

**BUY ONE, GET ONE FREE**



MARK CHESTER

**A JOURNAL OF MY  
PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN**

SPARROW

*Poet and soapbox orator Sparrow has run for president of the United States five times: in 1992 with the Pajama Party; in 1996 as the only revolutionary communist within the Republican Party; in 2000 on the Ear of Corn Party ticket; in 2004 as a Republican again (when he lost the nomination that year, he founded the RealRepublican Party); and in 2008 as the candidate of the Sudoku for All Party. "Buy One, Get One Free" is excerpted from his most recent campaign journal. A small portion first appeared in Chronogram. For more on his campaign, visit [sparrowforprez.com](http://sparrowforprez.com).*

— Ed.

**T**oday, May 25, 2007, a friend sent me an article from the *Guardian Unlimited* titled “Bush waves off bird’s dirty bomb.” It described how a bird had relieved itself on the president’s sleeve during an outdoor press conference. “The bird is yet to be formally identified,” the reporter writes. “Some say it was a pigeon, others, a sparrow. Perhaps it was a lesser spotted sparrow-pigeon.”

Here was the opening I’d been searching for! I fired off an e-mail to my closest associates:

Gentlemen and gentlerwomen,

I have been awaiting a sign, and now it has appeared! A heroic bird has loosed its bowels on George Bush! Like Mr. Bush, I look to the heavens for guidance. If that flying being — quite possibly a sparrow — can shit on our Chief Executive, so can I. The time is right to announce my candidacy for president of the United States!

**I**n 1969 Norman Mailer ran for mayor of New York City on a platform advocating that the five boroughs become the fifty-first state. He was nearly correct. In fact New York should be not a state but a country in combination with the other major cities of the world: Tokyo, Mexico City, Moscow, Cairo, London, Paris, and so on. The great metropolises resemble one another more than they do their host nations. They are increasingly educated, technological, multiethnic “city cultures” where religion is unimportant but yoga essential. This new nation will be called “Pancivitas” (meaning “all cities”).

**O**ne of my formative experiences occurred in 1969, when I was fifteen. A young woman shyly handed me a flyer on St. Mark’s Place. A psychedelic design on the pink sheet of mimeograph paper contained this text: “We Demand a Guaranteed 24-Hour Orgasm!” At the bottom was the notation “N.Y. Yuppies.” I saved that flyer for years.

Perhaps all my presidential electioneering is a tribute to that peasant-shirted *provocateur*.

**W**ho is the weakest superhero? I’m out of touch with the current crop of comic books, but of all the heroes I remember, the most feckless was Bouncing Boy, a member of DC Comics’ Legion of Super-Heroes. Bouncing Boy had one power: he could become roughly spherical and bounce around like a ball. Often he would ricochet around helplessly.

Why am I pondering the least-powerful superhero? Because America is no longer the Superman of the world. We are closer to the Bouncing Boy.

**I**am the first pro-Sudoku candidate for president in American history. Sudoku, as you may know, is a Japanese number puzzle found in most newspapers (except the *New York Times*). It consists of a square of eighty-one boxes in which the player must inscribe numbers so that each row contains 1 through 9.

Among the many candidates, only I am appealing to that vast section of the American public, the Sudoku-obsessed! Not

only that, but I will harness the mind power of my fellow Sudokuizers to solve the difficult riddles of our time. Scientists have shown that for about two minutes after having completed a Sudoku puzzle, one has an expanded mental capacity. I will ask everyone in the post-Sudoku state to think deeply on the problems of global warming, breast cancer, the economy, and so on. As the nominee of the Sudoku for All Party, I will harness the Sudoku-mind-power burst to serve our nation!

**W**e must stop thinking of imperialism as strength. France and England conquered Africa; therefore we see them as “stronger” than Africa. But suppose you have two daughters: One is a farmer who works diligently on the land, growing food for her family. The other moves to a foreign nation, where she kidnaps three people at gunpoint and forces them to work as slaves. Which daughter would you consider “strong”? Which would you consider mentally unbalanced?

**B**ecause of my love for Sudoku puzzles, I pick up all the free daily newspapers offered in New York City. Today’s issue of *Metro* contains a troubling essay on the lack of Secret Service agents. Don’t worry, I have the solution: let the presidential candidates campaign in pairs; but they must stick *very* close together, so that one agent may guard both of them.

Personally, I am prepared to travel with Mitt Romney — and even share my deodorant with him.

**F**orty-six percent of the American people now support the impeachment of George W. Bush. Imagine if he were to decapitate Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and carry her head through the streets of Washington on a pike. I’ll bet support for impeachment would rise to 48 percent!

**I**m the sort of guy who will read *USA Weekend* (the weekend supplement of *USA Today*) if he finds it in the garbage. (All right, I’ll admit it’s partly for the Sudoku!) In the May 25–27 edition I found a revealing article entitled “To Me, He’s Dad.” It’s an interview with three middle-aged children of American presidents: Doro Bush Koch, Jack Carter, and Patti Davis. They all exhibit the whiny nostalgia of grown-up child stars.

One anecdote from George W. Bush’s sister Doro is especially otherworldly. In response to the question “Whom did your dad turn to, to enable himself to cope, during times that required courage?” she replied, “My mom. She’d act like there was no crisis, like everything was normal. . . . On the weekend before my father sent the planes over to Iraq, she arranged for two of his dearest friends, Spike and Betsy Hemingway, to come spend time with him at Camp David. They’d laugh and joke and play tennis. This helped him greatly during this time.”

