

It's that time of year, folks – the dog days of summer... those languid days that pour out drip by drip like warm, sticky molasses. I have an annual tradition right around now: I call it Writer's Block.



My brain just refuses to spark in this humidity. Or if it does spark, those sparks never seem to catch flame. They just fizzle right out. Pffft. When this happens, and deadline looms, there's only one thing a girl can do. In the grand tradition of San Francisco columnist Herb Caen – and the later, lamer, tradition of USA Today's Larry King – she must resort to the random, incoherent ramblings known as "three dot journalism." It goes something like this...

... How 'bout that *New Yorker* cover everybody's been talking about? When I saw it online – Obama decked out like Osama and Michelle all Foxy Brown – I thought *uh-oh... this could seriously backfire*

. And so it has. Is it possible that the editors at *The New Yorker*

are so sophisticated that... they're not? Doesn't sophistication imply a certain knowledge of the world... including flyover country and the American south? The cover, of course, was not for *those*

(us?) yahoos. It was for the magazine's regular readers, who have no doubt enjoyed basking in their fine sense of satire while scoffing at the ignorance of the Great Unwashed, the intended objects of this clever send-up. But what *about*

the Great Unwashed – the ones who don't really *do*

satire, but are so often the butt of it? Well, they're laughing, alright, but not at themselves. They're circulating the image round the internet, where it's likely

stoking the fears and prejudices those tony editors meant to squelch with their little joke. Did the Enlightened Ones at *The New Yorker*

not foresee this? They clearly didn't expect the Obama camp to take (feign?) an equally literal

interpretation of the cover, pronouncing it "tasteless and offensive" and an insult to Muslim Americans. Poor

New Yorker.

Bitten in the bee-hind by the same humorless, PC mentality they helped create! Fortunately for them, they have more than a passing acquaintance with irony, too...

...And speaking of irony... I took my daughter to see *Kit Kittredge: An American Girl at the Sea Turtle* last week. It was a lovely little movie about a young girl growing up during the American Depression. Amelia and I were both moved by Kit's story, that of a well-to-do family that suddenly loses its livelihood (a car dealership), forcing the father to leave town in search of work, while Kit and her mom take in boarders to make ends meet. The film is full of great lessons about thrift, hard work, optimism, and prioritizing the important things in life. I kept thinking how wonderful it was for my daughter to see, writ large on the silver screen, that money

and possessions aren't important, that when times are tough (as they were then, and are increasingly now) it's family and friends who get us through. Amelia really seemed to respond to these lessons of love, community, and the big lie at the heart of the materialist world view.

And when we got home from the movie, she immediately began campaigning for a new American Girl Doll – Kit's best friend Ruthie, to be specific – and all the clothes and accessories that come with her. Should run me somewhere upwards of \$150. Sigh...

... *South Carolina is so gay*... Thus read the posters that were pulled from London's subway last week after Palmetto Scoop broke the story about a tax payer-funded ad campaign designed to attract European tourists to our fair (but not particularly gay, IMHO) state. Apparently, we were not the only "so gay" destination mentioned in the campaign. Others included Atlanta, Boston, Las Vegas, New Orleans, and Washington, DC. Excuse me, but how, exactly, did South Carolina (not a particular city, mind you, but the entire state) ever get lumped in with those cosmopolitan – and, I'm sure, quite gay-friendly – locales? Was this somebody's idea of a joke? The South Carolina posters touted, among our many attractions, "plantations, the Civil War, golf, and gay beaches." Aside from the gay beaches (we've got gay beaches?), what's so gay about any of that stuff?

The Civil War?

Come on.

We need tourists in South Carolina, and I'm perfectly happy to welcome *gay* tourists to South Carolina. But I think there's something to be said for truth in advertising. And let's face it, South Carolina just ain't that gay...

... Despite the hype surrounding its Euro-cool director, its heaps of stellar reviews, the enthusiastic endorsement of my cineast friend Mark, and the urgings of my husband who's dying to see it, I just can't get excited about a movie called "Hellboy II"...

... While out jogging the other morning, I was reminded that I like a tidy cottage with flowers in the window just as much a big, beautiful house on the water. I am fortunate to live in Pigeon Point, a neighborhood where we have plenty of both, and everything in between. And the best part? Much like the people therein, none of these homes is remotely like the next. They assume a pleasing harmony thanks only to a marvelous cast of trees and the frequent appearance of water. The poet Robert Herrick would have called the aesthetic here a "wild civility." Every neighborhood should be so wild and civil...

... I always assumed Water Festival took its name from the Beaufort River which runs alongside – and in some cases, beneath – its events and activities. But I'm beginning to wonder if "water" is, in fact, a reference to that which invariably dumps from the heavens on a goodly portion of the Festival each year... or maybe that which inevitably beads up on the faces, under the arms, and across the backs of the faithful attendees. Has anybody ever considered moving this thing to May? Or maybe October? The river would still be there, but just not so much... water.

... One last thing: an exciting bit of news for Beaufort, a sad one for me. Vic Varner, director of music at Beaufort High School, has just been hired by USCB to start a university choir, the school's first ever. With Vic at the helm, it's sure to be first rate, to which anyone who's ever seen a Voices concert at BHS will attest. The sad-for-me part is this: in order to take the job with

USCB, Vic has had to resign his position as Director of Music at First Presbyterian Church, where he's been my choir director for going-on two years now. A passionate and demanding musician with a warm heart and wicked sense of humor, Vic will be impossible to replace. He leaves behind a devoted choir that won't feel much like singing any time soon. We love him and wish him well.