

THE TREASURY

THE TREASURY



ANNOUNCER is a radio documentary voice speaking English with a Transatlantic accent.

ANNOUNCER: In the early decades of the twentieth century, banks were commonly perceived as somewhat risky places to keep money. A series of major financial panics closed many of them, leaving depositors with nothing. In this climate of doubt, persuasion became a necessary tactic.

Leah Penzkover, Architecture and History Inventory Coordinator at the Wisconsin Historical Society, shared with me the only two files on record of the State Bank of Spring Green. The beginning of this monologue is drafted from these architectural and historical documents, almost verbatim.

To assuage public concern, bankers sought to project an image of stability, permanence, and wealth by erecting impressive structures in a Neo-classical style. The high ceilings and colossal columns of these buildings mimicked the architectural standards of the Capitol, and they aspired to become new pillars of their communities. All was well in midwest America.

...Until it wasn't.

No longer able to maintain enough capital to meet loan demands, a small regional bank merged with another, and then was acquired by an investment bank. The business closed, and the building stood empty. Gossip spread of signs of life: Clapping noises. Laughter. Conversation. Murmurs that sounded like singing. But as the front doors never opened, these rumors remained unfounded.

After thirty years, this stagnation finally ended. The bank was ready to serve the community again. Proudly, cold brass handles were pushed open, welcoming the very first guests to:

HOST sounds seductive. Their voice is amplified by a stage microphone. They introduce a space as if introducing a cabaret.

HOST: Here, there are no rules: we got wild cats, yellow dogs, shinplasters... you name it, we'll print it!

A chorus of indistinguishable questions is heard offstage.

Will they take it? Darlings, all it takes is boldface confidence, that fake it 'till you make it energy. Gone are the days of shine, weight, and scarcity. This bank is our playground. Speculation? Yes! You think it? You got it! Haven't you heard? The old tellers used to say, "figures won't lie". Now we're saying, "liars will figure". And oh the figures we've sculpted...

A chorus of concerned murmurs is heard offstage.

A combination of phrases from Heinrich von Kleist's "On The Marionette Theatre" and the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Listen. You never know when that check won't cash. You never have! We have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body, and we awaken knowing this: when our checks bounce, we'll panic together. Scream so high these columns won't have anywhere to go but down! Unlike those bound by earthy gravity, we know nothing of the inertia of matter! The force that raises us upwards is much, much greater than the force that keeps us on the ground.

With this power, we've got the call. Questioning the value of one's currency is key to overcoming their power, after all.

Lights dim to spotlight, closeup on **HOST's** face.

Welcome, dear depositors, to The Treasury.

Wild cats, yellow dogs, and shinplasters are the names of paper currencies produced by regional banks and exchanged in the United States, especially in the west of the continent where people were encouraged to settle. The state of Wisconsin drafted a constitution in 1846 prohibiting the circulation of paper currency, but the trading communities of the area rejected it. These currencies were used until 1865, when a national banking system was developed.

'Liars will figure' is taken from 'The Big Reset', a book by Dutch economist Willem Middelkoop, who founded and runs an investment fund that invests in "exploration companies" in the field of monetary, industrial, and battery metals mining.

PREAMBLE

PUPPET 1, 2, 3, and 4 (P1, P2, P3, P4) sit on a couch. They are visibly aged, and share nearly identical facial features.

VOICE FROM ABOVE (VA) is a voice from above. They speak like a Feldenkrais guide.

VA: Let's begin. Are you ready?

P1: One thing first.

P2: Yes. It is important that we remain anonymous, because we are too few at present to handle the overwhelming number of personal appeals that may result from this broadcast.

This preamble is based almost verbatim on the forward to the "Big Book" from Alcoholics Anonymous.

P4: We urge each of our members to omit their personal name, designating themselves instead as a depositor to The Treasury.

P2: Very earnestly, we also ask the press to observe this request, otherwise our group will be greatly impaired.

P3: There are no fees, no dues, no currencies exchanged. The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to remember. We are the depositors.

VA: Thank you.

ACT I

P1, P2, P3, & P4 sit at a round table.

VA: Let's start at the front doors. Imagine opening them, pushing the cold brass handles. What do you see?

P1: Well... the thing is, she never really used those front doors.

P2: She had something in front of them, I'm guessing. A piece of furniture or something.

P3: They were too cumbersome. Big and heavy. She always used the side door. That was just a regular door. Regular door knob, regular height.

Sally Jacobsen, Peg Miller's younger daughter, knew she never used the front doors, but couldn't remember why.

VA: Ok. Then let's start with the vault instead. Open the door of the vault. What is inside?

