

The Last Word™

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Bike seller pedaling into trouble with Amazon

The largest wealth transfer in history from the 99% to the 1% continues unabated—thanks bigly to a complicit media. Utility monopolies haven't been reined in and continue to charge hard-working Americans exorbitant rates. The minimum wage still lags inflation by light years. Necessary social services are endangered year after year—and that includes earned benefits like Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, and SSI. A regressive tax structure continues to steal from America's most downtrodden. Dissidents are regularly blackballed from more lucrative employment. Tea Party drug lords almost always go unpunished for costing the community in both money and *human lives*.

But now, after all the years I've worked long hours and bowed under the pain of untreated medical conditions while also suffering under this unbending program of economic totalitarianism, I've finally hit one out of the park—and it's all because one Amazon seller didn't follow the rules.

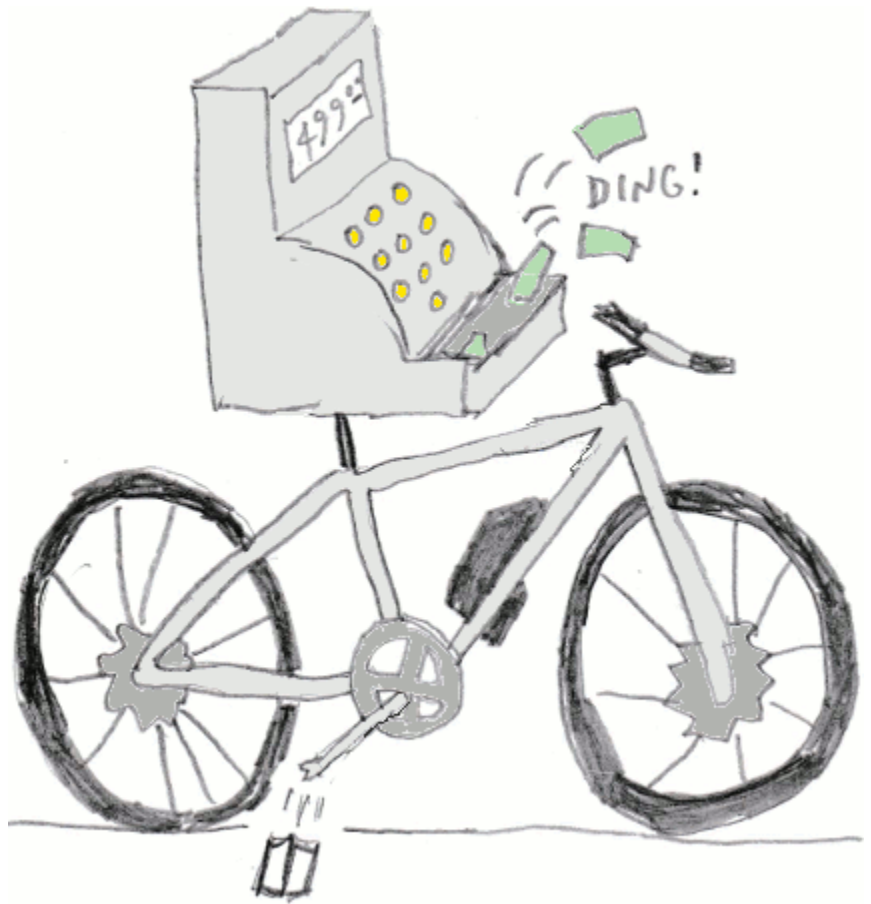
Amazon has rules. Its outside sellers are supposed to obey them—or pay the piper. I have to follow rules daily. I have to wait a half-hour before breakfast each morning because of my prescriptions—which I have to take forever. They're Allowed Clouds, if you will (or if you won't). The real surprise in this story is that Amazon actually enforced its rules. It seems like I had bad luck once with one of Amazon's outside sellers not refunding my shipping costs on an item that either was defective, had a misleading description, or was shipped to me despite me canceling the order. But this time, I won.

I purchased the Road Ruiner—an electric bicycle—from an Amazon outside seller. I wanted to buy an electric bike at the local bike shop, but it appeared as if they only carried models that cost at least 4 times as much. The Road Ruiner was sold as new. The item that arrived clearly was not new: The frame bore a huge scrape—as if someone had ridden it and spun out on gravel. But that was just cosmetic damage. If I can rock acne scars for 30 years, I can rock that. I had the bike almost fully assembled when I found a far more serious problem: The left pedal was defective. The threads had been stripped, and it could not be installed. It clearly was not new—even though the bike was advertised as new. I was able to remove a pedal from 2004 from the Peace Bike to use instead—but I was still out a pedal. I didn't get what I paid for. If I wanted to keep the Peace Bike as backup or sell it for someone else to enjoy, I'd have to buy a pedal.

Other parts of the Road Ruiner were bad too, and I had to buy parts to fix those—and spend hours of extra time fixing them.

The front brake hit the spokes on the wheel when I tried to ride—rendering the bike completely inoperable. It was clear the Road Ruiner had taken a big spill by a previous user. I almost gave up. Instead, I gave the brake a good whack with a hammer and pounded it into its rightful position.

It took a lot of additional expense, but I got the Road Ruiner in working order. I still needed to hound the seller about sending me the pedal. But they didn't cooperate. Instead of sending me a pedal, they expected me to take apart the mostly assembled bike and ship the entire 60-pound velocipede back to them. They said they'd send out a replacement bike—but I was afraid it might have defective parts too. So I told them I wasn't doing that.



They continued with the irrational excuses, saying there were no pedals they could send me. Uh, if they had a bike, they had a pedal.

Then they slipped up. Big time.

They e-mailed me saying, “The chances of getting parts is very slim, we will only get parts if someone returns a bike and we use it just for parts and who know when that could be ...”

Stop right there!

The product is advertised as new—is it not? Well, they just admitted to me the bikes they sell are made of used parts. Oops. I can live with that, as long as these used parts worked—and if they hadn’t lied about it being a new bike.

Because the seller wasn’t cooperating, I sicced Amazon on them. Amazon then apparently tried contacting the seller and got no reply. Sellers almost always reply when Amazon gets after them, but it seems this one didn’t. Amazon’s guarantee policy says that if sellers don’t reply, I can ask for a refund from Amazon. It doesn’t mean I’ll get it, but I can at least ask.

I applied for a refund from Amazon. I didn’t expect to get anything, because I know how hard it is to fight City Hall, but I didn’t want people thinking I didn’t try. About a week later, Amazon did the unexpected: They refunded me the full price of the bike. I would’ve been satisfied if they only covered the cost of the pedal and seat—but they refunded the *whooooole thing*. Well, if you snooze, you lose. The seller didn’t cooperate, and this is what happened. I wasn’t trying to shake anyone down. Never was one of them money-hungry fools. It’s just that rules are rules, the seller didn’t follow them, and it bit their ass off in public.

Rules burn. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. That’s what rules do. They burn. If the seller had told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about the Ruiner before I bought it, I wouldn’t have a leg to stand on in getting a refund.

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But I suspect it’s Amazon—not the outside seller—that’s covering the refund. I bet Amazon isn’t jumping for joy about this. If Amazon cares about its bottom line, maybe they’ll go after the seller for not following the rules and forcing Amazon to cover refunds. Someone decided to act stupid, and as a result, I effectively got a gently used electric bicycle for free. The refund is enough to cover a new pedal and seat many times over. At first, I felt a little guilty, but those are the rules.

