

A NOVEL OF LIFE AND SURVIVAL IN A DECLINING AMERICA

The
Genius Club
for Survivors Only



*If we are so smart,
why did we make so many mistakes?*

ROB REIDER

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Author's Quandary

I often wonder why we can't go back to the America I remember growing up. It always seemed to be a land of opportunity that held greater regard for quality education leading to greater economic opportunities for the masses. It lacked the present degree of greed, selfishness, bigotry, inequality and inhumanity to the people it served. Politicians were more apt to be in service of those they represented rather than self-serving—citizen politicians rather than career politicians.

If we can get unstuck from the stories and performance pieces that have been programmed into us by society and our own experiences. Maybe then we would be able to change our thinking and take action as to what our communities can be—and we can do it on our own. I wonder why I wake up each morning and I am still the same person with the same story. Our mind believes what we tell it and thus our story begins. All we have to do is change our minds.

I believe *The Genius Club* as depicted in this book has the chance to create a more supportive America, community by community, before the country free falls off the precipice of terminal demise. We are not alone.

*It doesn't take a genius to get it done
and raise our happy index.*



CHAPTER 1

Funny Meeting You Here

The sun came through the large uncovered windows creating a shadowy image and a glare throughout the opulent lobby. Those guests milling about the lobby kept their sunglasses on and placed their right hand over their eyes. Many of them still wore their skimpy bathing suits—if you have it, flaunt it. Those who didn't think their bodies looked attractive or were too old to care wore cover-ups with smart-ass messages such as Old Farts Rule, Beauty Is In The Mind Of The Wearer, My Other Body Is In The Shop and so forth. And of course there were those who should have covered up, but didn't know better or others were afraid to tell them. When in Florida let it all hang out. The sun is what pays the bills.

The concierge's table with all of those tourist brochures of where to go, where to eat, and where to lose your money quickly, sat in the shade at the far corner of the lobby. The concierge sat in the middle of the table talking with guests who believed he was there for them alone. Others tried to get his attention but the couple with the age spots from Minnesota blocked him off—he was theirs for the duration. And they took the liberty to address him by his given name of Ray as it said on the plaque sitting in front of him. Actually it read "Ray Golding, Day Shift Concierge" but this was Florida with a license to become instantly familiar—at least by the guests. Ray was still expected not to get too familiar and to address the guests as Mr. or Mrs. (or Ms.) and their last names. He complied but he always made up his own names for each guest. The Minnesota couple standing in front of him was the Walrus and the Dinosaur.

Ray looked up to see Mr. Carpenter shuffling across the lobby. It always made his day when Mr. Carpenter appeared. Ray's names for him were "The Old Smoothie" and "Mr. Slick." Mr. Carpenter must be over 80 years old but he still had the spark in him and a good eye for the ladies—no thong bikini, thin or fat, got past him and he always had a winning word to say to the more voluptuous guests—women only need apply. Ray looked at his watch. *Right on time and right on the button. Three o'clock—just like clockwork.* Ray followed him with his eyes

as he performed his most famous magic trick—he walked through the lobby and turned into a bar.

Mr. Carpenter gave Ray the high sign as he ogled a semi zaftig blonde (yeah good luck on that) waiting in line at Ray's table while coming out of her bikini built for the slim at heart. "Hoo Ray" he called out as he passed Ray. This was his daily greeting—meant to be funny and Ray liked it—and he liked Mr. Carpenter, a bona fide character and award-winning lecher. Ray could learn a lot from him—he was 28 but as shy with the ladies as the sign on his desk. Ray called back, "Mr. Carpenter, how's it going?"

"Oh it's still going but slower, much slower." He smiled at Ray as he made his way to the bar, The Sun and Fun Room. How corny can you get, even in sunny Florida?

Mr. Carpenter entered the bar as he looked around for any good prospects for the evening—widows and divorcees please apply. He spied a potential winner sitting alone at the bar, his favorite spot. She still wore her bathing suit with a see-through mesh cover-up. She sat with her legs crossed showing a lot of good leg that ended at the right spot—nothing left to the imagination. She looked good for her age, or any age, well made-up and coiffed to perfection. He thought to himself *just like the old days, waiting for old Dougie Dog. Mr. Carpenter indeed!*

He pulled his stomach in and stood as straight and tall as he could—he needed all the help he could get. He was never considered a good looking or well built lad (exercise gave him the willies) and as he got older he became more curmudgeonly looking—like a rejected prune. But he was always considered charming—if not to the gents then to the ladies. He was so non-descript and crinkled that the ladies considered him cute (so ugly he was cute)—like a cute plastic gnome on the lawn.

