

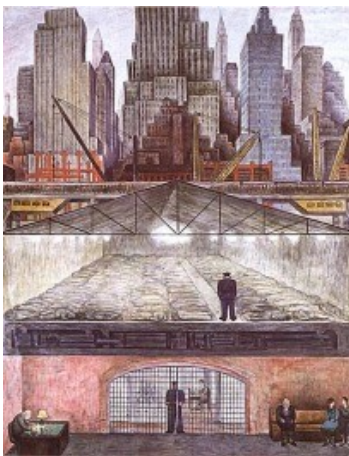
## Articles/Blogging (Please visit the websites for much more)

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### The Great Impression

By Brian Thomas Clark on September 22, 2008

<http://www.brianthomasclark.com/economy/article-from-the-past-the-great-impression>



“There is likely to be a lag between the need for action and government recognition of the need; a further lag between recognition of the need for action and the taking of action; and a still further lag between the action and its effects.”

- Milton Friedman, “Capitalism and Freedom” (1967)

Dare I say it, our government has irresponsibly let down its tax-paying citizenry in the worst way possible: by striking at not only our futures far down the line, but our parent’s futures TODAY.

That said, the damage is somewhat revocable. How? By demanding that the proposed \$700 billion bailout be cancelled.

A recession, at this point, should be welcomed. The irresponsibility has gone too far. What would be the purpose of bailing out these lenders at the moment? To ensure that they can keep operating and handing out loans?

When the Federal Reserve dumps more money on the problem in the hopes of preventing a meltdown (which is what we get anyway), keeping interest rates low and inflation high, you get a run on credit by people who need it the most. And, as we should all know by now, those who need credit the most should not be allowed to have it. So rather than letting a system that was designed to follow the laws of supply and demand correct itself, the Fed steps in to calm things down, in effect becoming the monkey wrench we all look to, ignorantly, for help.

There is no reason to be frightened of a recession, nor any reason further irresponsible measures should be taken to avoid one. A recession is a sign that WHAT WAS ONCE our free-market economy still works. It doesn’t want the government to be involved, mucking things up by trying to place a band-aid on a gunshot wound. It wants the recession. It needs to correct itself. I say, we let it.

Most of us have been through at least one recession before (whether you were too young to notice it matters not, you’re family was feeling the pinch). It requires belt-tightening; something most of the new home-buying generation isn’t very familiar with yet, since tightening a Coach belt might decrease its inflated value.

It’s scary I know, but somehow we will be able to live without our gas-chugging Chevy trucks and Coach accessories for every body part, all of which are usually purchased on credit. We can also live

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without the replicated 6-bedroom homes for 3-person families, bought with low or zero down-payment, low interest home loans by individuals who obviously have neither the income nor the credit to back them up.

The United States has seen the first drop in median home prices since The Great Depression. We have been living in an age of fancy cars and boxed macaroni and cheese for dinner, and now the economy is telling us it is time to settle up. It is telling us the time has come to make sure you can still eat at all, not just get noticed while going out to eat. The reality has always been just beneath the surface, but now it has arrived.

Let me make one thing clear: we can no longer rely on our government for financial security. It has now proven its failure. Do you want to retire comfortably?

Then work. Save. Spend wisely.

America's government and its citizenry (the majority at least) have been financially irresponsible for far too long, and now we need to pay for it. The party is not over, it just needs some re-tooling.

We all need to contribute to make it through what is going to be a very tough couple of years.

Step 1: Sign these petitions. QUICKLY. They might not make much of a difference, but it will kill 5 minutes during your first of many evenings spent at home:

<http://financialpetition.org/petition.shtml>  
<http://www.petitiononline.com/bailout/petition.html>

Step 2: Stay home tomorrow night.

Step 3: Don't vote for McCain or Obama, but if you feel you must vote for one of them, don't waste your time signing the petitions above.

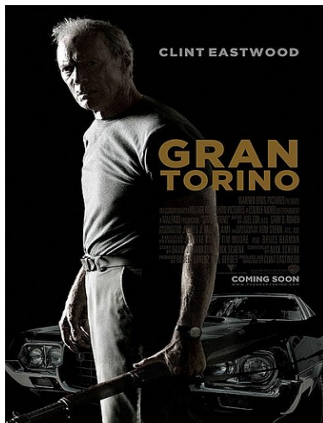
More steps to come in the future.

