

The US President

By Lloyd Nelson

One

Makepeace Eggleston is a CPA in Richmond, he employs about 40 staffers and operates out of the CBD. He is approached to run for the Presidency as a direct result of drawing the short straw to give an address to the East Coast Association of CPA's in Boston. There are a lot of accountants there, including a big mob of Quebec French Bean Counters, who yell at him when he stands up, 'Bon Chance, speak French'. They get the shock of their part Gallic lives when he immediately spits out 'Merde Cochons', and goes on to alternate his Boston English with the street argot of Montmartre. He did two years at the Sorbonne in his youth and rented an apartment near the cemetery in Montmartre, thus he speaks like a M^{on} Martian and this draws the close attention of the Paris Match stringer, who is along tonight.

In French and English, Makepeace is giving the appalling administration of George Dubya, a classic serve and at the same time spitting out some credible alternatives. Whatever, the French papers pick up their stringers report and give it front page billing in their intellectual stylised manner. The Yank papers give it top billing also and the London Times, who won't let the French out, report them come to the party.

He becomes seriously regarded overnight and his website has an astounding number of continuing hits. The Georgetown 'Think Tank' has been beating the bushes for a suitable candidate to back and get in touch. The Tank is run by respected people in downtown and in all country America, they are highly regarded by both sides of the political spectrum.

Two

They turn up on Makepeace's office door step by arrangement two Saturdays later. He always works Saturdays. It's a day to get things done without distractions. The Think Tank unlimbers phone polls, newspaper polls, computer polls and say,

"We are not hasty people, but by George, we think you've got it. We're here to persuade you to run for the big job."

"Why me?" he asks, 'you don't know anything about me'.

"The hell we don't," the Think Tank head honcho says, "the modern day version of Pinker tons have been looking into you with a magnifying glass."

"And?", Makepeace asks.

"Well, there's no one to touch you quality wise. You're immensely well educated, Harvard, Oxford and the Sorbonne. Your Pa-in-law is at the top of the Legislature of the Commonwealth of Virginia. You appear to be the heir

apparent to the Eggleston Lumber company, when your Dad and his two unmarried brothers stop running their huge show and there is a deal of suspicion that you are the Washington's Post's famous feature writer, 'Lucien Pour Effete', (which translates to Luke Cause and Effect)."

Makepeace dissembles, "I have the conviction," he says, "but not the personal big money or power base."

"Oh," they say, "we will take care of all that. Will you run if we do?"

So he does and is thus almost instantly immersed in the shot and shell of a Presidential race. Makepeace is as quick as and the Think Tankers are very very bright, so they get down to taws. Around noon, a very pleasant looking young woman lets herself into the building. It's Amelie, twin sister to Makepeace's late wife. They are close, too close, his mother-in-law thinks. She is married to another CPA and is very self effacing. Truth to tell, Makepeace's marriage was scratchy and they delayed having children in the hope that things might get back to bitumen running. His wife at marriage was a brilliant antique dealer in Richmond, very bright and assertive and this is why he now lives in Richmond. After marriage she sells Richmond Antiques and they buy a fine colonial house on four acres in the Virginia Country Club gated development. She becomes a country club animal and its hard to say what might have happened, when she ran slap bang into a larch tree while skiing down a fast slope in northern Vermont and breaks her neck.

Anyway, Amelie automatically takes over caring for Makepeace to the extent that she unobtrusively and mostly when Makepeace is at work, works at keeping the maids up to the mark. The antiques dusted and polished, plenty of good English suits dry cleaned and hanging in the closets, shoes polished and buffed, shirts hanging in plastic, comfort food in the fridge and so on. She is the quiet engineer that keeps the good ship Makepeace running along smooth as the Normandie.

Three

To get back to where we were, Amelie runs up a decent lunch - hot beef and gravy rolls, greens, tomatoes and onions, big paper napkins and apple pie and cream to finish on; not to mention humidors of marvellous Cuban Cigars and a decanter of superb port. When it's ready, she calls the group into the conference room and serves up. At the port and cigars stage, she tells them she has a husband to feed and that they should just leave everything on the table and a maid will be in later to clear the decks. By 4pm, they've finished the port and cigars and wrapped up the discussion. They agree to meet in two weeks and go their separate ways.