P1: Start in the closet? Hmm... ok...

P3: A lot of colors. I can't explain it. It didn't look like anybody else's colors.

P4: She painted with a lot of colors and patterns too.

Bonnie Allen, Peg Miller's eldest daughter, remembered the colors Peg wore.

P1: That was when she got sober. Before, she was painting really dark paintings.

P2: And I loved it, I loved it. When she got sober she painted bright and cheerful things. And... I liked it. I liked it.

Bonnie Allen was a drug and alcohol counselor. She said it wasn't a good idea to tell her mother that she liked her paintings better when she was drinking, so she never did.

P1: When her partner started losing memory, she started painting patterns because she could do a small square quickly, before she had to check up on him again.

P2: She said it kept her mind alive.

P3: I always wondered where she got her fabulous colors, so once I asked her, and she told me they were just what was on sale at the hardware store next to her.

Joan Zieger, a woman who is 42 years sober this year and who began her path to sobriety with Peg Miller as her AA sponsor, explained the relationship between the patterns Peg painted on found furniture and paintings and her husband Roy's dementia.

P4: She collected fashion magazines as inspiration. She kept them in the vault, with her clothes. She was very fashionable. Nobody dressed like her. She was once wealthy, I think...

P3: And still buying discount paint!

P2: Once she told me God was teaching her to be poor. And she was joyous being poor. She was more happy and fulfilled. She didn't think she would have learned her priorities in life if it wasn't for becoming poor.

In a TV segment on a program called "ON TV" from the 90s, Peg describes her patterns as something that "keeps an edge on [her] brain, having to make constant decisions all day long".

P3: I never remembered her poor.

P2: Artists have a way of being poor, don't they?

P4: She did live as a very humble person.

P3: But I'm not sure she was ever poor.

Paula Washow made the discovery of the discount paints at the hardware store by asking Peg directly.

VA: Now, bring your attention back to the facade. Where is the letter "N"?

P1: It was a work-around.

Paula also said Peg told her she was meant to live as a poor woman.

P2: It was a dodge.

P3: She would have been fined!

P4: It was the least she could do and still comply with legal requirements.

P1: She never wanted to touch that building. Just make it her own, but not change it.

The originating source for the story of the missing "N" of the "State Bank of Spring Green" sign hasn't been recalled.

P4: She always said she wanted to put a "D" up in its place.

However, Paula Washow confirmed the story by sharing that Peg wanted to put a "D" up in its place.

P1,2,3,& 4: GREED!

P2: And now, it's back up there. I can't explain it...

P3: Is it the same N?

P4: Don't know.

P1: Not sure.

P1: She held on to everything.

The description of the teller's cage is a combination of the memories from Dave Owens, current owner of the State Bank of Spring Green Building, and Sally Jacobsen.

P4: She even kept the teller's cage. Right in the middle of the room.

P1: Thirty-five feet long and about seven feet tall with a marble wall. She was proud of that.

P2: In the old days that's where you'd go up and do your business. The tellers behind the iron bars, you on the other side. Enough space for a hand to slide through, maybe a bill.

Sally Jacobsen described Peg Miller's 'Grey Assemblages', sculptures made from many small pieces of found wood. There are varying accounts on what color Miller painted them.

P1: That's where the Grey Assemblages were. Leaned up against the cage, like new bars.

P3: They were all painted black. Gunmetal black.

P1: No, they were painted all grey. Battleship grey.

P2: She told me they were called Chicago at night.

P3: She told me it was Madison.

Bonnie Allen said Peg told different stories about which city the works were representing over the course of her life.

P4: All of them had stories. She would light them up, and you'd peer inside them. I wish I could remember some of those stories.

In a commemorative text written by Barbara A.E. Banks found on the Facebook page of the Spring Green General Store, Banks describes the experience of viewing the "Grey Assemblages" in the dark, with a flashlight.

Paula Washow said Peg told wishes she could remember some of those stories.

ACT II

P3 stands in the middle of an otherwise empty stage.

P3: *(singing)*

She had this old guy named Dave
Dave had a pickup truck
They'd go 'round n' go
Testin' the day's luck

I'm not sayin' she was raidin'
garbage cans
I'm not sayin' that
But she didn't buy stuff
She found it in a dumpster dance

Sally Jacobsen described Peg Miller's habits of walking or driving with a man named Dave and finding furniture, material, and other discarded objects to make her art with.

P2: Or at garage sales. I guess she bought stuff there too...

P4: It's not that she couldn't afford it either...