In the immortal words of Big Bird: That’s cooperation!

I gave the seller a bad review. The only reviews I can find of this seller were posted *after* I received the Road Ruiner. One reviewer says they received a defective item, and the seller promised to ship a replacement—but it was never sent, and the seller stopped communicating with them to fix the problem. Another reviewer says this seller repeatedly sent them a defective shelf. After I posted my review, the seller defamed me by saying I left “dishonest feedback.” How much longer will Amazon tolerate this seller’s shit?

Someone else complained on another website about this seller, claiming the seller sold them a faulty tent that caved in all because it rained. The seller refused to let the buyer return the tent, even though it was ostensibly brand new. Then they blamed the buyer “because they left the item out overnight.” Uh, it’s a tent. It’s *supposed* to be left out overnight! The seller also accused *this* buyer of being dishonest. The seller went on to make this ridiculous statement: “Tents are designed for shade—not wind or rain and are *not* to be left up overnight.” Seriously, they said that.

A reviewer on the Better Business Bureau’s website said of the seller: “They have horrible customer service skills, and ship what appears to be used products.” Exact same problems I had. There are 12 complaints against this firm on the Better Bubbling Bureau’s site. Now there’s a growing number of complaints on Amazon about this seller selling used items as new.

Also, the pedal from the Peace Bike didn’t last long on the Road Ruiner. It fell off later, and I discovered the threads on the Ruiner’s crankshaft were stripped—another smoking gun that shows I was sold a used bike. I had to take it in to the bike shop to be fixed. The shop said they’d give me an invoice to show to Amazon, but that obviously won’t be necessary. The cool part is that the shop installed a left crankshaft that’s a different color from the one on the right, which I kinda like, because I have an asymmetrical head.

Meanwhile, there’s one Allowed Cloud that can’t be followed: Kentucky’s apparent *de facto* ban on



electric bikes. I sure don't remember voting for it, do you?

A grown woman did donuts at her high school stadium

As you know, I have a friend who has reviewed this zine each month lately, and she's given me tips on how to make it even cooler. She's got a zillion stories too, and this is one of the best!

She...did...donuts...at...her...high...school...stadium. Yes, when she was grown, no less! Not just one school, but 2!

Where we come from, *doing donuts* is the term for driving your car in circles on an athletic field, lawn, or similar surface. The surface is completely (keek!) ruined by this maneuver. A few weeks ago, a discussion with my friend about local radio stations of the '90s led to her reminiscing about her first car—a used Pontiac Sunbird—and how one of the first things she did with it was do donuts. (Also, since our discussion about '90s radio, I've had Billy Joel stuck in my head singing, "In the middle of the night...I go walking in my sleep...")

My friend was legally an adult when she bought this automobile. But still a kid at heart! It's not like on her 18th birthday Soupy Sales showed up at her party and shoved her face into her birthday cake and it magically caused her to stop being cool as she flung gobs of frosting onto the floor. Turning 18 doesn't make you suddenly abandon youth angst.

Long story uproarious: To protest what she calls the "Nazi regime" at 2 high schools she attended, she did donuts at their athletic fields. She says one was a baseball or softball diamond, and the other was a football field. I'm not going to name what schools, because of the stalking behavior that would be sure to follow. I've seen how one of the fields slopes down from the street, so I don't know how she got her car there.

She pulled off this stunt at night so nobody could catch her. But at one of the fields, all the lights mysteriously came on while she was doing donuts. She zipped on out of there with all haste!

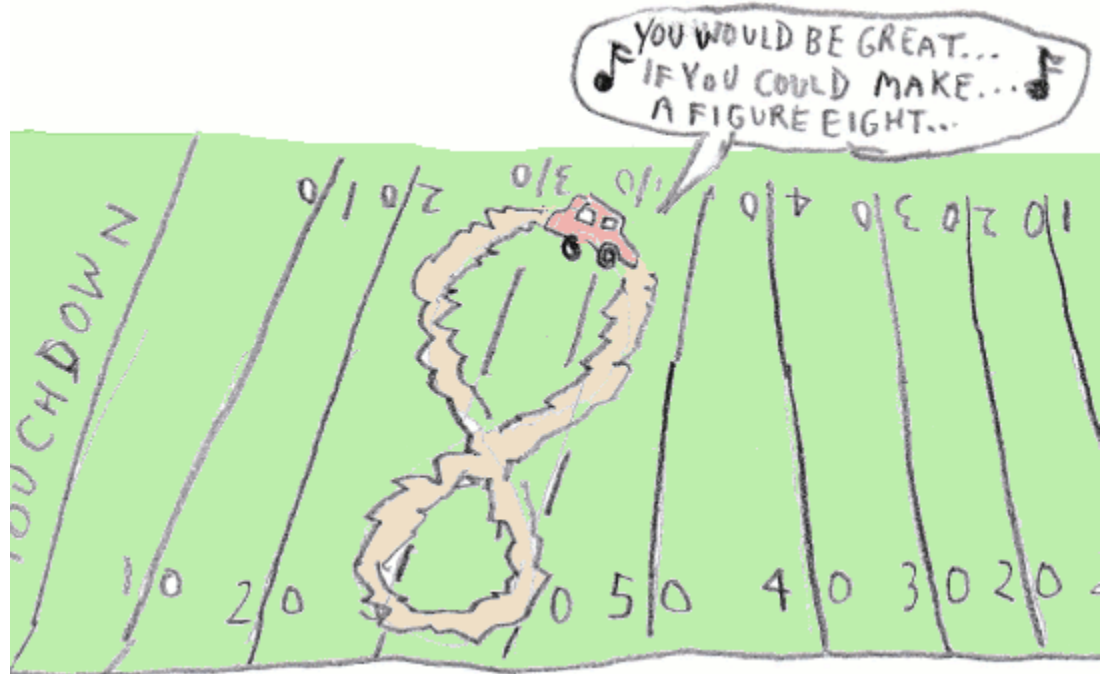
In the interest of safety, no beer was consumed in connection with this event.

The fields were marred by huge circles and figure eights. Soon after, the tracks created by the Sunbird filled with mud and muck.

(That was a Y-96 song!)
The athletic fields were seen covered with straw to try to repair the donut damage. If I could find some old USGS aerial photos, it would be golden!

Call me a weird guy, but I think the schools in question earned this. Either the schools were far more interested in athletics than academics, or they politicized everything and encouraged students to conform to their right-wing agenda. How else can you fight the far-right rectumfaces who commandeer our

pseudoeducational institutions? It's not a problem we can just bubble away.



So I didn't eat the 99% after all

An actress who starred for decades in one of the most popular children's TV series in the world reportedly once gave an interview in which she bragged of having precisely *one* porno credit. But she qualified that admission by saying it was behind-the-scenes—not onscreen.

That story may be just an urban legend, but it's kind of like the story of me and my tattoo. I have exactly *one* tattoo. But I qualify it by saying it's an amateur—not something I got at a professional tattoo shop. Oh well. It still counts.

The tattoo appeared in October and features the words "WE ARE THE 99%." It appeared because that slogan effectively outlived the Occupy movement that birthed it. People still yell out the motto all the time, but what has Occupy done since 2014? Sometimes you'll just be walking down the street, and you'll hear someone yell out, "We are the 99%!" The bet was that if the slogan lasted 5 years, I'd have to get a tattoo of it.

And yes, this tattoo is permanent. Just because it's amateur doesn't mean it's not permanent. It hasn't faded a bit.

