

The Last Word™

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My top secret mission to D.C.

One in 1,000. The odds were as long as the Republican Party is wasteful.

Before this fact-finding mission was finalized, I placed myself at a 1 in 1,000 chance of ever flying on a commercial airliner. It wasn't zero. It was higher than the chance of Donald Trump winning the "election" was. But it was *almost* inconceivable.

That was before I was invited on a top secret mish to Washington, D.C., to attend a human rights conference about abusive teen residential programs. The trip lasted from March 15 to 22. It's not top secret now, but it was top secret until it was almost over.

Where's my bifocals? I felt like a private eye!

For the past 5 years, I've been a regional coordinator for HEAL—a network of activists that focuses much effort on fighting against institutional abuse of youth. I thought everybody knew this, but not everyone listens, and now they think I reconnected HEAL into existence going back to its very founding. Locally, the situation had been relatively quiet since I participated in the protests that got Pathway Family Center shut down, so most HEAL work lately has been in other regions.

A side benefit of this trip is that it caused me to miss hearing nonstop about NKU being in March Madness. I actually shut out that yawner before I left. (NKU can pump millions of dollars into its athletic program, but can't afford to keep WNKU on the air? They *could* afford it, but the Tea Party patronage appointees who run the university were determined to give the radio station to a far-right "ministry.") And don't worry: HEAL raised the money for the airfares and lodging for this trip. I thought the chance of *that* happening was about 1 in 1,000, and my jaw hit the toilet when we raised the money. I didn't hoard "crazy money" like the alt-right is going to invariably accuse me of doing—let alone use it for pleasure. This was more or less a business trip. The alt-right doesn't like it? Too fucking bad. I don't live to cater to bigots. Think how silly it is that I'd change my activities when those who want me to change them have such corrupted values.

The bad news is that I had to fly Delta, since they have a near-monopoly at the Cincinnati airport. There were no direct flights available, even though we booked a month in advance. Delta is so knee-slappingly inefficient that they routed me through Atlanta on the way there and New York on the way home. Both layovers were a huge backtrack.

If you were waiting on the edge of your seat for a trip full of hilarious bunker blasts, you may be disappointed. I very briefly detected the odor of a silent-but-deadly on the flight from Cincinnati to Atlanta, and another at the Atlanta airport, but nothing special. But there were 3 celebrity look-alikes on the very first day. A Larry David look-alike was seen at the TSA gauntlet in Cincinnati. A man who resembled James Watt—Reagan's laughable Interior Secretary—was on my flight from there. At the Atlanta airport, I saw a Judge Mills Lane look-alike—which was uproarious, because he looked *just like* him!

On a more serious note, what did we do on this trip? For a while, I was expecting this business outing to be primarily an exercise in Jim Rockford cosplay, but the trip was actually highlighted by a series of visits with congressional staffers to advance HEAL's commonsense legislation to protect people—especially youth—from institutional abuse. We met with staffers from both the House and the Senate, from both major parties, and from multiple states. This was an impressive experience. I fully expected we'd get our faces laughed in, because I've tolerated decades of media gaslighting about how "wrong" I am. But staffers were friendly and accommodating. Among the staffers we met were legal counsel for longtime senators. The most successful meeting may have been



with the staff of Sen. Patty Murray (D-Washington). I don't think of Murray as a giant of progressivism, but her staff seemed the most open to our legislation.

What's in our legislation? Among other things, we want:

- **Ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.**
- **A constitutional amendment affirming that organizations can't hide behind religion to violate human rights.**
- **Denial of federal funds to states that accept out-of-state placements in facilities that won't follow federal standards.**
- **Federal authority over wilderness programs using federal lands.**
- **Child and adult protective services to be placed under the auspices of law enforcement to investigate crimes against those in institutional settings.**
- **Sentencing reforms to keep nonviolent youth offenders out of confinement programs.**
- **Emancipation of teens abandoned to such facilities.**

Congress should either enact our agenda or admit America has become a gag country.