P3: *(continues to sing)*

Poorly made, none of them survived.
Elmer's glue and nails, none of them survived
Unfortunately, they were poorly made and
None of them survived

A direct quote of Sally Jacobsen, describing Peg Miller's 'Grey Assemblages'.

Pieces she glued
Painted battleship grey
An homage to Louise, despair
Built from a bunch a rejections

Meg Huston said that one of Peg Miller's big inspirations was artist Louise Nevelson.

She pointed a flashlight
Shining on stories
Shadows casting shapes:
Chicago, New York, Detroit

Louise Nevelson said, "I think most artists create out of despair." She also said, "I think all great innovations are built on rejections."

I'm not sayin' she was raidin'
garbage cans
I'm not sayin' that
But she didn't buy stuff
She found it in a dumpster dance

Poorly made, none of them survived.
Elmer's and nails, none of them survived
Unfortunately, they were poorly made and
None of them survived

A different world (outside of the teller's cages)

HOST sounds like an American radio commercial. Their voice is amplified by a stage microphone.

HOST: Song and dance got you locked in? You are perhaps not well equipped to be changed by powers that lie outside your synthetic understanding. But despite all of that, here you are.

Perhaps our unselfishness, our absence of profit motive is what has you curious. Frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices, but it doesn't hurt, does it? In your case - as nearly all cases - if you are to re-create your life, you demand to be grounded in a power greater than yourself.

A loud, bass-y hum begins to crescendo.

Lay back, rest easy. Let us be that power. Do you feel it? Echoes from ceilings too tall shower down on you. Yes, you. Feel their weight. Let them wrap around you, squeeze you...

The hum stops abruptly.

(said through a smirking smile) Back to the show.

One of the first chapters of Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book is called 'The Doctor's Opinion'. It serves as an address to an anticipated skeptical response from the medical industry on the 12-step therapy to addiction. Much of this monologue is crafted from phrases in this chapter.

ACT III

P1, P2, P3, & P4 sit at a round table.

P4: (singing to themselves) ...And none of them survived.

P1: Not even the tellers' cage.

P2: Then moved it so it levitated above the bar. The marble wall grew too. Stately, scholarly. A Manhattan, a negroni, hard sounds of ice.

P4: A bar at her house... so bizarre...

P2: True dat.

P4: I almost suggested they serve only mocktails, but then I remembered that I'm an old geezer, and decided to say nothing.

P1: She took the money out of the bank, but after she left it came rushing back in, didn't it?

P4: The thing is, the place demands a certain experience. Especially when you initially walk in - tall, classy, high end, echoey, old.

P1: Expectations are high.

P2: Too high for this town.

P3: She was trying to share that elevation.

P4: You wouldn't believe how many times I woke up to a drunk sleeping it off on the sofa.

P2: When she lived alone, they were mostly women.

P4: Those were the days before rehab.

P1: Your only choice was just to quit.

P3: And that's a tall order.

P1: Everyone goes through the meat grinder at some point in their lives.

P2: She had a sense of humor about it. Living in a bank, offering a different kind of service...

P4: She must have believed in God.

P1: That's not something I know, or if I did I don't know if I'd tell.

Spring Green filmmaker Asa Derks, who worked as a bartender at The Last Leaf Restaurant located in the State Bank of Spring Green building, described the expectations insinuated by the architecture of the space, and how it made business for the restaurants that have occupied it since Peg Miller moved out in 2008 challenging.

Sally Jacobsen recalled sharing her home with recovering alcoholics when she was a child.

Bonnie Allen explained the development of drug and alcohol addiction support in the 1970s.

Peg Miller used the words "meat grinder" to describe difficult periods in life in an ONTV segment that profiled her artwork and home in the bank.

ACT IV

P4 stands alone on a stage, and reads from a piece of paper in their hands.

P4: I am
suspicious of the suspicion of religion
God
As whoever defines them.
A portrait of
A life lived
A disordered life
Tax documents
Unpaid bills
Busy every day with
Walking
Making
Five minute bursts of
Painting
Until she has to check up again
Five minute bursts
Shimmering slivers of time
Little mirages of control
Swimming over a horizon of acceptance

Of who?

Paula Washow laughed when she shared that once, she tried to help Peg get her documents organized, and they gave up halfway through the task as it seemed impossible to do so. Peg wasn't good with bills or money, she said.

I am told it takes six weeks to gain a habit, and six weeks in a recovery support group to begin to understand.

Sally Jacobsen said that Peg Miller was over 40 years sober when she died, and she was the sponsor to many other people who have outlived her.