Five months later, I'm disappointed that this tattoo hasn't evoked the reaction that I expected. I know it's winter and I'm not at the beach, so nobody gets to see it, but I expected some of those who know about it to be so angry that they'd crap a gaping poohatch clean through their britches. I have reasons to push people's buttons. I was disappointed at the neutral reaction that some people had to my tattoo, because I wanted to see them lose their shit in front of everyone and discredit themselves. One of the main reasons I feel this way is that I know not everybody approves of the people I associate with. They don't come right out and say it, because they try to tone things down when I'm around, but I know what they think. They've annoyed me with their foolish games. (Another Clu 132 flashback!)



In addition, the bubble gum doctor hasn't noticed the tattoo yet. I'm sure a fair but firm lecture about tattoo safety looms when they do.

Also, "oops" is not a word you want to hear from a person administering a tattoo. For a while, I was worried that the tattoo had been botched and that it said, "WE ATE THE 99%." But it healed beautifully.

Now I can go eat the 1%.

No covering up what this cosmetics firm did

L'Oréal is the world's biggest cosmetics company—and a poking thorn in my efforts to collect on the lawsuit I won.

I've told you about this case before, but I've never mentioned the individuals I sued by name. I don't want to pile on, especially now that the woman I sued has been in jail for months awaiting court dates for other cases. In fact, she has pleaded guilty in an identity theft case. The other defendant is a man who works at the L'Oréal plant in Elsmere or Florence. Apparently, the plant straddles the county line—since that was Boone County's excuse for refusing to serve my lawsuit summons after they cashed the check for the service fee I sent them. Actually, Boone County is trying to cover up the Tea Party's involvement in the local heroin pandemic.

This article is squarely about L'Oréal's petty crime they just committed against me. L'Oréal doesn't have anyone to blame except L'Oréal. Not the defendants. Nobody but L'Oréal.

Back in September (ba-de-ya!), I filed to garnish the wages of the man I sued, because he hadn't paid up. This meant I had to mail LOL-for-Real a check for \$10—and I'd get the \$10 back once the garnishment was carried out. L'Oréal ignored the garnishment order completely—and didn't cash the check. Pay close attention to that last clause, because it's important.

A couple months later, I had to refile the garnishment because L'Oréal thumbed their nose the first time—and send L'Oréal another \$10 check. This time, I sent it by certified mail, as the Campbell County Courthouse said they will file contempt charges against L'Oréal if they ignore a certified letter.

In December, L'Oréal cashed the second check. Later, I discovered they were starting to finally take money out of the man's paycheck. I have ways of finding this out, since I've got people. But then, in late January, LOL-for-Real cashed the check I'd sent them way back in September. So they got \$10 they're not entitled to.

L'Oréal did this on purpose. This is an open-and-shut case of theft. The biggest cosmetics firm on the planet *stole* \$10 from me. It's a petty crime that's not so petty. If the original defendants in my suit had deprived me of only \$10, I would have let it go. But L'Oréal is a corporation—so that makes LOL-for-Real's crime far worse. I know you just can't believe a big corporation would try to shirk responsibility for anything, let alone commit a crime, because we all know corporations are perfectly honest 100% of the time.

Maybe I should have expected L'Oréal to commit a crime, because L'Oréal was founded by a Nazi (seriously).

Oh, the home invader still hasn't been caught

If some conservative fartpipe brags about being "tough on crime", please deprive them of the privilege of not having their face laughed in. If the self-anointed crime-fighting superheroes of the Right had even a shred of competence, the circumstances that led up to the cancer scam of 2015 never would have taken place.

Not only that, but the home invasions I experienced in 2009-10 also wouldn't have taken place. Whoever

did it still hasn't been caught.

For a while, I thought the culprits were 2 men who lived nearby who were convicted of a similar burglary and suspected of 75 other local burglaries. Investigating the duo a bit more, it seems the timeline doesn't add up, since they were both in prison in 2009. It doesn't add up, that is, unless they had a conspirator who was free then—which is very possible.

Somebody ought to put on their Sherlock Hemlock hat instead of letting the evidence gather dust. No time was wasted going after the *Baby-Sitters Club* kids who ripped up a Donald Trump sign. Yet whoever broke into my place was never caught. In fact, every time I reported one of those home invasions, my apartment got robbed again. I just hope I don't have to take the P-ACT again if I ever want to go back to college, because the criminals who broke into my place lost my P-ACT scores while rummaging around for money.

This crime was many times worse than the woman in my lawsuit running a cancer scam, because at least there's no proof she committed a home invasion. *Somebody* broke in during that era, because my Speedway reward card went missing and my bank card was thrown behind the stereo by someone trying to escape out the window, but I'm not saying it was her.

Cue the victim blamers who will invariably say I "caused" these crimes by not staying home 100% of the time or by not moving to a town that is completely free of break-ins. (Trust me, I feel safer here than I would in the suburbs.) I'm especially awed by those who imply that I shouldn't expect my reports to police to be taken seriously unless I move to a wealthier area, which is preposterous not just because I can't afford it, but also because it makes it sound like basic police protection is a privilege that should be expected by only a select few.

Southern strategy or Southern surprise?

Ever hear anyone refer to gonorrhea as "the Southern surprise"? How did this expression get started? Republicans. That's how.

Some folks think gonorrhea became known as "the Southern surprise" because many symptoms afflict the lower half of the body. But actually it's because of Republican misbehavior during the party's national convention.

It apparently started with either the 1988 convention in New Orleans or the 1992 gathering in Houston (the one with the unintentionally hilarious rendition of the municipal anthem that sounded like 20 guys doing a bad imitation of a barbershop quartet). Republicans ran on a "family values" platform, but their delegates had a wild time! And when I say wild, I mean wild!

So wild, in fact, that they took some gonorrhea home to their spouses. Surprise!

Also, I'm sure lots of folks down in Dixie didn't appreciate Republican activists coming to their town and spreading whatever they had. The major parties were eager for Southern votes—and that's not the way to earn them.

A World War II poster warned servicemen, "You can't beat the Axis if you get VD." Maybe the GOP



doesn't care because they *are* the Axis.

When the seller's the feller

It's official: EBay knowingly allows scams. I'm never buying anything off EBay again.

I'd never bought anything off EBay—until around New Year's, when the first 2 purchases I made there went awry.

The Road Ruiner wasn't my first attempt to acquire an electric bicycle. A couple weeks earlier, I found an interesting device on EBay that would have been even cheaper—if it actually worked. It was an electric wheel for a regular bike. According to the description, it fits all bikes. But when it arrived, I found it did not fit the Peace Bike.

I'm a problem solver, and I'm good at making things fit. When you have all those weird physical features I have, you have to be. But I couldn't make this wheel fit.

Now, the thing about this is, I ordered the battery from a different seller just after I ordered the wheel. When the wheel arrived and I discovered it was worthless, the battery hadn't shipped yet—so I canceled that order. That shouldn't have been a problem, but later, this seller shipped the battery anyway.

Returning the wheel and the battery back to their respective sellers wouldn't be a big problem if they both took responsibility for their sales. They refunded the cost of the items—but not the shipping I had to pay to send them back. The seller of the wheel that didn't fit appeared to play dumb to avoid refunding the \$31.50 they owed. The seller of the battery—which had been sent out even after I canceled the order—brushed me off altogether and didn't refund the \$18.45 that EBay charged for a mere shipping label.

