

Paranoia--The Key to Happiness



Arthur Hoppe

IT WAS during the Watergate affair that young Freddie Frisbee first developed the initial symptoms of a classic case of paranoia.

As he read the daily revelations of widespread buggings, wire - tappings, spyings, infiltrations and burglaries by government agents, his sense of unease grew.

The first outward sign that he was suffering from delusions of persecution came on a Monday evening. He picked up the phone to call a liberal attorney he knew and then, after a moment's thought, hung up the receiver.

"There's a good chance they've tapped his line," he explained to his wife, Felicia. "Or ours."

"Really, dear," said Felicia blithely, "you're just overwrought."

But when a friend attempted to take a jolly group picture at a picnic the following Sunday, Frisbee dove head first into the sand, burying his head up to his ears.

"You know Army intelligence agents are always taking crowd shots to compile dossiers," he explained to Felicia. "Well, there's no sense taking chances."

A worried Felicia insisted he see a psychiatrist. And a reluctant Frisbee was dragged to the offices of Dr. Hermann Schrinck.

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"NOW, Mr. Frisbee," said Dr. Schrinck, folding his hands, "just sell me what seems to be bothering you."

"I would, doctor," said Frisbee cautiously. "But the evidence shows there's a good chance your offices will be burglarized by the CIA who will seize the records of our intimate conversation for who knows what ends."

Dr. Schrinck shook his head sadly. "It's the times we live in," he said. "I'm

afraid they've made you an incurable paranoid. All I can offer you, Mr. Frisbee, is my deepest sympathy."

From there, Frisbee went steadily downhill. He refused all dinner invitations on the grounds he hadn't adequate facilities to check the guest lists. He triple locked all the doors and arose thrice nightly to make sure no one had taped open the latches.

Felicia grew increasingly distraught. "Please, dear," she said, sobbing, "tell me what's the matter."

"I would," said Frisbee, frowning. "But how do I know you're not an FBI agent or a White House consultant? If they can infiltrate political groups to spy on them, there's no reason they can't infiltrate my household."

Felicia left him. He burned all his membership cards, including that of the Red Cross. He slept with his hi-fi on in case he talked in his sleep. And he never emerged from the house without his red wig and black moustache.

His friends never called any more, nor did his neighbors speak to him, considering him, at best, "odd."

Then came The Coup of 1984.

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ONE BY ONE, his former friends and neighbors were led off to jail on the evidence compiled in their thick dossiers. And it came as no surprise to Frisbee to see Dr. Schrinck being dragged off to a government mental institution for "rehabilitation"

"It's you who are the incurable paranoid," the struggling Dr. Schrinck shouted angrily at Frisbee as he passed. "Not I."

"All I can offer you, Doctor," said Frisbee with a faint smile as he strolled off, a free man, "is my deepest sympathy."