Oh, the blithe dreaminess of this picture: the happy WASP family whose patriarch will doom two hundred thousand Iraqis to death!

**T**oday I delivered this speech to the International Meatpacking Workers, Local 323, Council Bluffs, Iowa:

Ladies and nonladies, let me begin by explaining my saluta-

tion. I had intended to commence, “Ladies and gentlemen,” but I noticed a troubling sexist flavor to this phrase. Even though *ladies* is the primary word, somehow it’s less prominent than the longer *gentlemen*, as if one uttered *ladies* out of pure politeness before pronouncing the more-esteemed male noun. No, no, no! Let me keep the word *ladies* alive even while I address men. Therefore I say: “Ladies and nonladies.”

Other candidates offer hope; I offer hopelessness. To begin with, I alone among the candidates admit that we, the U.S.A., have become an empire. We cannot have military bases in 130 nations and *not* be an empire. Ask yourself, “Does Costa Rica have military bases in 130 nations? Does Denmark?” No, they do not. Why? Because they’re just minding their own business, being Costa Rica and Denmark. But we are an empire. And our empire is doomed. The peasantry who labor for pennies to supply us with cheap oil, cheaper coffee, and nearly free bananas are revolting. They refuse to accept our sneering mastery. The jig is up. All bets are off. Our little con game has ended. Each one of you should go home, saw off one-third of your house, and give it to a Mexican *campesino*.

Let me tell you a story. I live in the hamlet of Phoenicia, New York, in the middle of the Catskill Mountains. Phoenicia is quite dull during the winter, so a group of us formed a collective to put on shows every month. Two weeks ago, a woman from San Francisco named Owl Cat Boatrocker played the guitar and sang. At the end of one song, she began to whistle. Hearing a twenty-six-year-old woman whistle with her eyes closed was supernally lulling. The whole audience became, for a moment, four-month-old babies.

Our empire will end, as all empires do. But whistling will continue. Whistling is more eternal than a B-52 bomber.

**O**ur greatest national problem is that so many of us take anti-depressants (often just because we like the word *Celexa*). The American persona is cheerful enough already. When someone asks, “How you doing?” you must reply, “Fine,” or, “Great.” You’re not allowed to say: “I feel like a great big tongue that a water buffalo is peeing on.”

Americans are not happy or joyful. Rather they are “anti-depressed.” We need to start taking pro-depressants. The world is depressing, and we are oblivious to this crucial knowledge.

**O**ne of the principles of homeopathic medicine is that a smaller dose is considered more effective than a larger dose. This has profound implications for U.S. foreign policy. At the moment, we have 158,000 troops in Iraq. Imagine if we had only six! According to homeopathic logic, this presence would be much more successful.

Let’s try it: Reduce troop levels to six soldiers and see what happens! Adopt a homeopathic foreign policy! Sparrow for president!

**F**rom a speech I gave at the Chazz Oil Refinery in Fruston, Illinois:

As I look down at your smiling faces, I know that some of you are terrorists. This is a simple fact of modern life. A certain

percentage of our fellow citizens are avowed enemies of our government and economic system. It’s only about .2 percent of the population, but there is a large audience here today, so, statistically speaking, probably four of you are terrorists.

All I’m saying is — and at this moment I’m addressing just the terrorists — I ask for your vote. I am the only candidate (as far as I have been able to determine) who’s actively seeking the terrorist vote.

I’m not saying I am a terrorist, or even that I am pro-terrorist. All I’m asking of the terrorists is: examine my platform, and that of the Sudoku for All Party, and see if we deserve your support. I think we do!

**K**arl Marx wrote: “The capitalist will sell you the rope to hang him with.” (Actually this is a misquote. What Marx really wrote is “The last capitalist we hang shall be the one who sold us the rope.”) Today, in the age of credit cards, we must revise his adage: “The capitalist will *lend* you the money to buy the rope to hang him with.”

**I** recently learned an unfortunate fact about professional football players: their careers average just four years in length, and their injuries may lead to brain damage later in life. Something must be done for them. When I am president, I will pass legislation requiring incremental additions to football players’ padding, until by 2019 they resemble globular sponges twenty feet in diameter.

Protect our vulnerable linebackers! Sparrow for president!

**T**he phrase “One man, one vote” is obsolete. I propose we replace it with “One woman, one vote.” Let men sit out the next twenty-eight elections, as women did the first twenty-eight. Only then will our nation truly attain gender equality.

I am the first presidential candidate to declare: “I should not be allowed to vote!”

**I** predict that by April 2009, capitalism will crumble, and our world economic system will vanish. (I know I have made this prediction several times before, but those pronouncements were based on faulty data.) The subprime-mortgage crisis will nudge the shuddering carcass of capitalism over the edge of the cliff of insolvency, to be dashed to pieces on the rocks of moral urgency!

And what will replace capitalism? Possibly Hugo Chavez will rule the world with near-benevolent socialism. My suggestion, however, is cantorism, a system where one is rewarded for singing. (*Cantor* is Latin for “singer.”) Wouldn’t you enjoy living in a world where doo-wop groups are richer than finance swindlers?

**I**t’s time the whole world had a single currency. I suggest we call it the “eartho.”

*(end of excerpt)*