In broad essence they decide to stay with Makepeace's Boston paper. It seems to cover everything needed and in later weeks if anything else crops up, he tells his audience that these matters are 'lagniappe' and has no bearing on the thrust of his campaign. He's not entirely sure what it means, it's Arabic and

probably means 'of no account'. No one else understands what it means also and it works like a charm. Books, substantial books, have been written on the nuances of a presidential campaign. This is a short story so we must move quickly through this deep subject.

The Think Tank place Makepeace in an easy position to run hard and run hard he does. He is freed from his practise; the Think Tankers provide top men to run this; he can go anywhere in America as they station a rather sinister looking Grey Lear jet at his beck and call at Richmond air port. Very importantly, they make an unbelievably good look alike or double available, thus like the Scarlet Pimpernel he is here, there and everywhere in making the material that makes every TV screen. Added to all this, he is indeed that celebrated Post feature writer, Lucien Pour Effete and thus able to present in an influential way, through the Post and about two hundred syndicated runners of his article in the US and overseas, to puff his own campaign as it were. No one but Makepeace knows for certain.

Four

The Washington Post, doyen of newspapers, have printed Makepeace's cogent articles for four years past - they have no idea who he is. He posts in his fortnightly articles under his pen name with a Xeroxed bit of paper attached, suggesting that if they print this, a donation to the Battersea dog's home would be appreciated. This bit of paper is also his authentication. The post is in a cleft stick. His articles do a lot for the post and nowadays two hundred syndicated papers carry this column and compensate the Post. Suffice to say, they have never edited his offerings and the Dogs Home is in the black - first time ever. A golden spring of money comes into their account.

Makepeace's articles follow the simplest journalistic formula in the world. He follows the first law of physics i.e. for every action there is an immediate and opposite reaction. Thus when someone, in particular the US Government, takes a particular action, he simply extrapolates on the reaction and hey presto, he has a good and very topical article typed up ready to post. He and his double now run hard right through the primaries and the big democrat rallies. He does all the speeches, the double all the golfing, fishing, skiing and visits to National Monuments and so on. In short, all the photo opportunities which are so important to the media. Between them they are constantly on the all important TV coverage.

Five

Perhaps Makepeace's best strike is in Atlanta. He's down there for a huge democrat rally at the old Olympic stadium, but like many a pilgrim before him, he visits Mitchell House in Peachtree Street and gives a sound bite speech from the porch which ends: 'Let it never be said that the hopes and aspirations of this mighty republic have 'Gone with the Wind''. This latter and Margaret Mitchell are remembered like last Friday in Atlanta, so as you can imagine this speech is a huge and much publicised success. The Democratic Convention comes around in Chicago. Makepeace, as predicted, makes it on the first ballot. His running mate is the Junior Senator from Arizona - Stephen Hall. Stephen is as thick as two short planks, but looks like Rock Hudson in his salad days, while his wife is politically astute and makes up the short fall. The Grand Old Party's convention, also in Chicago, follows along quickly. The man they expect to be appointed is, however, sunk by George Dubya right at the start with too fulsome praise. The Nation by now doesn't believe a word that George says these days.

Makepeace keeps the debates to just one and kills his opponents and goes onto very easily be elected President. He is now the President in waiting, but not an inactive president in waiting. He can't do much officially, as that has to come after the January inauguration, but he puts together a temporary staff of three retired army men - good men who have been forced out by the old crustaceans in the Pentagon. He recruits Colonel Max Ball, who is sick of playing golf at Palm Springs; Sam Bovary, perhaps the best army staff officer ever and he borrows from the Brits, a former foreign officer Arabist.