Postscript: The U.S. Housing Department reports that the percentage of foreclosed/default mortgages for the country is still under 10%. That means that the majority of this crisis is due to only 10% of the mortgages in America. Imagine if that number were 20% or 50% or 90%. Then think about what you can afford and what it will really cost.

## Review: Gran Torino

By Brian Thomas Clark on January 30, 2009

<http://www.brianthomasclark.com/film-reviews/review-gran-torino>



Gran Torino was shot in only 27 days and is Clint Eastwood's second film this year. Not bad for nearly eighty years old. It also might be, according to the man himself, his last acting role. And what a role to go out on.

Eastwood plays Walt Kowalski, a recently widowed Korean War veteran who essentially has...well, brass balls. Clenched teeth, canine grimace, cigarette and a Pabst, Walt maintains a strong hatred of "pussies" and foreigners, meaning anyone that doesn't look or act like him. He lives in a decaying Detroit suburb taken over long ago by ethnic groups and flooded with gangs. He sees what's happened to the neighborhood and doesn't like it, but he keeps to himself and expects everyone else to do the same.

His only grown children are trying to put him in a home, while his granddaughter eyes his furniture for her new college dorm and his 1972 Gran Torino to haul it over there. Essentially, they want all of his worldly possessions but don't listen to a word he says. Tsk, tsk. Walt's having none of that, and the kids end up looking like crying babies with wet diapers after he throws them all out. Walt's priest even gets a taste of his ire, since his late wife bestowed the task of getting Walt to go to confession on the 27-year-old Father (I won't spoil the brilliant line you will here in that scene, trust me).

The trouble starts after the funeral when Walt notices the Lors, a Hmong family, moving in next door. We meet their friendly teenage daughter, Sue, and her calm and gentle brother, Thau. Thau seems like the Forrest Gump-type and only wants to go to school and live life, but continued harassment from a local Hmong gang led by his cousin, forces him to go along with their initiation task: steal the Gran Torino. You never fully buy Thau's sudden acquiescence to their demands, because you never buy that the gang leader, or any of the other "gangs" in this film, could inspire fear in anyone (more on that later). Thau screws up the GTA when Walt appears and shoves his rifle down the kid's throat. Later, when Thau is being beaten for his failure to get the car, the brawl spills over into Walt's yard and one of his garden gnomes gets smashed, leading to yet another appearance of the M-1 rifle: "Get off my lawn," he rumbles. Naturally the family is grateful for Walt's interference and Sue arrives later to thank him for saving Thau, to which he replies: "I didn't save anybody. I was just trying to keep a horde of jabbering gooks off my lawn." Eastwood excels in his portrayal by maintaining a softness under an exterior of New-Tough-Guy-Veneer, without conjuring up images of Dirty Harry.

Some people might think Eastwood takes the racial epithets too far in his performance, but they are missing the subtle joy a tough, straight-talking, racist old man can provide. Think Grumpy Old Men, only more profane. Once the story starts digging in, you will find yourself laughing at all of the ethnic slurs and wanting more, even though you just heard 35 within the last two minutes. This is due in part

to the acting. Eastwood cast only one actor when it came to the Hmong characters, a decision that both helps and damages. For one thing, there is an air of authenticity in the scenes where Walt joins a Hmong party and hangs out with old and young alike. Major points for the scenes where Walt calls Thau a “pussy” when he can’t score with a girl Walt refers to as “Yum-Yum.” But when the bad acting does happen (you’ll wince a few times), you find yourself wanting to get back to Walt’s “gooks,” “wops” and “spooks” ASAP, nevermind the story.

There are a couple of major themes in the film, and one of them was tough for me to find. The obvious one is the value of “being a man” in every way possible, particularly when it comes to building and fixing things, which is exactly what Walt tells “Yum-Yum” he does. Being a veteran and a former Ford factory worker, Walt owns every tool in the world, and can use them all, something that is fading away in our society. Nobody knows how to fix anything, and we’re all the worse for it. When Thau arrives to atone for his attempted theft, Walt has him patch up the neighborhood, shingle by shingle.

The tough theme deals with community and how we as a society communicate with one another across multiple boundaries. The juxtaposition found in the film hides it somewhat, which is probably what Eastwood was going for. On the one hand you have violence as communication: Walt bringing his rifle out every five minutes or beating the hell out of a Hmong gang member in order to send a message, and on the other you have Walt heading over to the Lors house to hang out with an ethnic group he thinks he fought against back in the fifties. Despite the load of ethnic slurs, the film is trying to show that communicating with people doesn’t mean staying PC or dancing around racist terms, but actually talking to your neighbors in your neighborhood; really trying to see people for who they are rather than where they come from, which inherently means no violence. You’ll see what I mean.

