

March 20, 2015

Home

It was mid-February, and my grandson and I had taken advantage of the 70 degree day to play nine. I had dropped him off at his house, and as I was driving home, I was congratulating myself for living on the Gulf Coast instead of one of the northern cities where temperatures were in single digits, and there were blizzard conditions.

It was late in the afternoon, and my thoughts turned to dinner. My wife, Joan is a very good cook, and I called her to ask what we were having. Before I could get the question off my lips, I suffered an attack. I don't know how to explain them, but I suffer these attacks about three or four times a month in the fall and winter ... mostly in months with the letter R in their spelling. In other words, September thru April.

These attacks began when we lived in New Orleans in 1960, and they only happened a few times a year, and when we moved to Atlanta, they ceased, and I thought I was cured. Since we have been on the Coast, the frequency and intensity has increased. I knew the remedy when the first one occurred 55 years ago. Fortunately, I was in the French Quarter ... only a couple of blocks from the Acme Oyster Bar. Two dozen on the half shell gave me immediate relief.

After 51 years, Joan is sensitive to my physical and emotional needs, and she knew that Mikey's on the Bayou was the answer. We live a block off of East Beach, and it was about five minutes before sundown when I picked her up. As we were driving the block to the Beach, the sun slipped below the horizon, and we had to stop. East Beach is on the entrance to Biloxi Bay, and the city of Biloxi is 3 or 4 miles across open water. The sky was about half covered in an altostratus cloud. (For the benefit of you unlucky people who have never "broken the surly bonds of earth," that is a thin cloud that the sun and/or moon can often be seen through.)

We have gotten used to the glorious sunsets here, but this one was not to be taken for granted. The sky was a hundred shades of magenta. To the left, the dozens of pine trees on Deer Island were silhouetted against the darkening sky. To the right was the majestic bay bridge which connects Ocean Springs and Biloxi, and in the middle were the Biloxi high rise hotels. The water was glassy smooth, and the lights on the bridge and the city were reflecting off the water.

If this was not enough, there were at least ten jet contrails going north, south, east, and west. The contrails whet my wanderlust the same way the distant train whistles did when I was growing up. I wonder where they are going and where they came from. What's the airplane type? Are the stewardesses - that's what they used to be called, when I was flying - young and pretty? We sat there, in silence, and watched for at least five minutes, and Joan was the first to speak, "this is home."

We are city people - Joan all her life - and me for 60 years. When she said "this is home," I realized that we no longer had "one foot in Atlanta, and one foot in Mississippi." We talked about the town as we drove to Mikey's. The city has charm. We passed Ocean Springs Harbor, and went up Washington Avenue, the main street. The shops, galleries and restaurants are all occupied, and live oaks line both sides of the street. Mikey's is on Fort Bayou less than a half mile from Biloxi Bay.

I said that my wife is a good cook ... no, she is a great cook, but Mikey's could treat my attack with three dozen on the half shell. I would've had more, but they were expensive ... \$5 a dozen. Well, the ambiance makes the oysters worth it, and being on the second floor of the bait shop affords a wonderful view of the bayou.