EBay claims that less than 0.1% of all purchases on their website are fraudulent. Well, that's not my experience. And EBay doesn't care. I posted in their discussion forum about the battery scammer, and I never got any serious replies. Just attitude and lip—and not a damn thing from anyone who purports to represent EBay. Furthermore, the battery doesn't even appear in my list of purchases, so I can't get anything done about it there—and can't even leave negative feedback about the con artist who sold it. I did leave negative feedback about the seller of the wheel though. Then they finally refunded my shipping costs in the hopes I'd change my review.

In brief, EBay isn't willing to stand by purchases made through its company—and doesn't always provide a proper way to report bad sellers.

Whatever is going on, it's a damn big operation. It took me only a few weeks to figure that out, so EBay can't convince me they don't know. I tried searching for more information about EBay allowing fraud like this, but all I can find is websites crying about buyers allegedly scamming sellers—not the other way around. So there's a cover-up, just like how I can hardly find anything about schools wrongly making students pay for textbooks they didn't destroy.

Also, EBay has begun spamming me with ads all because I used their site.

I will warn friends about my negative experiences with EBay, and I won't stop until the 12th of never. (Wow! Two Earth, Wind & Fire references in one issue!)

More “school choice” hypocrisy

“School choice” ranks right up there with “right-to-work” as another alt-right catchphrase that means the exact opposite of what it might appear to mean.

“School choice” is shorthand for privatizing education and letting you attend private schools *only*. It robs us—the taxpayers—of the choice not to subsidize bad private schools. The only choices you get are ones that are preapproved. “School choice” is unconstitutional for at least a couple reasons. For starts, it gives taxpayer money to religious schools—which violates separation of church and state. Plus, it drains money from public schools—which denies children the right to fully use a basic public service.

As others have pointed out, those who scream constantly about “school choice” are always the first to deny kids the right to attend a *public* school of their choice—by not letting them go to a public school outside their own district. This proves they just want tax money for their



own private schools and the far-right ideology that goes with it.

This isn't the only front for "school choice" hypocrisy.

I've been involved with very few organizations that were obsessed with portraying people as lazy if they were not economically secure. I got tired of hearing this canard very quickly, and these days, I have zero patience for it. One venue where people spread this lie was Cincinnati-area computer bulletin board systems. It was bad enough earlier, but frankly, I should have never returned in the mid-'90s, when it was far worse. I'd post some trenchant observation, and I'd get shouted down by Nazi assholes spewing their bogus economic theories and hate speech. I can remember being involved in only a couple other places where the alleged laziness of people who were less well-off was a central theme. I'm talking about 2 Catholic schools in northern Kentucky I attended: St. Joseph's in Cold Spring, and Bishop Brossart High School in Alexandria.

According to many in the school community, everyone who was less successful in life or came from a less privileged background was a slothful loafer who just wanted a handout. My friends at school were hard workers. My enemies there were not—and they were the ones propagating that lie. Unlike me, very few of my foes bothered to get jobs as teenagers, and those who did loafed through these gigs and fucked up simple tasks. Yet their class warfare theme was central to the school environment.

At most other schools, I was actually praised as working very hard on my schoolwork. When I worked at the library, my superiors also praised my work. When I worked for the Department of the Interior, I received a letter saying I submitted one of the best, most detailed projects they'd ever seen. The problem was obviously with St. Joe's and Brossart—not me. That's also why my grades were usually much better at other schools. But you can't win with the "school choice" thought police: One of their "alternative facts" (lies) is that I unfairly benefited from "grade inflation" in public schools (even though "grade inflation" was a hoax).

The school community defined anyone in their mid-teens or older on the basis of their submission in the workplace to some corporate overlord's bullshit. That may be one of the principles of capitalism, but if it is, I don't understand why I should be forced to follow it—since I'm not a capitalist. Unfortunately, a few who weren't that well-off somehow got it into their heads that this principle must have been fine. In the early months of this zine, I had a parody piece that touched on this (and on the general bigotry of the 1%), but I'd been doped up so much without my consent that I couldn't get my ideas across, and I have to live with that.

The real hypocrisy by the community's more privileged members was that policies they supported shut out the less privileged—yet they were holding the less well-off responsible for their own condition.

Then there's the obvious hypocrisy of accusing others of wanting a handout when "school choice" itself is a handout.

These hypocrites aren't guilty of a series of unconnected lies. Their censorious lies are connected, and it's gaslighting—and The Media participates. The press's coverage has been one-sided for a long time. They don't present their ideas as opinions, but as facts—even though they're patently untrue. According to them, all private schools are better than all public schools, and nobody is allowed to argue. By repeating this lie, they're trying to make people question what they've experienced firsthand.

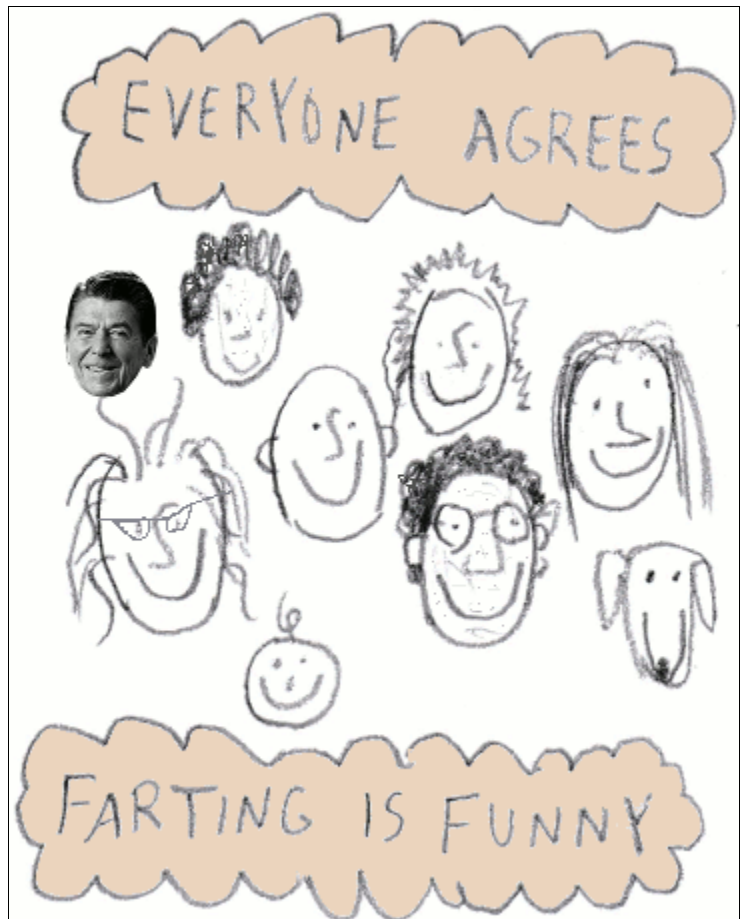
Let me tell you one thing for sure. Public schools are generally better than private schools. Not always, but a vast majority of the time. I know this firsthand. My experiences are facts—and not "alternative facts."

People farted and it stank

The Golden Age of SBD's was long and colorful.

We don't detect as many silent-but-deadly bunker blasts as we did a few years ago, and this is disappointing. Fortunately, however, SBD's have a long and noble history of occurring with regularity. Farts are funny. But few things about them are quite as amusing as the gasps and scowls from the spoilsports who think they aren't so damn funny.

Historians believe the Golden Age of SBD's began one day when I was about 14. I was in the den with a family member and a neighborhood teenager.