When all is said and done, when I’m pushing eighty years old I hope my work is nearly half as interesting and thought-provoking as what Eastwood churns out on a regular basis. The man is more prolific than most other Hollywood directors, yet at the same time is able to produce films that not only meet with box office success and numerous awards, but also push the boundaries of what we think of as story, character, and life in general without bashing you over the head with sappiness or gory violence. Eastwood still knows how to tell a story and force questions on the way out of the theater.

## Would We Have Elected a Brick?

By Brian Thomas Clark on February 6, 2009

<http://www.brianthomasclark.com/politics/would-we-have-elected-a-brick>



Now that the post-inauguration fervor has died down, and Obama is starting to make some decisions, nominating some people to his cabinet, getting some blowback, and trying to pass a stimulus package, I wanted to step back and take a look at the day Barack Obama officially became the 44th President of The United States.

I might as well get this out of the way first: I did not vote for Barack Obama, and before you hit your “Back” button, I did not vote for John McCain either. I have my own reasons for why I voted for my candidate, but I’m not going to dig into a pile of political issues here

I will be blunt: George W. Bush has left this country in a shambles compared to what it was when he came into office in 2000. No president could ever do a perfect, much less a great job in office because it’s a literally impossible job to succeed at in any normal sense of the word. We all know that no other president in history, since approval ratings first came about, has had a lower rating than George W. Bush. This man had the country’s heart given to him on a silver platter, and he dropped the plate, propelling shards into every American home. 9-11 happened and America was ready to mobilize, to gather our collective spirit and patriotism in honor of what we believe to be the greatest country that has ever existed, and what did he do? He regressed back to the mentality of an angry college freshman, a maniacal evangelist, labeling countries as “Evil,” trying to impress people rather than do what was right.

And he lied. As most politicians will do.

Even in the face of the truth, he stood by his lie. He knew he was cornered, but with the weight of the entire country on your shoulders, what would you do? Admit you screwed up? The principles our founding fathers laid out say that, yes, you are indeed supposed to say you screwed up, but you are also meant to forge ahead, steadfast, always trying to keep the well-being of the citizenry in mind and working to make us feel some semblance of confidence in you. We have to learn to expect our leaders to make mistakes; we would be remiss not to always keep in mind that they are human beings like the rest of us.

Our national media has destroyed the way in which politicians are meant to be viewed. Our leaders have become caricatures: Larger-than-Life, above-the-law figures. This in turns makes them behave poorly. They commit crimes, become embroiled in scandals, and basically act above the law. They are enabled to behave this way due to how we are forced to view them through our media. Of course our freedom of choice is always present. We do not have to pay attention to the media, or, at best, we can pay attention but always be sure to form our own interpretations and opinions. But the standard rule is,

if you were a bad person before you became a politician, skirting laws, easily manipulated by wealth or the dream of success, believing you could get away with anything due to your status, odds are that you will continue down that path once you enter into politics.

George W. Bush is no different. His first and worst crime was thinking he could handle the office of President. Once he had convinced himself that he could handle it, everything went downhill, and all of his bad decisions led to some of the worst (let's face it) crimes ever perpetrated by a President of The United States. I doubt Bush's own family enjoyed his time in office.

Now I do not agree with all of Obama's policies. When it comes to my personal leanings, I will just use the popular terminology and say that I am a left-leaning Republican. That basically means I don't like wasting my hard-earned money on government programs that have yet to deliver what they promised, but I don't like the government telling me what to do in my personal or religious life. If I live here to be free, let me be free. I certainly do not agree with all of the recent bailouts, which places me in opposition with our new President and much of Congress.

This question is for those of you who voted for Barack Obama: Despite Bush having served for eight years and being constitutionally forced to leave office, if the Democratic Party had selected John Kerry as their candidate once again, would you have voted for him? George W. Bush was already failing miserably back in 2004: he had a terrible environmental record, he had lied to the American public about WMDs in Iraq, and he had already literally invaded another country without answering to those who had re-elected him. Things simply became worse from then on. So why was he re-elected? Why didn't the Democrats vote for "Change" four years ago?

