Earlier this week, I'm having dinner with some business colleagues. Amid the wine and martinis, the topic naturally turns to the assassination of John F. Kennedy. I avow that the conspiracy theories are crazy flights of fancy, and that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in shooting Kennedy. Everyone else at my table seemed to have a different opinion.

One of the guys related a story told by a colleague of his, who may or may not have worked in the past for the government in some capacity, and his job may or may not have been to monitor the activities of Fidel Castro. It seems that on November 22, 1963, Castro specifically diverted all of his intelligence resources to listen to what was happening in Dallas, TX, indicating in some capacity that Castro had pre-knowledge that there would be an attempt on Kennedy's life. As we all know, that prescience on Castro's part proved to be all too true.

I googled this fact and it turns out that it is substantiated, at least by one more source. I learned that former CIA officer Brian Latell makes a similar claim in a book he recently published - *Castro's Secrets: The CIA and Cuba's Intelligence Machine*
. So this factoid certainly makes you scratch your head a little.

So how exactly did Castro know Kennedy was about to die? Castro certainly wanted Kennedy dead, and feared that Kennedy wanted the same of him. Ordering the assassination, via

Oswald and/or other operatives, would certainly not be beneath the Cuban dictator. You also have to consider the role the mafia may have played. In the early 60s, Havana was the mob's playground, and the intertwining of mafia leadership and Cuban government would mean a free flow of information between them. Castro could, in fact, use the mob to order the execution, as they would have the US assets to be able to pull off such an act. Alternatively, the mob had reasons of its own to want JFK to die, and could have planned the whole thing, telling their friend Castro as a courtesy.

But you also need to consider Oswald, who allegedly wanted to prove to Castro his worth as a revolutionary, and may have told the Cuban embassy of his intent. Oswald did, in fact, seek entry into Cuba and was denied such in the past, and Latell indicates this as a probable explanation for Castro's intelligence on this matter. And though it is not the most glamorous explanation, if we apply Occam's Razor to this, the simplest explanation with the least moving parts is indeed the most likely one.

Jimmy Haslam, America's newest Browns fan, this week got a little taste of what it is like to be a fan of this franchise (a franchise he paid a billion dollars to own). He saw his starting linebacker blow out his knee and be lost for the season, saw his top draft pick need a second surgery this year on his knee (before even playing a single game), and saw his best cornerback run afoul of Emperor Roger Goodell's office and likely be shelved four games or so. These events have us wondering once again: is there a conspiracy, cosmic or otherwise, that keeps the Browns from success, and will do such for the foreseeable future?

It is easy to say we are cursed. Decades of losing, and even when the Browns aren't losers, the still find innovative ways to lose when it counts. As we near the fifty-year mark of the last championship in Cleveland, the statistical improbability of losing so consistently and, recently, so completely weighs on our collective psyche as fans. We see our best players get hurt, or fail to rise to the level of competence we expect them to achieve when they don the orange and brown uniforms. We see improbable and painful losses – the Drive, the Fumble, Northcutt dropping the ball, etc. And the weight of all of this history makes the recent events seem like symptoms of a larger cosmic conspiracy against the Browns, and the city of Cleveland in general.

The fact remains, however, that things like this happen all across the league. Reading the injury wire from last night's preseason games, multiple teams had major injuries befall their starters, some of whom will miss significant time. The fact is, injuries are a part of the game, and suspensions happen, but the reason these are so devastating to the Browns is because the team has drafted so poorly, and developed talent so miserably, through all of the inconsistent

regimes foisted upon us by our incompetent former owner, that there simply isn't the proper talent on this team to cover normal situations. Winning teams have a consistency of talent acquisition and development that allows new stars to rise when old ones fall, and a proper and coordinated scheme in which that talent operates and knows how to play. Occam's razor here demands we look at the potter as to why the pots are consistently of poor quality.

So does Haslam own a cursed team now? No, he doesn't. But he clearly owns the responsibility for removing the "curse", the curse of poor management and player development. We will soon learn whether he is up to the task, or whether Cleveland has once again been cursed with an incompetent and feckless owner who delivers a subpar product to market consistently. Note I am not making an accusation on Haslam here, we have no idea what he is going to do, and won't know for another five years or so his competence and ability. But you can bet the media has diverted all its intelligence to figuring this out, just like Castro did in Dallas that fateful day in 1963.

Anyway, off to the questions. As a reminder, this week, I've reversed roles and asked a few of my loyal readers their opinion on things weighing heavily on my mind.

Hey Brady, What is the scariest thing in the world?

When this question first showed up in my inbox I figured it would be a breeze to answer. Johnny Damons swing, a Browns 3rd and 15 from their own 8 yard line and Jim Bollman were all contenders from the get go. Since TCF is one of the top Ohio sports sites out there, I thought something along those lines would please the casual reader in this corner of cyberspace. But if you've seen my twitter profile (a confirmed 62 have!) you know I also like everything and anything to do with Meteorology and or Geology. Those are the disciplines I drew from for the scariest thing on planet earth.