There were probably one or two dogs in the room too. We were big into computers—this was the Atari 800 era—so we had one of the first modems in the neighborhood. It was a useful tool—not a toy. This wasn't long after Cincinnati Bell abandoned its greed-driven plan to charge an outrageous fee for using a modem.

For some reason, the neighbor kid was talking on the phone that was hooked to the modem. I was laying on the floor. Then it happened. The SBD! It was a trouser sneeze. A loominsky. An air biscuit. A wafto. And it sure did stink! It didn't make a sound, but the stench was enough to peel the boogers off the wall.

My family member began scowling and gasping. He didn't say a word. He just scowled and gasped. You should have seen the dirty look he gave!

He was supposed to laugh! I don't know who ripped that stinker—or even what species the feller was—but whoever it was surely did so with the intention of being funny. The bunker blast was hilarious enough, but my family member's reaction made it downright uproarious! So I did my trademark stifled laugh with my hand over my mouth (continuing my habit that began when I tried to keep from laughing when someone shit on the toilet seat in grade school). That earned me a *huge* scowl! He looked like he was about to *punch* me!

Many hours later, my family member complained to another family member about what had happened. Talk about living in the past!

And the rest as they say is funny.

Operation KroGum expands to Newport

It's the big day you've been planning for months. Today's the day you're gonna chew gum, and you're gonna blow a bubble!

You've just gotten your dentures rotated for the big occasion, and you've finally tracked down your nice big aerosol can of cooking spray so the burst beegee doesn't stick to your eyeglasses. Maybe you're planning on including some goodies to go along with it, like a kazoo to blow a bubble through. Maybe you'll even blow a bubble inside a bubble, or chew some pennies along with it so you can blow a bubble with money inside—like the old commercial where the guy burst the balloon.

You've been sorely disappointed with the gum selection at the Kroger in Bellevue of late. But no bother! There's always the Kroger in Newport. It's not just a Kroger. It's a Mega Kroger!

Unfortunately, you're going to be in for another disappointing disappointment. So bust goes that bubble.

But seriously. My investigation of the troubles that gummers are encountering with finding this soothing confection at Kroger has expanded to the Newport location. And the Newport store seems to be just as lacking in gum as the Bellevue store—maybe even worse. It appears as if the Newport store's gum choices are just as limited. In fact, they don't even seem to have Freedent, which the Bellevue store has. Not like that matters, because nobody chews Freedent anyway—no matter how many delicate dental appliances they have.

This Kroger is of course part of Newport Pavilion—a gargantuan commercial development that was built when the city abused eminent domain to pulverize an entire working-class neighborhood and turn it over to the developer. Worst all, this development also includes a Chick-fil-A. There aren't many things worse than illegally confiscating homes from hundreds of residents and giving the land to a restaurant chain that hates gays. Big Business has a history of advancing right-wing causes, but Chick-fil-A is a particularly vitriolic offender.

You'd think this Kroger location would have a better gum selection just because of the store's sheer size. That's what normal people would expect if they're gummers.

If you're a Krogerer, and if you adore the satisfying feeling of beegee cushioning your grinding chompers, it's slim pickings.

Keychain caper only scratches the surface

Let's take a trip down Memory Lane, back to the rock 'n' roll year 1977—or thereabouts, since I don't know the exact year.

My parents rarely bought shit at downtown department stores. We visited these stores quite a bit, but never found much to buy there. We were working-class people, and these stores were mostly above our price range. But sometime in the late '70s, they purchased a new kitchen table and a set of white wooden chairs.





Long story hilarious: This kitchen furniture didn't last long before it began falling to rack and ruin. One of the chairs began falling apart when a wooden bar connecting the legs broke off. Guess who got blamed despite having nothing to do with it?

I have to admit though that I was pretty rough with the table right from the giddy-up. My mom had a magenta keychain that was sort of pear-shaped. She had it for years and years. Also for years and years, I used to grab the keychain and jangle the keys on the table.

If you wanted to see my mom get really angry—and I mean really, really, really livid—that was the way to do it. Jangling her keys on the table was one of the most surefire ways to accomplish this. That's because it would scratch the table like it was going out of style.

Another thing just like this was to take the wooden chair in the den and spin it around and around on one leg...



My mom admonished, “That chair is not a gyroscope!” She said this would “ruin” the padding under the carpet. The magic word!
Stuff got ruined.

Eat mor stupid

Some things were right in America in 2012—like the Occupy movement, or Mitt Romney losing the election.

But lots of things were wrong too. The Tea Party. The Occupy Cincinnati sidewalk chalk bust. And Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day—which celebrated the fast food chain donating to far-right hate groups.

The most arrogant people in the universe were those who replaced their Facebook profile photo with a picture of a Chick-fil-A chicken sandwich. I call these bullying crybabies the Chick-fil-Losers. And they were part of what was wrong with America.

The Chick-fil-Losers—who smugly participated in Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day—possessed the most self-righteous mindset of anyone you'll ever meet. They saw the world through a haze of delusion. They talked shit on Facebook and around their friends—but if they talked this way around normal, broadminded people, somebody would have lost their shit sooner or later and let them have it.

You know how Judge Judy always says, “There's something wrong with you”? That's what I need to say to the Chick-fil-Losers.

All you needed to do to gauge their serial assholism was look at their commentary on social media websites—even on economic issues that had nothing to do with Chick-fil-A. They were hardcore right-wing ideologues—not populists by any means. They didn't care about people in need. Their right-wing plen-T-plaints usually consisted of some made-up story about seeing someone using food stamps to buy lobster and driving away in a brand new luxury car. It's strange how the Chick-fil-Losers have all seen this person in all 50 states and D.C., yet I've never seen them. That's because the Far Right made up this story to justify punishing the poor who truly needed benefits. The story often varied a little. The Chick-fil-Losers might say the food stamp client has expensive tattoos or a piercing, but the basic premise was always the same.

Another made-up story was how they always claimed they had a moocher cousin who visited a “quack” doctor who diagnosed them with a “fake” disability so they could wrongly collect SSI or Social Security. Yet

nobody could find this phantom cuzzo anywhere. “You’ll meet them someday.”

I saw an article a year or two ago that said the Republicans try to whip up support by getting people who are slightly above the poverty line to think they have a close family member who bilks the system like this. After Chick-fil-A built its Newport location on land stolen from working-class residents, who’s really gaming the system?

If the Chick-fil-Losers are such champions of industriousness, why do they support a restaurant that benefited from eminent domain abuse? I’ve seen how they worship random rich guys and corporations because “you’ve got to respect someone who’s made it in life.” Never mind that a majority of the rich inherited their fortunes. Maybe the checkbook clergy is feeding them this propaganda, but it’s hard to see how anyone who’s not rich believes it.

It’s just like the right-wing politicians who whine against everyone else getting freebies, when said politicians collect farm subsidies for huge estates that they don’t even use for farming. When exposing this hypocrisy, sometimes it’s easy to forget just how necessary it is for society to have economic security for those who truly need it. You don’t get to offshore jobs and then whine at people who have to go on welfare because of it. In my day, it was taboo to challenge the necessity of economic security, but later it became taboo to even remember it was taboo.

The Chick-fil-Losers couldn’t exhort that they’re for “limited government principles”, because they supported stricter laws on consenting adults’ sexual activity. They supported stricter laws on *most* things. I’ve met people like the Chick-fil-Losers, and they’re shrill control freaks. They’re always babbling about everyone else’s “bad discipline”, when their own vitriol contributes nothing positive to social discourse.