Did Kerry not run a good enough campaign for you? Did he not inspire confidence in you? Did he have poor policies? Bad speaking skills? Was he too old? Not good looking enough? Not charismatic enough? Or finally (and I only ask this because with the turnout of voters this past November, there had to be a large number of individuals who had previously voted Republican but now voted Democrat), was he too white?

Was the American voting public so drunk with desire to get George W. Bush the hell away from the controls that we would have elected anyone? In my opinion, by the time November 2008 rolled around, this country would have elected a brick to take office. Do you think Barack Obama is really the "Change" we not only need, but have been searching for throughout the last four years?

[www.EzineArticles.com](http://www.EzineArticles.com)

## California Special Election Results: We're Not Stupid, We Just Demand Change

By Brian Thomas Clark on May 20, 2009

<http://ezinearticles.com/?California-Special-Election-Results---Were-Not-Stupid,-We-Just-Demand-Change&id=2383962>



I hope everyone who is a resident of California remembered to get out there and vote yesterday. I sure as hell forgot until I went to the grocery store in the early evening to do some shopping and took a look at the ridiculous sales tax on my receipt.

Glad to see the state legislature has come up with some innovative ways to solve a budget crisis in a state that is simultaneously one of the wealthiest in the country and already has the highest sales tax in the nation.

Anyway, the increase in sales tax is old news. It happened over a month ago, I thought last evening, and there is nothing I can do about it. Then on my way out of the store I noticed the cover of the L.A. Times where, in a rare showing of vital information, it mentioned the 6 measures on the ballot for the election.

Being both the concerned voter as well as the newly formed yuppie that I am, I decided that I needed to find my polling place pronto and so pulled out my new phone. They are always changing the polling places in Los Angeles County, and this time instead of a church, my polling place was in the lobby of a senior home on a heavily trafficked street with no parking.

Now, I have been to some strange polling places in my time: Knights of Columbus buildings, someone's garage on a random residential street, apartment building entryways, gas stations, etc. So after yesterday's experience in the senior home, I started thinking about my criteria for a polling place. I would think that most people just want to get in, punch the little card and get back to their lives. When you go to vote, it should be painless, hassle-free, and empowering. You should leave that gas station proud that you have done your duty as a citizen. You should not have to be confronted with visions of the tail-end of life: hacking old men, oxygen tanks, wailing senior citizens, Wheel of Fortune at top volume. I know we will all grow old and possibly end up in some kind of "facility" (another reason to make sure you treat your kids well), but I would like to request that all polling places be essentially shut off from the outside world. Instead of feeling proud about myself while exiting the senior home lobby yesterday, I wanted to weep all over my "I Voted" sticker and blow my nose in the ballot receipt.



Anyway, onto the issues. I'm not going to go into some long-winded political rant (I have friends who

are much better at that), so I will start by saying that I am a Libertarian. I have noticed in recent years that people are somewhat guarded about the political party they align with and who or what they may have voted for (I can understand this given the past 8 years). In my home it was often treated as a taboo topic by my mother, and since then whenever the topic of who or what you voted for comes up, my instinct is to treat it like a sexually transmitted disease:

“Oh, well, I’d rather not discuss it.”

So, in an effort to break out of this habit, here are the results and how I voted:

1A - Result: No My Vote: No

1B - Result: No My Vote: No

1C - Result: No My Vote: No

1D - Result: No My Vote: No

1E - Result: No My Vote: No

1F - Result: Yes My Vote: Yes

Now, I’m all for everyone exercising their right to vote, but I can sympathize with those individuals who feel that their vote never counts due to the makeup of our electoral system. However, to those individuals, I offer this piece of advice: Always vote on state propositions. Voting on propositions is one of the few ways to really see your vote count, and the effects of rejecting or passing propositions are often directly felt by voters.

The L.A. Times sees the outcome of Tuesday’s election as a continuation of “Californians’ long-standing pattern of demanding what is ultimately irreconcilable, all the more so in an economic downturn: lower taxes and higher spending” (see article here). They go on to say that “Californians showed they were unwilling to scale back their demands in tight times: Voters turned down propositions that would have freed up money that they set aside years ago for mental-health and children’s programs.” I, as well as other Libertarians, see it as a clear signal to the governor and the legislature that Californians are demanding a dramatic change in budgeting and where tax dollars should go. In effect, spending smarter, not harder.