Doug sat down next to the evening's prospect. He smiled at the corners of his mouth and she returned the smile with a full facial come on. He slowly perused his quarry, starting at the painted toes and upscale sandals, up the good looking shaved legs, up the tight slightly aging midriff, an appraising stop at the still full breasts and an abrupt stop at the face. He smiled at her. "Very nice," he said, "very nice indeed."

The fancy lady smiled back. "And what did you see that was so nice." Doug signaled to Nick (Nicholas Stofacas on his nameplate) the bartender.

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“Everything,” he said. “What I can see and what I hope to see.”

She smiled. “Don’t get your hopes up.” She looked down at his pants.

Nick came over and smirked at Douglas. The old goat was doing it again. He had bagged more female trophies at this bar than any of the other guests. Most of the other guests couldn’t get up on the barstool. A legend in Nick’s mind. “So Mr. C, what will it be?”

“Ah my mad Greek friendly bartender. I feel lucky today so let’s go with the regular.” Douglas always went with the regular, and he always felt lucky. At his age what did he have to lose? Rejection had become his middle name.

“That would be a triple Bushmills and soda—neither stirred nor shaken—with a Smirnoff chaser.” Nick looked over at Douglas for approval.

“Ah my boy, you are a quick learner. No more than four cubes in both.” Doug moved closer to the fine lady. “And what can I get for you?”

The lady re-crossed her legs for Douglas’s benefit. “How do you know I drink?”

“If you sit at the bar you want a drink. If you sit at the pool you want a tan, which you already have, and such a scrumptious one, and to be looked at. Am I right?”

“I don’t know. I can get a drink at the pool.”

“Yes you can but not with such good company. And what happens at the bar stays at the bar.”

“And that company would be you?”

Doug smiled. “Ah yes, that would be me.”

“In that case I’ll have another clamdigger.”

“And what might that be?”

“Something you don’t know? Well. Clam juice with a double shot of Scotch—Macalén single malt—on the rocks. One of Nick’s specials.”

“And you actually drink that concoction?” Doug made a face.

The lady looked over at Nick. “And he actually drinks his regular—ugh triple Bushmills and soda with a vodka chaser? My kind of man.”

“Touche pretty lady. My kind of lady. Give the lady another clamdigger, Nick my boy.”

Nick went off with a knowing grin, thinking *Mr. C rides again*, Doug moved in on the lady.

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He whispered in her ear. “My name is Douglas Carpenter and I have a private cottage by the pool with beautiful views.”

The lady looked at him and whispered back. “My name is Velma Robinson and I have a room to myself on the top floor with a view of the beach. And there is no view from the poolside cottages other than the pool. The back side looks at the retaining wall.”

“Absolutely correct, but I was thinking of the cottage with you in it.”

“Oh! You are a smoothie.”

“Smooth as a triple Bushmills. And the cottage is more comfortable than sitting on a hard barstool in the Sun and Fun Room with only Nick for company.”

“You do have a point Mr. C but I like Nick.”

“So do I, but you look a lot better in a bikini and a lot better in my cottage. So shall we? I’ll have the drinks sent over—and there are more where they come from.”

Doug stood up and put out his right arm. “So, shall we? No promises but a quiet drink, and interesting conversation.” He looked over at Velma expectantly.

Velma hesitated at the bar. She looked over at Douglas. *He was kind of cute for an old codger.* She got up slowly and looked over at Douglas. “Sure why not. I was getting tired of talking to those east coast and Midwest yentas out at the pool. Let’s take a chance. What can I lose?”

“Nothing that you haven’t lost already.”

Velma bent over to pick up her bag from the floor. As she did her sheer cover-up and her bikini top opened just enough to expose her breasts. Douglas looked over with approval—the perfect pair and perfectly aged. He shook his head. *I don’t know what men see in those things. always seemed gross to me. Sometimes what you see is what you get, but a well-formed curve is forever.*

Nick leaned over the bar almost falling into the dish of peanuts to get a better view of Velma. He looked up and gave Douglas the thumbs up okay sign and a knowing wink. *If I had a pair I would be queen. What it must have cost to keep Velma in this shape. Pretty fine for an older lady—must be at least fifty. Mr. C is one lucky dog.*

Velma took hold of Douglas’s right arm. “Lead away Mr. C.” He led her out of the bar like the trophy he saw her as. *Mr. C rides again.*

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As he passed through the lobby Ray shook his head. *There he goes again.* Ray looked at the clock. Three twenty—five minutes late. *Mr. C is slowing down.*

The man at the concierge table looked over at Douglas and Velma. “I think I know that man? What is his name?”