Beware toxic bullies like this, and keep your distance from them.

A person ruined their gum with peanut butter

I wanted more gum stories, and dammit, I got more gum stories!

At least one of my readers has answered the obligatory gum call-up I made last month. This gentleman says he has a funny gum story to regale you with.

He says that in high school, gumming—especially bubbling—was strictly forbidden. But—ever the rebel—he Chewed Gum And Thought It Was Funny. A good bubble bustin’ kind, it was. It must have been a mighty good wad, because he didn’t want to part with it.

So at lunchtime, he tried to eat his lunch without discarding his gum first. He was going to munch on gum and cafeteria food simultaneously. He didn’t seem to mind if he looked ridiculous doing so. I’ve seen people chew bubble gum as if they were also eating something else at the same time, and it’s a hilarious sight. Some girl in grade school chewed gum like this.

The trouble for the guy in this story was that celery with peanut butter was on the menu that day. Long story cool: That was the end of that wad of gum. After jawing on a stick of stringy celery slathered with peanut butter, he noticed his gum had mysteriously vanished. It was never seen again. How sad. It didn’t even bubble out his ass when he farted, which means he hadn’t swallowed it.

The hero of our story didn’t know at the time that peanut butter dissolves bubble gum. The oils in peanut butter break up beegee. According to the Internet, people use peanut butter to remove the remnants of burst bubbles from skin, hair, eyeglasses, and even a video game console. (Someone must have been mighty talented to blow a bubble big enough to burst on their video game console!)

The real question is: Where does bubble gum go once peanut butter dissolves it? It seems to disappear without a trace.

The man who sent me this story also expressed disdain at the decline in quality of small gumballs that took place in that era. He says they shrank so much during a chew that they dwindled into nothing—and it was impossible to bubble with them, even though they were specifically labeled as *bubble* gum. I guess he was a bubble poppin’ peep.

Gum. It will be discussed again in this ish. Just you watch!



A person made a paper airplane out of a dentistry assignment

I was pleasantly surprised to receive gobs of positive feedback regarding last month's article about the teenager who vowed to tear out her own braces to protest being forced to get them. My friend who reads and critiques this fanzine of fun told me it reminded her of another funny story. Bear with me, because bubble gum will be mentioned—and punk rocker teeth too! (But no *Sesame Street*, toilets, flatulence, or Roads Scholaring.)

In an e-mail exchange, she recalled that in grade school—in the early 1980s or so—each student in her class received a photocopied worksheet about dental hygiene. She says the page had a photo of a girl who sported shiny braces. The photo was creepy because it used that old technique that showed only the person's head—no neck and no background. It was cut perfectly around the edge of the girl's head. It was accompanied by a caption about how she could not chew gum.

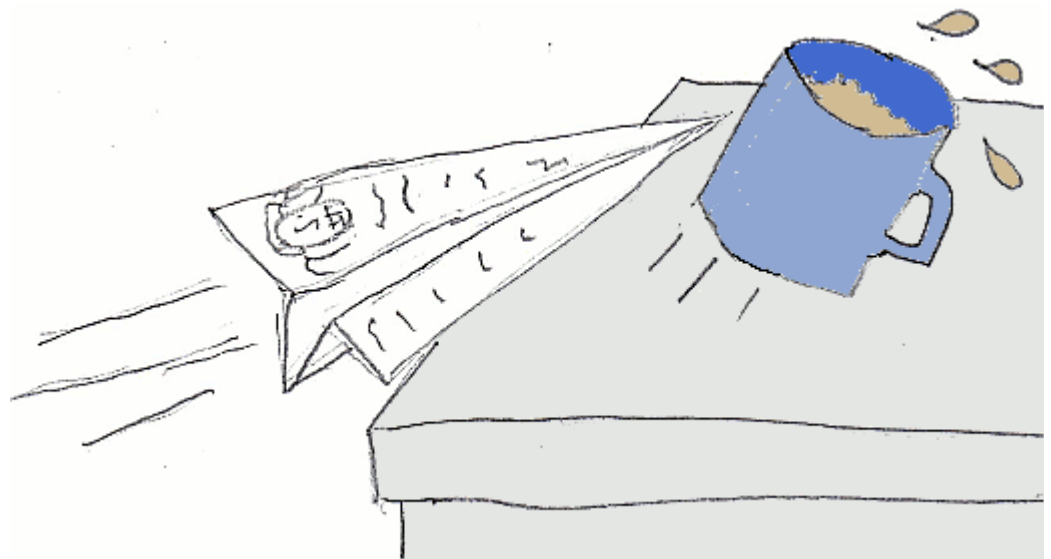
I bet it was a rough day for the braces industry when kids received that worksheet. If people thought braces would keep them from gumming, they were probably determined never to get them. I'm unsure why braces would stop anyone from gumming. I never thought it strange when I saw schoolmates gumming—even bubbling—with their orthodontic work. (A college schoolmate once gummed, got the pink beegee caught on her metal wires, and noted it was "Halloween candy gum." Why was a 19-year-old still going trick-or-treating?) I truly hope nobody ever gave up beegee just because they had orthodontic treatment, for this savory goo was invented for people to enjoy. In my hometown of Highland Heights, Kentucky, the 4 food groups are Bubble Yum, Dubble Bubble, Bubblicious, and Bazooka—so I know the importance of maximizing your beegee choices. If I was told I couldn't gum like everyone else did, I'd be so mad I'd eat the vinyl covering of the school bus seats—or at least pee all over the school's hall pass.

I bet the next day's assignment was about the perils of kicking basketballs or cutting the tags off furniture.

Now let's get to the *really* funny part. My friend promptly made a paper airplane out of this assignment. The airplane was nice and pointy. The photo of the braces wearer loomed large on one of the plane's wings. My friend remembers releasing this paper airplane and watching it sail across the teacher's desk—evoking an angry tirade from the instructor.

I wasn't there, but the image of a school assignment being fashioned into a paper airplane that was flown in class struck me funny—even though it's something I did countless times. It's even funnier because it had a person's picture on it. It doesn't matter who the person is or whether they're anyone famous.

After searching for a little while, I think I actually found this ridiculous assignment online. I'm not 100% sure it's the same one, but it sure as shit matches the description. Here's what I mean when I say the photo was creepy. This is a picture of an unidentified man that uses the technique described above...



See what I mean? He looks spooky because he has no neck, and there's no background or color. His cabeza is just floating in midair. Most of the congressional photos from the 104th Reich are similar to this: They have a neck, but the photos are black-and-white, and the background is solid gray. Go look for a photo of some

loser right-wing congressmoron who served one term in 1995-97. You'll see what I mean. It's one of these creepy old things like the Sohio tones on the radio that would jump out of nowhere on very cold days.

In the assignment I found, the caption under the grinning braces wearer reads in part, "She can't chew gum or bite into ice." Or popcorn—of all things. Doesn't exactly make you want to set up an orthodontist appointment, does it? At least after reading this hilarious worksheet—and doubling over in laughter repeatedly—I finally know what a retainer is. I had thought it was a rubber band that braces wearers have, but it's actually a device that looks like dentures without the teeth. At Bishop Brossart High School, this was the object students would often pry out of their mouths when they were getting ready to get in a fight.