I don’t see these results as another example of Californians being fickle and wanting everything for nothing. That is a defeatist view that offers no real solutions, just blame.

I’m wondering what other people think? Leave a comment below.

To learn more about why I voted the way I did, check out the California Libertarian Party website or read their press release here.

[www.SpeakWithoutInterruption.com](http://www.SpeakWithoutInterruption.com), Contributing Author, 2008-Present

## **We Never Know How Good We Have It**

by Brian Thomas Clark in Economics, General Topics, Social Issues

<http://www.speakwithoutinterruption.com/site/2009/02/we-never-know-how-good-we-have-it/>



I was listening to the radio while driving to dinner a couple of weeks ago. The host was Tom Leykis, a Los Angeles radio veteran on Monday through Friday from 3 to 8pm on 97.1 KLSX. 95% of the time, Leykis discusses “issues” that focus mainly on men, such as how to get “laid” more, how to spend only \$40 on a date, or how to “dump that bitch” the moment she starts talking about a relationship. Very highbrow.

Lately, however, Leykis has been focusing on the economy. It seems as though whenever I tune in, the topic has changed from “signing racks” to “how has the economy affected you?”

On this particular Thursday evening, he had on a caller, a young man it sounded like, who just a few days earlier had lost his job working for Wachovia somewhere in Southern California. Apparently, he had called in the week prior and was talking to Tom about how thankful he was that he was working for a beleaguered bank and still had a job. Speaking too soon is an understatement.

He proceeded to tell Tom how he had been working diligently at the bank for the past couple of years, and then all of a sudden, he was let go. He was awarded no severance (which I assume means he was hourly) and had to leave the office that day. He went on to explain how he also had a roommate in his apartment with whom he split the rent. Unfortunately, the roommate had decided to return to school in San Francisco and had bailed on him a month earlier.

At this point, the tone of the call shifted dramatically, because this man completely broke down.

Within just one month, he had gone from working for a bank, doing a job that was helping him pay for his college tuition and living with a roommate in an apartment, to living in his car. He explained that he could not stay with his parents at the time because he they had no room due to his other siblings, and that he was, in fact, helping them pay for their mortgage. He was going to cancel his cellphone next and was using some of his remaining minutes to call Tom and ask for advice. Throughout all of this, he was sobbing, saying what a “failure” he was and that he did not make himself more indispensable at his job.

“I never knew how good I had it,” he said.

He also explained that, since he did not have an address, he had been rejected by other businesses for a lack of residence. And forget trying to get another bank job.

Tom, for his part, did the right thing by first suggesting that the guy go get a P.O. box for a couple of bucks at the nearest UPS Store. Then he told the guy to do what most listeners were probably thinking he should do: bite the bullet, tell his parents, and start sleeping on the couch. The guy realized he would not be able to continue school, but the important thing was that he stop living in his car.

I could go on a rant here about how this guy probably could have kept his job had executives in his company been smarter about their business practices or not taken huge salaries with perk-addled bonuses, but the bottom line is that by the time the call was over, listeners, including myself, were faced with one of the many hard truths of these times: people out there are not losing their jobs strictly due to laziness or ineptitude. Hard-working people are being given the heave-ho simply because there is no more money to pay them with.

I imagine myself back at that age (pretty easy since it was only around eight years ago), and I think about how I would have reacted had that happened to me. I was fortunate enough to have parents who had found success, thus I was taken care of. If I had suddenly lost both my job and my home within the same month, there was always a bed for me at home, and in fact I have had to use it at times.

I have never been laid off or fired from a job, and I count my blessings everyday; ten times more in the last six months, but one of the caller's comments really stuck with me, and probably will for a very long time. He mentioned that a good many of the previous callers that were on before him were commenting on how the current state of the economy was essentially "cleaning house" for the rest of the hard-working people in the country. To put it bluntly: the people losing their jobs were losing them because they were useless jobs to begin with, occupied by lazy people who never realized how easy they had it.

I beg to differ.

I realize that there have to be some jobs in the millions lost that should not have existed in the first place for the sake of proper budgeting, but that does not give anyone the right to judge another person's work or occupation from a distance. Those that immediately jump to the conclusion that all of these lost jobs were useless in the first place, should stop and take a closer look at the walls of their glass houses and make sure of how thick they are.

