

## Searching for Needles

March 28, 2014

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. It has been three weeks since the Malaysian airliner and 239 passengers went missing in the areas of the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Since that time, news about the incident has been on the front pages of newspapers and is featured as the lead-in to news broadcasts. Some critics, especially the families of the passengers, have stated that not enough was being done to find the missing plane.

Also during this time, several million citizens in the Crimea became instant ex-citizens of the Ukraine; a third of the citizens of Nigeria have been forced from their homes (actually, three million people since January, 2014) in escalating violence; “Al-Shabaab, a militant group based in Somalia, attacked a mall in Nairobi, Kenya, leaving 67 dead; suicide bombers killed 81 at a church in Pakistan; and the Taliban took credit for killing two police officers with a car bomb in Afghanistan.”<sup>1</sup> “Thousands of people have fled their homes in India's north-eastern Assam state after clashes between two tribes in which at least 16 people have died.”<sup>2</sup> The list goes on and on.

Returning to the Malaysian plane crash, “not enough was being done to”...do what? To do exactly what people have been doing for three weeks: *pulling out all stops to locate the airplane*. In the meantime other citizens (*alive* citizens) who desperately need aid are being ignored. Somehow, they don't matter, while thousands of labor hours and millions of dollars are being expended on looking for *dead* people, while *living* people go to the back of the humanitarian queue.

Color me heartless and insensitive? Let's assume one of my loved ones was on the plane.

Color me selfish that I would criticize a three-week search effort in the Pacific Ocean. A search conducted by thousands of concerned people at a cost of millions of dollars to verify that my loved one was dead.

Color me dense for not accepting that my loved one had gone down in a plane in the largest expanse of water on the planet. Color me confused that *all* the inhabitants on earth were not watching for that *single* plane to disappear. What else did they have to do with their time but watch my loved one's plane fly?

Color me confused as to why I would want to wear a T-shirt emblazoned with the number of the flight that crashed and led to my loved one's death.

Color me puzzled why this T-shirt is supposed to symbolize the image of my loved one suddenly becoming a hero when he simply had the bad luck to fly on a plane that crashed.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2013/10/28/terrorist-attacks-and-deaths-hit-record-high-report-shows/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-25633778>.

Color me clueless that I cannot understand why his pilot could not manage to land a large commercial airplane onto a coral atoll.

Color me oblivious to refuse to accept my loved one's death in spite of GPS, satellite radio, radar, and basic common sense indicating otherwise.

Color me full-of-myself that I demanded the search go on and on, regardless of the costs.

Color me sorrowful that my sorrow has made the headlines three weeks running...going on four...going on five?

Color me ranting and raving, assailing a multitude of well-meaning and dedicated searchers because, against-all-odds they could not locate a needle in a 3 million-square-mile ocean haystack. Color my mournful laments as an insult to others who have lost their loved ones as well, but handled their grief with dignity.

Color me indignant that I would march on the Malaysian Embassy, throwing bottles at the building because the Malaysians declared many loved ones were likely dead, which they were.

Color me as being absurd that during this confrontation, I demanded, "Tell the truth! Return our relatives!" Spoken as if the Malaysian Airlines had kidnapped them.

Color me incredulous that the citizens of China, whose friends and relatives were on the plane, want proof that the passengers are lost. Proof? What better proof can they have?

Color me certain that I do not need a T-Shirt to commemorate the death of my loved one.



We all have lost those we love, some naturally, some unnaturally, such as in a crashed plane. We wish they were still with us. But if they cannot be, we should let go and encourage the rescuers of the world to go forth and salvage the hundreds of thousands of people in impoverished and endangered areas who are indeed alive, but barely. We should not regale these fantastic efforts made to, yes, find dead bodies. Throwing bottles and demanding, "Return our relatives!" is an insult to those relatives.

I had originally placed my brother Tom in this essay as "my loved one." My editors/counselors (who proof-read this material) suggested I use loved one instead. They advised that the use of Tom was too personal; that some readers would be taken aback about my, well...lack of sensitivity. My editors/counselors are wise-ones. They routinely keep my (often flippant) prose out of hot water. However, their cautions about this essay make my point---not about Tom, but about the reluctance to tell the truth and face facts. We have become too sensitive to the truth. We value smoothing things over in place of candor. It will never be my intent in these essays to knowingly upset an innocent party. However, it is self-defeating to paste over reality and live an illusion.