Super Volcano. It kind of sounds like a coaster at Cedar Point or some new intestinal smart bomb that Taco Bell is trying to shill. Unfortunately, when the real super volcano hits, you will be begging for that agonizing night spent in the john after 12 beers and 3 nacho cheese

chalupas.

There is a ticking time bomb that sits just miles under the surface in Yellowstone National Park. "Yellowstone! Isn't that somewhere not close to here?" some people might say. Those people would be Steeler fans.. err morons because when this thing blows, there will be nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. Anyone within a 500 mile radius of the park will be incinerated. Those within neighboring states of the disaster will have ash feet thick that will reek havoc on crops and collapse buildings. After a few days the ash cloud will encompase the globe, block out the sun and send the planet into a mini ice age that could take decades to escape.

It's not all doom and gloom though. The chances of seeing this event in your lifetime are pretty remote. However, the Yellowstone Super volcano IS overdue for another cataclysmic event and there are some disturbing signs within the park that pressure is building faster than usual. The power this underground monster posseses is unfathomable. Nothing would do more damage to the planet and its population short of a large asteroid impact. It's also guaranteed to happen again. 100%! No doubt at all. And we don't have any idea when it will blow. All those factors combined put Yellowstone on top for me. Zombies be damned.

Hey Sabre - I saw in the news the other day that they were sending people to Mars to colonize it. It will be a one-way trip, and you won't be able to receive supplies from earth, so anything you want for food and sustenance will have to be grown there. You will maybe have room to grow seven crops, and that will be all that you will ever be able to eat the rest of your life. What do you grow? Assume infinite soil fertility and water in this scenario.

Assumptions first: No Master Chef kitchen pantry box, no meat, no vitamins, no mayo, no salt (yikes, maybe those ancient sea beds were saltwater?)

Next I need to target some favorite crop related foods to strive for: Chips/salsa, veggie pizza, spaghetti, bread, cake, potatoes, baked beans, vodka.

Finally I need to split into groups to make sure I have things (health) covered: starch, veggies, sweet, spice, fruit.

I would go for 1) Wheat (yeast grows naturally on plants, right?) 2) Sugar cane 3) Onions 4) Tomatoes 5) Potatoes

Now it gets more difficult because Italian spices is not a plant…hmmm, basil? Paprika? Cumin? Pepper? Nope. 6) Garlic 7) Lemon tree (hated to waste this choice (it was going to be chili peppers) but I think I need vitamin c. It works with Vodka though.

I'd be willing to swap potatoes for corn if I could bring a cow with me. But how long do cows live? Could I bring a bull too? What if they only had baby bulls? No cheese or butter? This is crazy! And I forgot caffeine! Crap! Nope, I'm done.

The economy suddenly collapses causing every automobile company worldwide to close their doors forever. You, being an effective prognosticator of the future, foresaw this event, and took action by buying the one vehicle you would be able to use the rest of your life. It's got to take the kids to soccer practice, bring supplies back to your home from Home Depot, and be able to ward off the marauding gangs of looters in a post-apocalyptic world. What did you buy, and why? (Note you can have any car from any era too. The assumption is every car is available, but won't be after the carpocalypse.)

OK, first let's make an ass out of you and me with some basic assumptions.

1. Oil & gasoline are still available.
2. They are expensive (not like it isn't now, just sayin).
3. Many businesses will close & consolidate due to the context of this scenario.

4. Relocation is unlikely for most; I'm in NEO so I'm taking Midwestern winters into consideration.

In such a scenario a person's needs for a vehicle change. Space quickly becomes a major priority, and you're going to need enough room for cargo & passengers (particularly since the kids will not stop growing just b/c the economy took a shit). Reliability & durability will be key as well; it is quite possibly the last vehicle you'll ever purchase. You're also going to need technology on your side, not only to help conserve fuel but also b/c you don't know where you might have to go to carry on in this carpocalyptic world. IOW fuel injection and 4WD are going to be important and even a navigation system (if you don't have a smart phone, dummy). While a hybrid/EV vehicle might be the ideal choice in this scenario the technology is far from mastered and there just aren't enough on the road to get your hands on one. Those who own them are not going to let them go for less than a premium, besides who's going to fix it when it needs repair you? Remember all the manufacturers went under and you're so dumb you don't have a smart phone. Last but not least, it still has to be affordable, remember the economy collapsed.

All this leads to really only two choices, either a car with a lot of cargo room (a station wagon of sorts) or an old fashioned pickup truck. Scrap the thought of the traditional modern SUV, they're geared more toward creature comforts and they lack flexibility and well thought out use for cargo in most cases. So let's pay quick homage to some cars of our past. Station wagons were great back in their day. From the 60's through late 70's they were behemoths, but they were from the 60s & 70s, so they lack technology and have most likely contracted car cancer by now, that's rust in layman's terms. What about the 80's wagons you say, I say what ABOUT the 80s? Let's pretend cars were never made in that decade. Remember the El Camino? While a neat car and one that could multi-task like a truck it suffers from the same issues of cars of that era, plus the cabin is too small. Truthfully getting your hands on a car too old just isn't going to cut it, regardless of the class, the make or the model.

