate) free-range eggs, add judgement-free diced Spam. Infuse with ground red pepper flakes and overripe mushrooms. You can use dried mushrooms, but you have to let them slurp some hot butter first. Bake (or sauté) the mix in a shallow dish/pan puddled with *beurre blanc*. Butter or olive oil will

do.

After baking to a medium rare fluff in a pizza-hot oven; garnish with a slather of hollandaise (or shredded cheddar), a spritz of fat capers, a rasher of cheeky adolescent spinach and a tankard of extra chill Paso Robles Chablis.

Calorie counters may want to pass on the hollandaise.

If you overcook Uncle Spam, oven irony will manifest itself immediately. Well-bred eggs may be disciplined and coddled in the same dish, yet never tortured.

G. Murphy Donovan usually writes about the politics of national security but occasionally wanders into the kitchen where things like Spam sushi or Loco Moco are possible.

If you enjoyed this article by G. Murphy Donovan and want to read more of his work, please click [here](#).

To help New English Review continue to publish interesting and informative articles, please click [here](#).