Ray looked up. “You mean Mr.C.?”

“I guess so. He looks very familiar. So his name?”

Ray leaned over. “I’m not supposed to give out guest’s names, but for you Mr. Smith, I guess it’s all right. Douglas Carpenter, some character. When he’s lucky, he scores a different lady every day. And that one is a looker and still nicely built. You should see some of his others. Ugh.”

“Douglas Carpenter. I do know him from the good old days at IBC. Son of a gun, it is the son of a gun—good old Dougie Dog. So what’s his room number?”

Ray shook his head. “Oh names are one thing but room numbers no can do. But you can find him at the bar at three on the dot every day. Over there at the fabulous Sun and Fun Room.”

Mr. Smith nodded his head. “Three o’clock you say—every day.”

Ray smiled. “Like clockwork. In at three, if he’s lucky out by three fifteen with something female on his arm. He’s my hero, man. When I get old I want to be just like him. So you still want to go to the dog track?”

“Nah, I think I’ll sit by the pool and dream about old Dougie. Maybe I’ll get lucky as well.”

“Good luck Mr. Smith. Face the sun. Better odds in that direction.”

Mr. Smith thought to himself. *The popular people—the attractive ones—the athletes and the privileged often times wind up more unsuccessful than the unpopular ones—the unattractive, the obese, the weak, the wimps and the geeks—and that’s what we want to confirm when we go back to the high school reunion at least twenty years later.* Allusion or truth, does it really matter as the story goes?

Other Books by Rob Reider

Other Fiction:

American Scream: A Novel of Hope and Possibilities

(2012: America Star Books)

Brother Knot: A Novel of Oppression's Effect on the Other

(2010: Infinity Publishing)

Creating an Authentic Life: The Storyteller and the Tale of Self

(2010: Sunstone Press)

Gone Wanting: A Novel of Unfilled Dreams and Living with Reality

(2013: American Star Books)

Road to Oblivion: The Footpath Back Home ~ A novel of Discovery

(2003: Clear Light Publishers)

Non-Fiction Professional Management Books:

Benchmarking Strategies: A Tool for Profit Improvement.

(2001: Wiley)

Developing Successful Business Strategies. (2014: Business Expert Press)

Effective Operations and Controls for the Small Privately Held Business. (2008: Wiley)

Expanding Customer Service as a Profit Center: Striving for Excellence and Competitive Advantage (Marketing Strategy Collection). (2012: Business Expert Press)

The Search for Best Practices: Doing the Right Thing the Right Way (2015: Business Expert Press)

Improving the Economy, Efficiency, and Effectiveness of Not-for-Profits: Conducting Operational Reviews. (2001: Wiley)

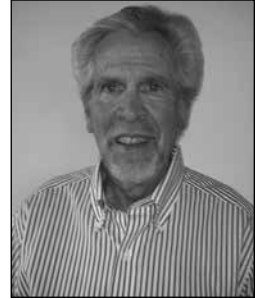
Managing Cash Flow: An Operational Focus (co-author with Peter B. Heyler). (2002: Wiley)

Operational Review: Maximum Results at Efficient Costs. (2002: Wiley)

Operational Review Workbook: Case Studies, Forms, and Exercises. (2002: Wiley)

About the Author

Rob Reider, Ph.D, MBA, CPA is the President of Reider Associates, a management and organizational consulting firm located in Santa Fe, New Mexico, that he founded in 1976. Rob is a nationally recognized author, speaker, seminar leader, and management consultant. Rob has also been a presenter at numerous professional conferences, seminar offerings, and in-house programs around the country. He has also published numerous articles in professional journals and is the developer of various online courses. He is the author of five other works of fiction and nine professional management books. Rob is also the President and Managing Director of a social issue theater company in which capacity he has been instrumental in producing, writing, and sometimes (under some duress) directing and acting in ten social issue theater pieces. Rob lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico, with his wife Barbara.



Rob can be contacted by e-mail at:
robreider1@gmail.com