This brings us to two specific options, both available new or slightly used: a Ford F150 (ext. cab) or a Subaru Outback (wagon). Both have enough room to seat 4-5 comfortably, and have enough cargo space for hauling all the goods you'll need. Both have an available V-6 which offers plenty of power (yet is decent on gas) while each offers 4WD (and navigation). While the Subaru will have the advantage of being nimble, more comfortable and better MPG the F150 obviously allows for larger loads of basic goods, and the hauling of large major appliances, not to mention it's a truck frame and will take abuse over time much better. The F150 also has the option of a removable cap for the bed. This is nice for oversized loads, and could be important when fighting off looters and thugs in the neighborhood. It is a lot easier to pile all your shotgun toting hillbilly friends into the back of your pick up, not to mention it has separate space separated from your cabin for your dog when traveling or out patrolling for trouble.

While either will get the job done you need to think long term, and the F150 has too many advantages, plus it was made in America, and by a company that didn’t need to borrow money from you to build it.

Honorable mention goes to the Dodge Caravan, a vehicle that did alter the landscape of family travel. (4th gen had 4WD).

Either that or get a Dodge Dart.

Hey pod -You've been given a time machine. It can only take you to Philadelphia in September 5 of 1771. You have three years to get influence among the people of Pennsylvania to have them elect you to the Continental Congress, at which you can help to frame this country. How do you go about making colonial pod loved and admired by all, and what do you change about the Constitution once you get to the Congress?

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! I come to Boston to meet with Thomas Jefferson and provide some "heads up" and food for thought and hopefully put his printing press to work. Mr. J the Boston Massacre was just the beginning. The import taxes and oppression without representation will continue. We are on a collision course with the Crown. My time is short, only three hours, not three years as I must get back to my life which is stuck in the 20th century ;).

Forget the Star Trek "no interference" rule, we Colonials will need all the help we can get. So here we go...

1. The French do come.....but late in the action.

2. Drop the big white powdered wigs - out of style quickly, and they confuse the school children.

3. Do not wear bright blue uniforms, big hats, shiny buckles or carry flags to do battle.

4. Avoid lining up in formation in straight lines & going toe to toe with the best trained & equipped army in the world wearing bright red uniforms, big hats, shiny buckles and carrying Union Jack flags. Fight more like Indians.

5. Advise G. Washington to begin raising money now (soldiers want paid), amassing weapons, munitions, food, boots, firewood, and plenty of warm socks, etc. Stockpile them at, say, Valley Forge.

6. Do not trust Gen. Benedict Arnold anytime after 1779.

7. Advise Alexander Hamilton to just "let it go" with Aaron Burr...let it go man.

Now, concerning that living masterpiece of a document the Founders will put together in 16 years which will be the foundation to govern the greatest country ever known, take heed...

1. Abolish slavery immediately, you know you want to cause you will become President of the Abolitionists after you emancipate your slaves.

2. All the new citizens (see #1) vote.

3. Women are citizens, they vote.

4. Lower the voting age to 18.

5. Alcohol shall never be prohibited, just tax it.

6. Coke is prohibited to be in Coca-Cola...just write it down.

7. Limit Congressional terms to THREE.

8. Lobbyists are banned, no access to the Legislative branch.

9. Encourage investment into infrastructure, education, medicine (including mental health), & energy.

10. Massively improve our treatment of & to the Native Americans. They are citizens & vote.

11. Provide incentives for American Companies to want to always stay here and not overwhelm them with regulations.

12. Start immediately in protecting our air & water. Help companies with subsidies &/or technology to this end.

13. Force Georgia to send delegates to your meetings.

14. Make the "threshold" for indictments higher than the "ham sandwich" bar.

15. Rethink the whole "conspiracy" felony thing based on extorted testimonials/affidavits.

16. Allow the President to wage war, not declare it, and only fight if war is declared. (Highlight Southeast Asia & the Chinese Peninsula on your globe please)

17. Article I Section III : The Senate shall be elected by the people not legislated.

18. Make a note for future Legislatures to consider sticking with the "gold standard."

19.Limit the tax code to 50 pages, double spaced, 8.5" x 11"; #12 Font.

20. If you take my recommendations above seriously we will need an influx of immigrants to keep up with the economic dynamo so double the yearly immigrant allotment.

Mr. Jefferson, it has been an honor. Thank you for your service. I must go...God Bless You & The United States of America.

Please email questions to lars.hancock@yahoo.com , tweet them @ReasonsImADrunk, or DM them to me in the forae to LarsHancock.