Of all the reasons *not* to buy braces, getting skeeped at for chewing bubble gum would be the *least* of them—because *everyone who had them ignored this advice*. My impressive lack of orthodontic treatment is a key factor in my ongoing popularity. It's also one of many ways I've fought against capitalism. In 7th grade, I always wore torn jeans and ratty shirts to school, and my jagged teeth go well with that persona. Besides, we weren't made of money.

I know what's socially acceptable in the YouTube era—but I just don't care. I take pride in having punk rocker teeth—defined as crooked teeth that look cool. Irregular dentition hasn't caused me any serious problems, so the good far outweighs the bad. It's a shame so much of the younger generation will lose the can-opening ability that a half-inch overbite gives them. Your jaws and chompers are like a mill that grinds stone into gravel. Even if the gears are misaligned, the pebbles still get through. The magic of punk rocker teeth is like that. Just chew your food a little off-center, and you can usually dig into your vittles quite efficiently. We cool people know how to make things fit.

I've also been well aware that overbites are prone to being hit by flying objects ever since 6th grade when kids at school started throwing things a lot. But their poor discipline was not my problem. I was usually careful at school not to walk around with my mouth open.

Yes, kids, the rumors are true: Punk rocker teeth are a real thing. We teeth punkers do exist, and we're a gallant bunch. We keep it real!

As that paper airplane soared, there's little doubt that it inspired the entire class to someday spend their braces money on a Living In A Box record instead.

Someone wrote Janet Jackson lyrics on a hotel wall

That's the end? No, Janet. It's just the beginning!

My friend who critiques this zine has yet another funny story, so hang on to your underpants! Once, years ago, she embarked on a little roadtrip to Columbus with a friend of hers. Probably saw COSI and the world's first Wendy's, and maybe even partied.

I had a couple trips to Columbus in the '90s that were just as uproarious as you might expect. On one of these outings, a motel room got trashed by some college friends, and we almost knocked over a vending machine at COSI. On another, a used Band-Aid landed in the hotel swimming pool.

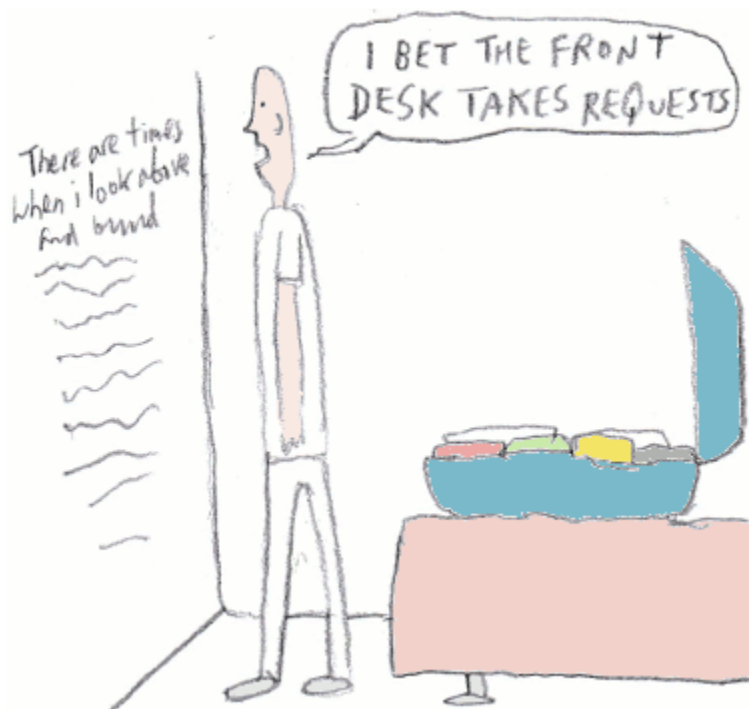
But my friend's trip hit cooldirt right when she and her pal got to their inn. After the duo checked into their room, my friend used the bathroom. When she emerged, she found the other woman using permanent marker to write all the lyrics to the the Janet Jackson song "Together Again" on the wall of the hotel room next to the mirror.

"Together again ooh...Say it loud and proud..."
That was all over the wall!

It reminds me of the time in high school when someone wrote all the words to the Geto Boys' rap hit "Mind Playing Tricks On Me" on a desk.

That motel room took a beating that weekend. The pair also spilled shampoo all over a table and left it that way, and they got chip dip all over the TV. My friend's roommate on this trip also somehow took a painting off the wall and smuggled it home. My friend didn't know until she saw it hanging on the wall in her comrade's apartment.

It's unknown whether anyone on this trip bubbled.



Dog has denture adventure!

Here's another blast from the past. Not a bunker blast. Just a blast.

I have an aunt who once told me—maybe 15 years ago—a funny story. This is the second hilarious story involving dental accessories in this ish, and it's even more guffawy than the first!

My aunt told me she had a neighbor who had a dog. In addition to a dog, the man also had dentures—and he rocked them. A full set, no less! He could have kept it a secret—but he wore his false teeth proudly! He's the type of guy who'd log on to the Internet and post a message in alt.fuck.sun-myung-moon consisting of 3 words: "I wear dentures." It's not known whether he enjoyed removing them in public places—or if he wanted people to pay him to do it.

But—as we used to sing in church—great things happen when dogs mix with dentures. The man's dog was a funny little woocap. One day, the man took his dentures out of his mouth and left them unattended. Just left them laying around in plain sight for the whole wide world to ogle (beep). The false teeth greeted every visitor to his home. And guess what happened? The dog got a hold of the dentures. It was over. The dentures were no more. My aunt said the dog "chewed the gum" of the dentures. By that, I don't mean beegee. I mean the gums that are a part of dentures, which held the appliance together. Destruction of the gums loosened the teeth—and the dentures would no longer fit in the man's mouth because they were chewed up so badly.

The dentures were a total loss. Nine thousand costly dollars down the portable poopot.

As the dog was chewing up the set of false gnashers, the animal held on to them for dear life! How very businesslike.

The Internet teems with stories from people whose dentures were chewed up by their dog. They say it's because dentures are "comforting" to dogs, and dentures make them happy. One person says their dog ate their dentures completely. Someone also posted a message asking whether you're responsible to pay for it if your dog chews up a guest's expensive dentures.

Brings a whole new meaning to "let sleeping dogs lie"...



There's also lots of stories about people accidentally dropping their dentures in the toilet. Some folks actually tried to retrieve their dentures so they could keep wearing them despite being covered with piss and shit. One person admitted to flushing them down the toilet on purpose and committing insurance fraud by saying it was an accident. On another website, a plumber reported finding dentures buried deep in the pipes under a toilet—along with a Dora the Explorer toy. (In the same thread, a plumber reported finding a bra in the pipes.)

Notice also that people talk about “*the* toilet”, not just “*a* toilet”—as if there’s only one toilet in the whole universe.

The toilet. There can be only one!

A TMJer stopped gumming and doesn’t think it’s funny

Stop the presses! A person told me they actually obeyed a medical order to stop chewing bubble gum—the only recorded instance of this in history!

A person told me they beeged nonstop 24/7 their entire life—until a specialist told them they had TMJ disorder and instructed them to stop. Else, the specialist will say “stop” again. After being ordered to stop chewing bubble gum, the person did something nobody else has done before: They stopped chewing bubble gum.

The specialist’s advice contradicts what I was told. My doctor told me to chew bubble gum to treat TMJ disorder (caused by an assault in middle school). That’s why I call them the bubble gum doctor. The doctor just called it gum, not bubble gum, but beegee is what they meant. I never changed what I ate because of TMJ disorder. (What a shock!)