Six

He involves the Think Tank just a bit, mainly to get the logistics together. The Think Tank has no intention of telling him what to do. Their interest was and always has been the placement of an intelligent man in the job. He does a deal with the owners of the apartment below him and takes this over as quarters for his new staff, while his own apartment, the one above, becomes command headquarters. It should be explained that after his wife's demise, Makepeace sells the country club home and takes a twenty-nine year lease on the top floor of the old Armoury building. It's on a bluff overlooking the James River and as it faces east and traps the morning sun, is a pleasant place to live. He's kept the best of his wife's antiques and the place is furnished beautifully. When the Rebs quit Richmond, they torched a lot of the public buildings including this one, but it really was scorched rather than burnt. It has a fascinating printing plate bolted to the foyer wall. It's a printing plate for confederate \$50 notes. Much of the old south's money was printed in this building during the Civil war. An inspiration punched into the metal with a capital letters range of punches reads;

'Lines on the back of a Confederate Note - Representing nothing on Gods earth now, and naught in the waters below it, as a pledge of a Nation that's passed away, keep it dear friend and show it'.

Seven

A few days after the election, Makepeace; first telling Stephen's wife of what he wants done to muddy the waters, does a double shuffle with his actor double and he flies out in the Grey Lear to Malta. The Think Tank has arranged the use of the Villa Guernica for a week or three.

They car around to the Villa. It has a classic pedimented front of creamy limestone washed by the late afternoon sun. They find later, that it also has wonderful, long, courtyard gardens at the rear and that the Villa takes its name from a spectacular ceramic tile reproduction of Pablo Ruiz Picasso's seminal work , 'Guernica'. It's on a limestone screen wall and you look directly at it as you access the main front doors. Its astonishing and little known - talk about a conversation piece.

Arrangements made in Richmond and Washington with various ambassadors now kick in. The Israeli's provide security for the Lear and Villa and personal security for the visitors; also chef and house staff. Day one for lunch is the Israeli Prime Minister and the Minister for War. Day two is the French President, Foreign Minister and Minister for the Army. Day three is the British Prime Minister. Day four is the General Commanding in 'Eye Wrack' (to quote George Dubya). Day five and six they all visit Israel to look at this and that. Days seven to ten, they have a good look at things in Bagdad. Day eleven the Maltese Prime Minister comes around to pay his respects. He looks a bit anxious about whatever Makepeace is up to in the Sovereign State of Malta. Day twelve he sends a runner to Princess Anne and her husband to come to dinner and they do. They have the house next door and spend a bit of quality time on this beautiful and cosmopolitan island. They all get along well.

"What in the world, Mr President," Anne asks, "are you doing here?"

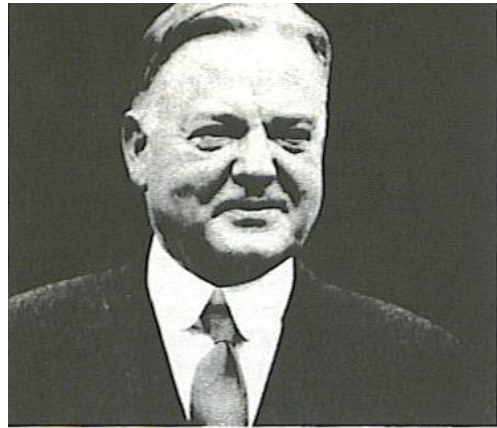
Makepeace laughs, "Oh, it's just a bit of a hide out from the media," he says. They decide to do nothing on day thirteen, but on day fourteen they are poring over aerial maps of this and that in Bagdad. He returns to Richmond the next day and goes to the apartment. Nobody seems to have rumbled that the President, supposedly visiting his lumber co rellies in Washington State, is his



double. It's been very well done and Stephens's wife has similarly done a good job of obfuscating what has been going on.