This economy, while far from a depression (it's not a depression if they're still throwing away food at restaurants), is turning on those who felt protected, safe and completely invulnerable. We cannot start believing that everyone is at risk, because that is taking a stance of fear. That is working against, not for.

Instead, we should take this opportunity to look closely at what it is we do, what we offer, and if we are truly passionate about it. To really examine what we are after: Money or Happiness. The Money route helped to land us here, so that might not be the best course of action. I have learned the hard way, through boring office jobs, undertaking work I couldn't care less about, to finally trying to strike out on my own, with my own company, my own work. And I can tell you right now, it is far better now to

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wake up every morning and look forward to my day, even if the paychecks come every six weeks instead of every 2. Working without passion shows. When you see someone performing a duty they don't absolutely love, it is clear, and odds are they are going to be out-worked by someone more passionate. I understand it can get tough, especially with mortgages, kids and bills, bills, bills, but it does not take 20-20 vision to see that the clearest way make those things labors of love rather than just labors, is to go after your passions. Even if it's in your off-time.

There were people being laid off long before this economy tanked and long before the bailouts and the Iraq invasion and the housing slump, and there will continue to be layoffs even when the country is in boom times. Think of how those people must feel, the ones who were pink-slipped when the country was sky-high.

So let's take a cue from the Leykis caller and think about how good we do have it, or how good we could have it, by trying to do what we love.

Am I wrong?

## **I Am Now 30 and Not Bald: Hallelujah.**

by Brian Thomas Clark in Lifestyle

<http://www.speakwithoutinterruption.com/site/2009/06/i-am-now-30-and-not-bald-hallelujah/>



I turned 30 almost two weeks ago.

After much deliberation, I felt the need to speak on what my mother and new fiancée refer to as a “momentous event in my life.”

This is how I look at it:

To me, turning 30 was like sleeping on a beach in the dead of night, when all of a sudden an enormous ship glides by, as though it were being pushed across a blanket of velvet. You did not hear it, did not see it, but it was gargantuan, not to mention right in front of your face.

Don’t ask me what all this allegory means, just go with it.

Now, some people turn 30 and immediately become wildly depressed. These are the people who stay up all night, dreading the ship’s arrival. Then they break out in tears and whine about how they are still single.

Others turn 30 and could not be happier; they are thrilled to be alive with family and friends. These are the people that stay up awaiting the ship with anticipation, and once it arrives, they hop on and party until completely drunk.

Then there are people like me who could care less about the damn ship. We wake up and go back to work, because that’s what we love to do.

I suppose it is now obvious that I really did not care much about turning 30. That might sound harsh when it comes to the opinions of my mother and fiancée, but they threw me a fantastic party anyway. The point is, it just didn’t make much difference to me that I was turning 30. It could have been 35, 22, or anything else.

To put it another way, what excited me most about turning 30 was seeing the balance in my IRAs. For Christ’s sake, the original impetus for writing this article was a site I read that provided people in their 20s with sound financial advice (<http://20somethingfinance.com>), not some self-serving desire to justify my place in the world at my new age.

Sure I was a bit perturbed about not yet owning my own home, but that thought was quickly squashed by my oft-ignored desire to live somewhere other than Southern California, which is why I chose to wait in the first place. I was also jolted briefly by the thought that I had yet to publish my novel, but that again was quickly squashed by several cocktails and a reaffirmation that even if I never “make it,” I would still write everyday no matter what.

Take my 21st birthday, for example. I don’t recall even being that excited about turning 21, nor did I get crazy or drink until I threw up on that day. I went out and ordered my first legal drink (paid for by friends) and went home to get some sleep before school and a 10-hour shift for work the next day.

I used to be more excited about birthdays, but in the past few years, they feel more like a slow, oncoming rash to me. It’s not about the fact that I am turning a year older, but more about the fact that I do not want attention paid to me for something as trivial as not dying in the suburbs for the past 365 days.

I have also noticed an increasing lack of desire for gifts from others within the past few years. It is almost as if I just want to eat a great meal, drink some great wine and talk to family and friends. Nothing more, nothing less. No big vacations to Vegas or anywhere else, no big presents, no cards, no anything. Like the man said, “I want what I want and I can’t do anything about it.”

I realize I might sound ungrateful in saying some of these things, but let me be clear : It is not that I don’t appreciate attention paid to me, gifts or anything else; I believe that I am simply...growing simpler.

I see other family members and my friends having outings for their birthdays, going on trips, throwing huge, drunken bashes, but all I want to do is have a bit of fun with good food and good people for a couple of hours and then get back to work.

