

Phillipe and Jorge's Cool, Cool World: Hernandez, Concrete Projo and Arc Iris

A Small Favor

This request will doubtless set the bad taste bell a-ringin', but Phillipe and Jorge are at their wits' end.

Would a local blond, white, teenage girl please manage to get abducted or at the least, go missing? P&J figure this is about the only thing that will get the clapped-out, mind-numbing coverage of the Aaron Hernandez trial out of the first three news stories EVERY DAY. Enough is enough, and this courtroom faux drama passed "enough" about eight months ago. The only people who seem interested in it are the media, but this dog don't hunt anymore for the general public.

While Hernandez is always referred to as the "former star NE Patriots tight end," the Pats managed to win a Super Bowl without him, thank you very much. And guilty or innocent in court, the verdict has already been reached that Hernandez is a violent, stupid thug. So what's the fascination now, except for train wreck aficionados?

Even though the recent crash of the German airliner in the Alps caused by a mentally ill co-pilot took the lead-off spot for a few days with Hernandez reduced to second or third lead, it has no legs, since it took place in Europe and mostly furriners died. What we need is the surefire bet of that blond teen (preferably cute as a button and described by friends as "lighting up the room" every time she entered one) vanishing without a trace, which will take immediate precedence over any other story, and for weeks attract the media tragedy porn reporters. Please, do this small favor for P&J. Thanks.

RIP, Concrete Charlie

Growing up outside Philadelphia, Phillipe's # 1 sports idol was the Philadelphia Eagles' Chuck Bednarik (sorry, Richie Ashburn and Wilt the Stilt), who died last week. He is in the NFL Hall of Fame, deservedly so, and was the last of the two-way players, turning out at center and middle linebacker.

Bednarik was known as Concrete Charlie, supposedly because he once had a job loading bags of concrete. But as arguably the toughest guy in football when he played, the concrete analogy works one way or the other. The fact that he also flew 30 combat missions as a gunner in World War II didn't hurt the hardass image either.

Phillipe also had a personal connection with Bednarik. When Chuck came home after the war, he went to college at Penn, and while there worked with P.'s father at Foremost Dairy. So to a young boy's mind, he was part of the family.

Bednarik is probably best remembered from the time in 1960 when he laid a hit on glamor boy Frank Gifford of the arch-rival NY Giants that separated Gifford from both the ball and consciousness. In fact, Gifford sat out the entire next season due to the concussion. Bednarik was criticized for a photo of him pumping his fist over the prostrate Gifford, seemingly gloating he had KO'd him. But Chuck explained after he retired that was not the case, in his typical eloquent style, that he saw a teammate recover Gifford's fumble and he was shouting, "This game is fucking over!"

But to Phillippe, his favorite Bednarik moment came in the 1960 NFL championship game at Franklin Field in Philly, which P. actually attended. The Eagles beat the Green Bay Packers, 17-13, but not before the Packers were marching down the field looking for the winning touchdown. With just seconds remaining, Concrete Charlie tackled Green Bay's Jim Taylor at the Eagles nine-yard line. Bednarik lay on top of Taylor, holding him down as the clock ticked away, and told him, "You're not getting up until this fucking game is over." The final whistle blew, and P. went home walking on air. Thanks, Chuck.

Beginning of the End?

So, Vo Dilun's daily newspaper, one of the oldest and most celebrated daily newspapers in the country we like to call "the United States of America," announced recently that they would double the price of a newsstand copy of the newspaper from \$1 to \$2. Here in the Biggest Little, a lot of people are wondering if this is the end of the line for a true institution. The building on Fountain Street in downtown that has been the paper's headquarters for decades now is up for sale. It could very well be that they will now move to Cranston or some other nearby suburb.

As you will recall, it was in June 2014 (less than a year ago) that New York-based New Media Investment Group Inc., the parent company of Gatehouse Media LLC, purchased *The Journal* for \$46 million cash. At that time, Phillippe & Jorge (and many others) openly worried that this would turn out badly. The Belo sale was bad enough (the loss of local ownership to a company that was primarily interested in *The Journal's* television holdings), but the Gatehouse sale was even worse. What they have done to their other newspaper holdings has been to make severe cutbacks that result in worse newspapers. There was no reason to believe that what they would do with the Other Paper would be any different and, sure enough, one of their first moves was to lay off veteran reporters and columnists (Thomas Morgan and Bob Kerr immediately come to mind) who represented both the heart and soul and institutional memory of the paper. Giant red flags.

Is anyone surprised at the latest move from this particular corporate organization? With sales figures flagging, the paper getting smaller, less local reporting and fewer pages, now mostly filled with syndicated copy from sources like the Associated Press, Gatehouse's "solution" is to double the price of the daily paper. This is not going to work and fewer people will now pick up paper copies of *The Providence Journal*.

It has become increasingly obvious that the continued trend of large out-of-town conglomerates buying up daily newspapers around the country will result in the end of newspaper template we have come to know. Changing typefaces and fonts has also met with near universal dismay from regular readers of the paper.

So will the last person to leave the building (likely to be Mark Patinkin) please turn out the light.

Music Tip for April

Your superior correspondents ran into a couple of members of the fine RI-based band Arc Iris the other day and want to tell you about the weekly arts and music festival that they will curate at Aurora on Westminster Street on four successive Friday evenings in April. Starting April 3, an eclectic variety of bands and musicians, from The 'Mericans to Last Good Tooth, Haunt the House, Death Vessel, Andrea Belanger, Allysen Callery and Arc Iris themselves, will be performing with "intermittent performances in the front lounge" as well as the fabulous Big Nazo Lab creatures (who will be there each week).

This is the Zoetical Festival and it is highly recommended. Do yourself a favor and check out some of the more interesting musical acts in the Biggest Little.