Eight

He sits pat for a while and doesn't do a darn thing about appointing White House staff or new cabinet. He's well aware from watching the West Wing that once you do this, you can't achieve much, as some pest is always in your ear. Bush wants to lunch him at the White House and take him down to his Texas ranch in Air Force 1. 'No thanks,' Makepeace signals back. The Nation's a bit flummoxed about all of this, it's very unusual. However, Inauguration day arrives. It's bitter but not wet. He does the Jimmy Carter walk and wears a Homburg hat (which suits him well) that has been borrowed from the Herbert Hoover Library. His Dad and old bachelor uncles march wearing superb logger clothes, which the Yanks produce so well. They carry their logging axes and for a bit of sideshow fun when interviewed on TV, Uncle Bill, the tallest says,



Wide World

Herbert Hoover

"We are from back woods America. We don't trust you urbanites,"

and opens his lumber jacket to reveal the huge .45 pistol he is wearing in a shoulder holster.

"I carry my 'Hawg Leg' just to be safe," he drawls.

This is of course pure farce. They live in magnificent town houses on Nob Hill in San Francisco and only visit their lumber acres at high summer.

Inauguration night is hard work. Makepeace looks in at four balls and his double at another five. He wakes about 6.30am and trailed by his secret service details, hunts along the hallway and finds a bit of a kitchenette.

"Good oh," he says. Turning to his guards he says,

"Off you go. Find a deli and get me some Uncle Toby's porridge oats, some cream, a loaf of wholemeal and some croissants. Oh, and also some coffee and a bit of marg and jam."

"But, but, but..," the secret service man says.

"No buts," Makepeace says, "get your skates on before I get cross and have you transferred to Ethiopia!"

As the startled man starts to go he says,

"Stop! Get me a Washington Post so that I know what's going on in the country and also a Wagin Argus so that I can find out what the Oz wheat lobby

are up to - nothing else is worth reading. Oh and if Felicity Benning is out there with the gate paparazzi, bring her back for brekkie."

"Err," the Secret Service man says, "how will I know her?"

"God," says Makepeace, "doesn't the Secret Service know anything? She looks like Joanna Lumley and wears a Joanna French coat."

He comes back with all this and a breathless blonde photo taker in tow.

"Hi Felicity," Makepeace says, "I want a few informal pics after yesterdays boring formal ones. Here, have a coffee and a slug of Napoleon Brandy, it must be bitter at the gate. You look a bit pinched."

Thus he microwaves his porridge, toasts bread and also toasts his croissants (stops them going hard or soggy he says). He gets through this with Felicity snapping away and goes back to bed with his Post and Argus and she snaps him reading away in bed in the Lincoln Room.

"All done?" he asks.

"Well, yes, Mr President and thank you."

He looks at his Secret Service man.

"Whistle up a car and take Felicity up to Washington Post, best have her scrunch down and toss a rug over her going out or she'll be mugged by that horde at the gate. Oh and Flic," he says, "how about dinner next week, someone will ring you."

Nine

This and succeeding days are messy. Having appointed no one to anything, he rings the army and they provide switchboard operators, cooks, and drivers and so on. It can hardly work better and as they are all under orders and have no personal axe to grind, things settle down quick.

He loads all the time consuming stuff onto Stephen and gets to work on articles for the Post to set the scene for the frenetic activities he has in mind.

Two weeks later the tow-headed photo taker come to dinner and for a sleep over.

"What's your long term aim, Felicity?" Makepeace asks.

"Oh," she says, "Id like to marry a President."

"Oh," he says, "that will never work. Old George Dubya may be a rat-faced so and so but he's quite seriously rich, Laura will never give up on him."

She wrinkles her nose and throws a pillow at him.

Ten

About 3am, the Secret Service wake him. The army and air force chiefs are here to see him. A national emergency!

Makepeace yawns and says,

‘Tell those pompous characters I will see them in the kitchenette down the hall at 7am.’



Makepeace is well aware that his friends in the Middle East have kicked the bee hives over and blitzed Syria overnight. It's the soft option as Iran is a harder nut and Makepeace well knows that if the US pulls out of Baghdad, the Syrians will take over the next day. To quote the old poem, the 'Assyrian's came down like a wolf on the fold.'

“Oh,” says Makepeace, “make sure there is a telly in the kitchenette tuned to CNN.”

The pompous ones are very antsy when he turns up and starts to tell them this and that. He turns on the TV and says,

“Where're your written reports?”