Some people think we’re cursed and our lives are (keek!) ruined because we have this condition. Not really. I 100% rocked the clicking sounds that come with it. Besides, I don’t think I even know anyone who isn’t a TMJer. If every TMJer stopped chewing bubble gum, the beegee industry would be bankrupt in a week.

Indeedity-doodledy, I know TMJers who were ordered to stop gumming—but then began masticating beegee more than before. Wouldn’t you?

To gum or not to gum? This controversy fills TMJ disorder websites far and wide! For every website that discourages it, there’s always a TMJer out there who insists on gumming “because I remember such relief from it.” I remember such relief from Republicans losing elections. Let’s bring that back!



Bad attitudes grow up

First, a boy warned he would snap his glasses in two because he didn’t want them.

Then a girl threatened to pry out her braces because she didn’t need them.

But what happens when boys and girls who get assailed by authority for a “bad attitude” become men and women? Unfortunately, there aren’t nearly as many stories like this on the Internet as one might expect—because everyone started getting cowed into compliance so much in the ‘90s—but it looks like those who flaunted a “bad attitude” when they were kids don’t regret it even as adults. Good for them!

As our ever-popular study of clinical accessories with varying degrees of usefulness continues, I found a story from an adult who destroyed such a device as a youth—and never felt sorry about it. I don’t know whether the person is male or female, and in this story, it was some dental appliance I’d never heard of. Apparently, they got this device when they were 12. They had it for less than an hour before they ripped it right out—which (keek!) ruined it.

They don’t regret doing this even though now they’re about 30.

I’m sure the people in these stories don’t hate eye doctors and dentists as much as I despise the psychiatric industry. Their forte is ruining clinical devices. Mine is rejecting psychiatry. My stories of Bart Simpson-like underachievement and getting in trouble with authority were a chart-topping smash hit in the very early years of this fanzine of freedom, but I’m disgusted at the mindset that took over in the mid-‘90s and the hostile, Nazi-like response I began receiving then. It took years for society to catch up with me after that. I’m just glad there’s still some younger people with guts out there.

(A side note I can’t fit anywhere else: Some of my Occupy Cincinnati friends lamented that our group had too many “libertarian” types. Actually, these “libertarians” were younger adults who were raised in suburban Cincinnati in the ‘90s, which was an even more repressive setting than when I was raised earlier. Their “libertarianism” and interest in unsupportable conspiracy theories was the only way they knew of to fight authoritarian conservatism.)

Radio ain't gonna play "Sun City" (a blast from the past)

American radio still plays Ace Of Base constantly—replete with the likely Nazi references—but they barely even touched "Sun City"?

Radio blacklisted the Dixie Chicks because they spoke out against the Bush thugocracy. Now a station in Texarkana, Texas, has shunned Madonna because she dared to criticize Donald Trump (R-CNBC). Radio's reaction to "Sun City" wasn't much different.

"Sun City" was a 1985 single by an all-star gathering of famous musicians and singers known as Artists United Against Apartheid. The song protested South Africa's apartheid regime of the time, and sales of the record raised money to fight this policy. The record was a big hit in many countries, but it barely squeaked into the top 40 in the United States.

I heard a brief piece on the radio recently about the "controversy" surrounding the song, which led to most American stations refusing to play it. Among pop stations in Cincinnati, a family member says they remember WCLU playing it maybe once or twice, but Cincinnati was a more conservative market back then, so the song probably wasn't a big seller here. One small AM daytimer playing the song is offset many times over by the fact that far more influential stations in other cities never played it.

I don't understand. What's so "controversial" about *opposing* racism? Shouldn't we have a consensus against government-enforced apartheid? I know there's a few bigots out there, whose values are inconsistent with humanity, but why should we mollycoddle their racism?

As American radio banned "Sun City", Ronald Reagan was one of few world leaders who actually supported apartheid South Africa. Ol' Ronnie even vetoed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986—only to have his veto overridden by Congress. One of Reagan's excuses was that South Africa had "eliminated" apartheid—though everyone knew it hadn't done so back then.

Now we know who invented "alternative facts": Ronald Reagan.

Still no bismus like strabismus

Think. Do. Be.

Take it from me. There's no bismus like strabismus. There really isn't. Of all the bismi out there, strabismus—the eye disorder I have—is the coolest of all. So cool in fact that a commenter on a website even dubbed the 1980s "the golden age of strabismus" because MTV filled the airwaves with Bonnie Tyler and Men At Work's Colin Hay. You want updates about my strabismus, and I'm here to bean you right over your pointy noggin with them!

Lately, my crossed eye has worsened. It's not bad enough for me to actually do anything about it though—because I'm like that about shit. My strabismus is separate from other degeneration of my eyesight, which was induced by Cylert. I've enjoyed strabismus since before the era of forced druggings—but it sat dormant for over 30 years.

How can you tell my strabismus has gotten worse? Look at some of my drawings lately. I do most of my illustrations now by drawing them lightly with a pencil and then tracing over them with heavier lines. Notice that the heavier lines are slightly off from the fainter lines. I better be careful when I take a leak!

You'll notice I'm taking it well—but it's a very, very minor battle. On a serious note, sometimes you'll see a news story about an average person in your town who faces some major crisis—maybe an illness, accident, or senseless tragedy. As their struggle continues, you'll notice that if the person has more realistic ideas about life, they generally hold up much better. If the person has ideas that are associated more with the political left than the right—even if the person is apolitical—they usually do much better at dealing with their situation. I'm



not saying that to generate controversy. That's a factual, educated observation.

Besides, what exactly do you expect me to do about having strabismus?

Hey! I know what I'll do. I'll go back to Sesame Street!

Marathon's got it...gum, that is!

Operation KroGum always helps this zine improve its gum-to-noise ratio. But we could just as easily have Operation MarathonGum.

I went Roads Scholaring recently and stopped by a Marathon station in Evanston to find something interesting to eat for lunch. And you know what they sell there? Gum. Of the bubble bustin' variety, no less.

I dared not buy any of Marathon's bubble gum—let alone bubble with it. But there it was, smiling its ass off. Its discovery has unearthed some important developments in the bubble gum world.

Did you know Juicy Fruit now has a variant that's specifically labeled as *bubble* gum? Juicy Fruit never used to be a big bubble kablammoin' brand, but some woman actually has a blog where she praises this variety because it's "screaming to be blown into giant bubbles with a good pop afterwards." She even posted a photo of herself bubbling a big, yellow bubble.



And Bubblicious still exists. According to gum connoisseurs on the Internet, the product itself hasn't changed in the memory span of anyone alive today. People have always complained that bubbles blown with Bubblicious often wilt instead of popping all over their face—which is unfortunate because the #1 reason people chew gum is to blow bubbles that burst on their face. Folks say all of the above is still true, but when I went to Marathon, I noticed the Bubblicious labeling had changed. Bubblicious reportedly still bubbles as well as ever, but it's not generally labeled as *bubble* gum anymore—and when it is, the Bubblicious people have no respect for its bubbleability. The only flavor still labeled as bubble gum is the standard pink kind, and they call it "bubblegum"—as if it's all one word. They act as if bubble gum is just a *flavor*—not a measure of bubbleability. They don't seem to know what a *bubble*

is. They probably hurt their own business by not labeling most flavors as bubble gum when they are still eminently bubbleable.

Gum. The stuff is real. I didn't just make it up.

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