



The Bowfin Inquirer



January, 2021

Escape from Boredom

by Jerry Lerman (344)

Looking for creative things to do while spending even more days indoors - with not a definite prospect of when things will become normalized - I was intrigued to open my rarely used Bartlett's Quotations and look up quotations about "boredom" to see if there was something I might learn from them.

First off, I found this fairly recent one: "Boredom is the keynote of poverty ... for where there is no money there is no change of any kind, not of scene or routine" – from Moss Hart's autobiography "Act One".

I had heard of Moss Hart – but only the fact of his having created several musicals ... "Rodgers and Hart" was a team before there was Rodgers and Hammerstein. I mentioned the quotation and its author to Eve (but not the source), and she immediately chimed in with "Act One!" I had no expectation she would have known something substantial about Mr. Hart. So already I had a positive benefit from my efforts: I had learned something new about my wife!

Then I ran across this quotation that I found a bit concerning: "The inexorable boredom that is at the core of life" – Jacques Bénigne Bossuet (1627-1704).

I'd never heard of this famous person – but a quick search of Wikipedia showed me that I probably SHOULD have, as it says: **Jacques-Bénigne Lignel Bossuet** (French: [bɔsɥɛ]; 27 September 1627 – 12 April 1704) was a French bishop and theologian, renowned for his sermons and other addresses. He has been considered by many to be one

of the most brilliant orators of all time and a masterly French stylist.

Really? One of the most brilliant orators of all time and I'd never heard of him before!

I gave Bartlett's yet another go and came up with an interesting quotation tying boredom to another problem vexing the U.S. (and much of my family) today. "Obesity is a mental state, a disease brought on by boredom and disappointment." – Cyril Vernon Connolly – *The Unquiet Grave* (1945), pt. 1

Had I heard of Connolly or his book before? Of course not. Wikipedia has quite a sizable entry about his life as a literary critic and author – and a neighbor and wannabe friend of Aldous Huxley. As for the source of the quotation, it says: During World War II, he wrote *The Unquiet Grave*, a noteworthy collection of observations and quotes, under the pseudonym 'Palinurus'.

Perhaps I can use as an excuse for never having heard of Connolly that I didn't realize Palinurus was a pen name!

Another reason I SHOULD have heard of him might be that I believe I read Michael Lewis's *Moneyball* some years ago. Apparently, I didn't commit it to memory all that well, because the article points out that "Michael Lewis ... cites Connolly at the top of the first chapter – 'Whom the gods wish to destroy they first call promising.' (*Enemies of Promise*)"

There are several other Bartlett quotations for the word "boredom" – so I may busy myself the next few days seeing what other adventures might spring from this research project. This boredom thing could turn out to be better than I ever imagined!