“It doesn't work that way,” they say.

“Well,” Makepeace says, “it does now. Write it all up and keep it to three pages.”

They refuse coffee and croissants and stalk out.

“Back at ten fellows,” he says, “you can use bullet points if you like but it must be in writing. Don't worry about what you write, it's embargoed for thirty years anyway.”

CNN now kick in with the big one. The Israelis have whacked old Osama (who's been living very comfortably in Cuba for the past four years). They drop him in a steel cylinder with a perspex view-place at Gitmo, thus the Yanks take the credit for this very long overdue hit. The Syrians, who are in a bad way have no idea who's whacked them. The clever old Zionists have used beefed up scuds with smart bomb-heads provided by Makepeace to do the dirty work. The aim is not to decimate the place, only to obliterate the nerve centres.

The French now arrive at Iraq. They are using a couple of aircraft carriers minus planes to move a lot of troops - many ex Foreign Legion. Max Ball is now GOC Iraq Command and is up and running. He's quarantined the Iraqi Government and flown them out of the country. By orders of the day, he musters the Iraqi army and police force and introduces them to their new commanders and NCO's; all French and all Arabic speakers. They are then formed into five commands. A great many of the French troops, now assume

total protection of the oil production facilities. A huge muster takes place of Iraqi's who are formed into working teams.

Eleven

Under duress and close supervision they provide the endless labour to split Baghdad into five zones, each zone with only one entrance and egress. They do this with four metre steel mesh fences topped with the worst razor wire ever invented and they go down the centre of streets right around to make the access to carry out the work super easy. This is done in an amazingly short time and the Israeli engineers now arrive and install sniffer tunnels into and out of each zone. This marvellous invention is the brain child of a Pilbara pastoralist, a chemical engineer supervising the dismantling of the Boodarrie Pellet plant and the Shire Engineer of Port Hedland. Using lengths of corrugated circular culverts common to the Pilbara, they add a very strong extraction fan which throws air from one end of the tunnel (where the people are moving through) out through a chemical filter which changes colour if any of their customers are carrying weapons drugs or explosives.

The Jews have done exceptionally well with the first ones of these and this is now a big extension of a product which sweeps the world, making the Pilbara three zillionaires, and also Knights of the Realm, holders of Orders of Australia, Legionnaires of Honour and Congressional Medals of Honour.

The sniffer tunnels do away with suicide bombers of a walk around nature. A new regiment drafted from America for ninety days only, arrive. They are without exception, panel beaters and the panel beater who advanced this idea to Makepeace when he was taking a bingle out of his beloved Buick, is now to his own astonishment, a sixty day, one star general running this op.

They're after the car bombers and thus stop every car coming in to any of the five zones, or indeed going out and using angle grinders and other power tools, take the passenger and rear driver's side door off every car and grind off the boot lids. Lucien Pour Effete's column muses this same week, 'you have to at times be cruel to be kind'.

*****Trucks they can altogether from Baghdad. All ingoing stuff has to be unloaded onto bob-tailers in five different unloading zones, out of the city a bit. The two Moslem factions now take to daylight sniping at opposition adherents entering mosques. The Arabist recruited by Makepeace, shakes his head,

"The mosques, on the figures in front of me have to go."

Max Ball flies again to Malta to confer with Makepeace, who is attending to other business there.

"Go for it Max, use the French engineers. They've been laying plans to blow up the mosques in Paris for years."

Two huge major visitors arrive to confer with Makepeace at the Villa Guernica. The first is the Chinese ambassador to the USA; Harvard educated and easy to talk to.

"Mr President," he says, "the Iranians are trying to buy cottonmouth missiles off us. If we buckle, its London to a brick, they'll give them to the Hezbollah, who will, of course, fire these very frightening missiles into Israel, instead of the Katusha firecrackers they've used for years."

Makepeace laughs.

"Mr Ambassador," he says, "you've left us alone in our operation Iraqi sort out. We appreciate that. I intend to resolve the issue of Taiwan during my first term, it's not a priority as yet. If you wish me to leave this on my agenda you know what to do."