"In America all we learn is a victorious history, don't make a victorious history" are words heard from an installation of audio and video material from the Umbra Poets Workshop by artists Atelier Impopulaire and musicians Blacks' Myths. The Umbra Poets were a group of young black American writers who met in New York City's Lower East Side from 1962 to 1965 to read together and discuss writing politics.

I am
suspicious of the suspicion of religion
so I stick around
They say it takes six weeks
To understand
So I stick around
She puts in forty years
I stick around
Forty or more
Counting the years of her others
How she spread herself.

Bonnie Allen said Peg collected quilts and hung them on the walls, and stored them folded in a large wooden cabinet.

Paula Washow suggested that Peg's quilt collection coincided with a "quilt revival" of the 1970s, which was nationally aligned with the centennial celebration of the United States of America.

But:
Don't make a victorious history
Someone else's words say:
Don't make a victorious history
In America all we learn is a victorious history
Don't make a victorious history
Her collection of quilts
A celebration of
The homespun
The resourceful
Nostalgia for the simpler times
Blocks upon which to build
An insincere portrait of a nation
Stitched stars
Bright colors obscure

A
Violent Empire

A
Victorious Empire
spreading the myth of a joyful people
making do.

I am
suspicious.

This is a country of resilient people,
they insist the stitches prove.

I am
suspicious.

Joy, god, money: the tools to survive the nation
pass through time the monster becoming:
Joy, god, money: the tools that affirm the nation
Joy, god, money.
A bank, a home,
and the courage to understand the difference.

Poor woman in a rich woman's body
She called herself:
an inherited addiction
an inherited craft
What is a naive artist?
Not a victorious history.

I am
suspicious of the suspicion of religion
so I stick around
I stick around
There are no shortcuts
To a portrait
Of a disordered life,
My disordered life.

I am
not afraid
of time the monster.

In a handwritten card
sent from Chicago to the
Netherlands, Meg Huston
wrote: "I am not afraid
of time the monster".

**I AM NOT AFRAID
OF TIME THE
MONSTER.**

POSTLUDE

P1, P2, P3, & P4 sit at a round table.

P3: She deserves a lot of credit.

P1: A studio, a safe house. She survived.

P4: A celebrity.

P3: A different kind of celebrity.

P4: And rich, too.

P3: A different kind of rich.

P2: Who would have expected, in an empty bank.

P3: Healing in a cavity left by speculative failure.

P4: Actually, it was just a merger.

CREDITS

We see text and hear 'We're In The Money' sung in pig latin, after Ginger Rogers.

Shaun Motsi recommended Julia, who in turn brought on three puppeteers

PRODUCTION MANAGER

JULIA DAHEE HONG

PUPPETEERS

KYLE TRYHORN
RICK GEENE
GLORIYA AVGUST
KOTRYNA BURUCKAITĖ

Yael Davids is an artist and a certified Feldenkrais instructor.

VOICEOVER

Yael Davids

SECOND CAMERA

ASA DERKS

MUSIC

All music played or sung by Lili Huston-Herterich, based on two songs:

STORMY WEATHER

Harold Arlen & Ted Koehler (1933)

WE'RE IN THE MONEY

Harry Warren & Al Dubin
(composed for the musical film 'Golddiggers', 1933)

These two songs are played on 'The Numbers', a program on American National Public Radio that reads the stock market numbers on air. When the numbers are down, the program plays a subdued version of STORMY WEATHER. When the numbers are up, they play the upbeat WE'RE IN THE MONEY. When the numbers remain stable, they play IT DON'T MEAN A THING (IF IT AIN'T GOT THAT SWING), by Duke Ellington and Ella Fitzgerald.

For technical encouragement.

THANK YOU

MARIANA ABOIM

For her emotional and physical support.

SHAUN MOTSI

For fueling our puppetry fires.

REYHAN LÁL

ELINE GROEN

For passing on her knitting machine.

BONNIE ALLEN

SALLY JACOBSEN

PAULA WASHOW

JOAN ZIEGER

DAVE OWENS

KARIN MILLER

MEGAN BOND

For their generous time and energy during cross-Atlantic conversations about their friend/ mother / acquaintance Peg Miller.

For help with engineering a camera rig.

MARUICIO VAN DER MAESEN DE SOMBREF

NATASHA SOOBAMANEN & RESIDENTS OF THE RIJKSAKADEMIE

MELVIN MOTI

ANSUYA BLOM

TIRDAD ZOLGHADR

For their close attention.

For crucial writing feedback.

MEG HUSTON

WERNER HERTERICH

For inspiration and encouragement.

For inspiration and permission.

LILI HUSTON-HERTERICH
2024

{ LOOP }