

Knowing When to Hold Your Tongue

By George Cunningham

I like to think of myself as a person who stands up for himself. If somebody overcharges me for an item or service I have purchased, I speak up. Or if I am being unfairly maligned, I don't hesitate to refute the allegations. But there is one situation, where I hold my tongue – and it's for a practical reason, not a lack of assertiveness.

I never send the food back to the kitchen in a restaurant, although I know people who do it quite frequently. It's not that they are crazy. They just haven't thought it through.

First they complain that somebody back in the kitchen has failed to do their job correctly. Then they send that same food back to the kitchen – out of their sight – to have that same person correct the flaw.

I don't think so.

I am sure that most people in the restaurant industry are professional food handlers, who hold a high ethical standard when it comes to serving the customer. But most people does not mean all people. I have known some folks who work at restaurants that I would not like to have anywhere near my food.

This has been reinforced lately by the spate of restaurants-in-trouble reality TV shows such as Kitchen Nightmares with chef Gordon Ramsay, Restaurant Impossible with chef Robert Irvine, Mystery Diners with food investigator Charles Stiles, Bar Rescue with nightlife expert Jon Taffer, and Restaurant Stakeout with restaurateur Willie Degel.

These shows all have the same premise. There is a restaurant or bar in deep financial trouble – about to go out of business – and the owners in a final act of desperation call in the TV consultants, who taste the food, sometimes set up secret cameras to spy on the employees, change the menus, give the restaurant a facelift and then ride off into the sunset.

But there is always a scene in every show where they tour the kitchen, and it is disgusting. Roaches, dead rats, moldy food, contaminated meat, grease everywhere, substandard refrigeration and owners and kitchen workers who don't see what the big deal is. There are many folks who claim these shows are more fake than real, and they are probably right. But I think the depiction of some of the restaurant kitchens is closer to reality than people like to believe.

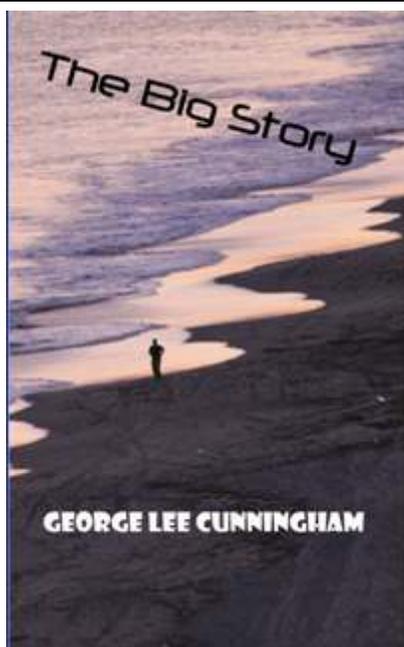
So believing that, it's a leap of faith just to go to a restaurant and hope for the best – to hope that the management and staff are dedicated to providing their customers with good, healthy food and a pleasant dining experience.

The truth is that there are times in life that you must “not think too carefully about some things” if you want to enjoy the experience. When you go to a hotel, you must not think about all the people who slept in that same bed before you, who sat in that same chair, who shed hair and skin, and left behind their germs and other biologicals. You know that no matter how good the housekeeper may be, she’s not going to get it all. But if you start thinking about it, it will drive you nuts.

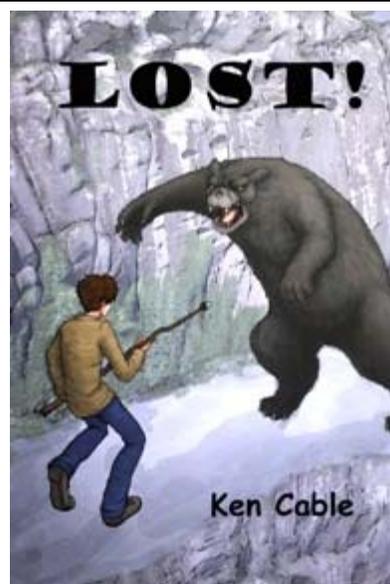
Going to a restaurant is like that. You walk in, you order your meal, and you hope for the best.

But sending your food back to the kitchen? That’s just pushing your luck.

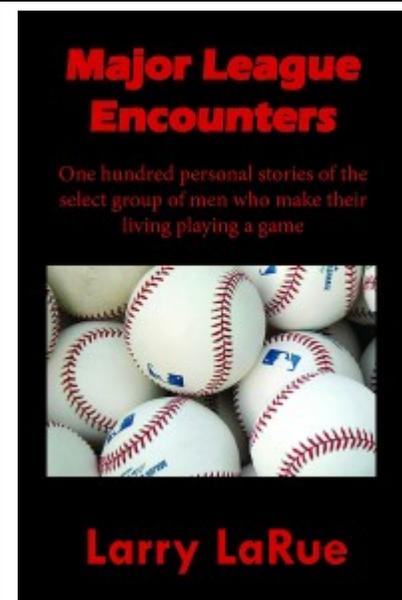
You can contact George Cunningham at george@readerpublishing.com be his friend on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/#!/george.cunningham.94695> and be his tweetheart at <http://twitter.com/#!/GeoCunham> His novel, *The Big Story*, can be ordered at www.readerpublishing.com. His new novel, *Kaboom*, will be available early next year.



A hard drinking reporter has to decide whether to keep chasing his big story or to make his bosses happy, rekindle the flame with his ex-wife, and be a responsible adult. Guess what he chooses. Mobsters, corrupt police, sissy editors, and the body of a nude girl on the beach. What more could you ask for?



Three boys – trapped in an early summer snow storm – struggle to survive in California’s Sierra Nevada mountains. This story by author Ken Cable marks a return to the traditional youth story – with the focus on adventure rather than social or political issue. The book – set in 1970 – follows the boys as they learn to deal with cold, hunger and a rogue bear in order to stay alive.



Author Larry LaRue gives an inside look at the world of Major League Baseball as he relates 100 personal encounters with the men who make their living playing a game. LaRue, who spent more than 30 years writing about a sport that he loves, tells tales that are sometimes inspiring, sometimes heartbreaking, and often very funny. This book is both easy to read and hard to put down.