The Chinese leans forward on his Hepplewhite chair and bows.

"Message received and understood." he says.

Twelve

The Iranian Foreign Minister comes in the next day. While Iran has been buzzing like a bee hive, they have the object lesson of a blasted and incapacitated Syria right under their nose, no one even knows the perpetrators yet. Even the world authority, Lucien Cause Effete, pleads ignorance in his column but thinks it was a very good idea. The Iranian is antsy and insists on talking Arabic though Makepeace well knows he's a good English speaker. Makepeace nods to his Arabist.

"Tell this stupid drop kick that we know they have been trying the Chinese for cottonmouth missiles. Tell him that we know that they are not stupid enough to use them themselves. Tell them that we would expect that they want these to supply Hamas in Gaza or Hezbollah in Lebanon. Tell this clod clearly that if that happens the Jews will undoubtedly retaliate with the nuclear weapons that 'they haven't got' and which are not stored in Israel, to the extent that the only thing to come out of Iran for perhaps thirty years will be an awful lot of radioactivity!"

This shocks the Foreign Minister out of his foreign language.

"Is that a threat?" he asks.

"Not at all," says Makepeace, "it's a Jewish promise which I am permitted to pass on to you."

Thirteen

The ambassador stands.

"We think," he says, "you seem to have all the answers in Bagdad, but you've done nothing to sort out the big outside centres."

"Oh, that's on the go." Makepeace says, "the Kurdish league officered by the French will handle that shortly."

This shakes the Iranian to his boot tops.

"Our business is finished." Makepeace says, "Why not stay for a spot of lunch. I'm not averse to talking of more constructive things."

Surprisingly he does and doesn't depart the airport until nearly 5pm. They sort out many things. Time ticks around in this endless tale and with the country now firmly controlled and just as firmly disarmed (the Iraqi army shoot any local carrying a weapon, for ten days straight and then amnesty the weapons into central points. The Iraqis can't hand them in quick enough), the war is over and commerce is now king. The Arabist and a Brit board of trade experts, now start to repay the huge costs to the US and France of the pacification. They set oil at fifteen dollars a barrel and this shuttles out to France and the USA. Also at the same price they let the oil flow into Russia; restart on condition that the Russians send in extra troops to protect the supply lines.

Fifteen dollar oil now diffracts into the Western world's economy and because Iraq has so much of it, the Arabist and his mate are now setting the price for world oil. Makepeace finally holds a White House press conference, his first ever. He answers the key question.

"Why the French? Well they're as tough as, while our dough boys are good old boys, they don't speak the lingo. Once we got the old Foreign Legion Arab speakers in and did away with interpreters, who never told us the truth, we were quickly able to get the Iraqi army up and running. As you know, we the USA, now just keep 75,000 of the best armed troops in the world in Kuwait. They're out of the fighting, living like kings, but they're 'Johnny near the spot' if needed."

"How the French?" they ask.

"Well again they depended on Iranian oil and that was at total risk if the Jews were forced to press the button. In short, they saw the sense of the deal." There are a million questions, but he's answered the key ones. Makepeace now starts to enjoy his first Presidential term. The hard and risky graft is now over.

Lucien Pour Effete now starts out to rebirth poor old George Dubya, who is hiding out down in Texas and is reviled up hill and down dale. Makepeace does this cleverly. Firstly, at his Memorial Day address at Arlington and then at the next Kennedy Memorial lecture to his old CPA group. He's on his own turf and the Quebec chaps are urging him again to speak French.

Makepeace sees the best result is to boost old George Dubya a bit and to keep the French on side.

“My theme tonight is Iraq. It was always about the oil, nothing else. The combination for the US of A being the biggest oil consumer and not much of a producer, always left us open to blackmail. Not anymore, all thanks to old George Dubya.”

It’s an inconspicuous venue to tell the biggest truth in the world. In later years, when Cuba joins the USA as its newest state, Makepeace appoints George W. as Life Governor of Cuba...