Obviously this must be caused by my growing older, possibly maturing more as time goes by, and definitely becoming more dull. And yet at the same time, I feel as though this is how I have really felt every year since adulthood; I was just too confused or unable to recognize it cogently enough to speak on it. “Wisdom comes with age,” as the saying goes.

Regardless of the reason, I have to say that, at 30, I am happier than I have ever been in my life. I am comfortable in my own skin and with everything I am doing and working towards. I am confident that I will be able to handle (with grace, I hope), anything life has to throw at me from now on, even the unthinkable.

Most importantly, though, is the UNBELIEVABLE fact that I still have all of my hair, because let me tell you, every male on every side of my family was practically bald by the time they were blowing out 25 candles.

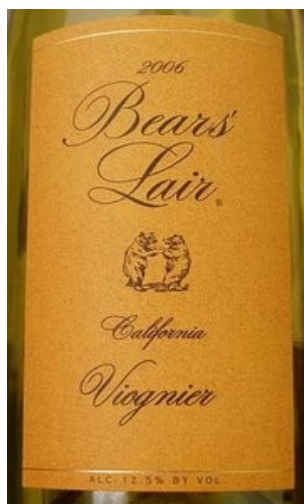
## Professional Sites

[www.WineWelfare.com](http://www.WineWelfare.com), Designer, Producer, Writer 2008-Present

### **2006 Bears' Lair Viognier**

June 4, 2009

<http://winewelfare.com/2009/06/2006-bears-lair-viognier/>



Bad News First: Ahem, it's \$4 and tastes good. There is nothing wrong with that.

Now The Good: Friends brought this one over for dinner one night. Once this was chilled and sipped, they weren't ashamed to say they had bought it at Trader Joe's on the way over for \$4. We couldn't believe it. Ridiculous tropical fruit scents (papaya, guava, lime), moving onto a light butter and pure pineapple, remaining chewy the whole way but drying out just as a Viognier should in the end. Melon is normally a flavor in Viognier, but this one is weak on that. Not that it matters. \$4? Who cares? We haven't seen it at BevMo, but definitely get it now before people realize its beauty and the price goes up. By the way, if you notice, this is the 2006 Bear's Lair Viognier, and if it's any indication, an older vintage or the 2007 Bear's Lair Viognier should be just as good.

With Food: We would not recommend eating a damn thing with this, but if forced, we can't think of anything as good as the ingredients of our dinner that night: chicken, apricots, thyme, lemon. It was a kind of Moroccan night.

\$3.99 at Trader Joe's (hard to find online, head over to TJ's)

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## 2006 Hahn California Syrah - Santa Lucia Highlands

May 27, 2009

<http://winewelfare.com/2009/05/2006-hahn-california-syrah-santa-lucia-highlands/>



Bad News First: Not. One. Thing. A rarity around these parts.

Now the Good: There's a lot (especially at this price)! This was another purchase from my run on the BevMo 5 Cent Wine Sale last winter. I have had Hahn before, mostly thanks to my step-father and his wife, who always find a way to finagle at least a case or 2 of Gold Medal-winning wines for free from the L.A. County Fair, of which Hahn is usually a recipient.

This one, however, was a special treat, as the Hahn Syrah usually judged at the fair is the Monterey County juice. This one comes from the legendary Santa Lucia Highlands, in particular the Doctor's Vineyard owned by Hahn. This is a vineyard that absolutely bakes the grapes in the sun, but immediately cools them off nicely thanks to the ocean breeze. Think a blueberry pie cooling on a window sill.

You'll notice as this site progresses in its number of suggestions, that my personal taste is toward big wines. If the wine explodes and is full of tongue-clenching, chewy flavors, i'm good. That said, this is one of the bigger ones. Chewiness through and through with only 3 berries coming through upon the first sip: blueberry, blackberry, raspberry. Give it a minute before you swallow, and it's Roadside Diner-boysenberry syrup on French Toast.

With Food: Remember I mentioned the blueberry pie earlier? This includes the crust, melting with buttery cinnamon, coating every tastebud and begging for you to eat something dead and red with it. I repeat: Dead and Red. Hell, drink it by itself and you'll be rewarded.

A steal for \$17.40 at CalWine.com

Hahn Family Wines

Remember to subscribe here to get the latest suggestions from Wine Welfare!

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