While searching for Mitch McConnell's office at the Russell Senate Office Building, I used an elevator reserved exclusively for senators. I'm such a rulebreaker! Also in this building, I noticed someone had placed toilet paper all over a toilet seat in a men's restroom and peed all over it. Nice to know we elect such mature people as senators! Also, one of the House staffers we talked to strongly resembled Lisa Whelchel, the right-wing has-been who played Blair on *The Facts Of Life* and who later wrote a book advocating child abuse.

To save HEAL money, we lodged at one of the cheapest hotels in the D.C. area. Our room featured a small kitchen, but the floor of the kitchen and bathroom were covered with small morsels of what appeared to be human excrement. We concluded it was probably tar. The inn also provided dishes, but some were too dirty to use. A drinking cup seemed to have a dead ant encased in the plastic. One morning, a bird flew into our room because the screen had a huge hole in it—but we considered it a positive omen. Plus, the washing machines in the laundry room didn't work right and kept stealing our quarters.

As another way to conserve HEAL's hard-earned dough, we made a grocery delivery order from Safeway instead of visiting restaurants. But Unsafeway brang spoiled grapes: We noticed the grapes had expired back in February.

On the weekend, when congressional offices were closed, our group went down to the National Mall. I went into a restroom there and noticed that a urinal had a sign that said, "URINE ONLY."

But we weren't done with celebrity look-alikes yet! No sirree! On the way home, during my layover in New York, I saw a man who resembled Emilio Delgado—actor who plays Luis, the hero of TV's *Sesame Street*—getting off another flight. He looked like Luis did back in the '70s!

Whatever the weather, this will prove to be a successful business trip. It's hard to see how legislators can ignore us. A toast to success! Blublublublublublublublublublubl!

I believe I can fly

I *believe* I can fly. I just don't *want* to—especially after the serial asshattery of Delta Airlines on my Washington, D.C., trip.

On the way from Cincinnati to D.C., I had a layover in Atlanta. On the way home, the obligatory layover was at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York. I entered and departed D.C. at Washington Dulles Irrational Airport. My first commercial flying experience was only slightly miserable until about 45 minutes into the first flight—from Cincinnati to Atlanta. Then, as the cramped, rickety airliner soared over Tennessee, the man sitting next to me ordered a Limburger sandwich.

Trust me, the gaseous aroma of a bunker blast would have been preferable. That sandwich smelled *horrible*. I had to hold my shirt over my face for the remaining 45 minutes of the flight. The feeling of nausea was thick. (The man also watched porn on his laptop, but I have no objection to that.)



Why does Delta serve sandwiches that stink up the whole plane?

The flight from Atlanta to D.C. was inexplicably delayed by 90 minutes. Someone asked the clerk why, and she didn't know. I used FlightAware to track the previous day's flight—which was right after a Nor'easter—and it wasn't delayed, so Delta couldn't very well blame weather. Plus, the clerk announced this flight was "oversold"—which means Delta deliberately sold more tickets than the plane could handle—and asked passengers to volunteer to give up their seats. I also overheard 2 other flights being announced as "oversold."

This flight was even more insufferable than the first. A delay of another half-hour was incurred when—after the plane taxied before takeoff—it idled on the taxiway for no apparent reason. The nausea on this flight was almost unbearable, because when the plane was approaching D.C., it appeared to circle the airport over and over. That's because air traffic controllers expect flights to be *on time* and aren't going to let needlessly delayed planes land if it would delay other flights. Later, I checked FlightAware, and it turned out this loop was actually just northwest of Richmond, Virginia, which makes it even more inexplicable. It looks like the flight was trying to return to Atlanta even though we were only 60 miles from D.C.!

Did I tell you none of the flights on this trip had airsickness bags?

After arriving 2 hours late, I didn't have to worry about Delta again for a week. And did I ever! The flight from D.C. to New York—after it taxied—was delayed by 35 minutes as it idled. I didn't suffer any airsickness until we were about to land, when suddenly the nausea got so bad I was ready to pass out. I was so afraid I'd have even worse motion sickness during the final flight that I almost bought a bus ticket to finish the trip home.

The flight from New York to Cincinnati was delayed without explanation—meaning 3 of the 4 flights on this trip suffered significant delays, a failure rate of 75%. But this was the only flight where I was free of nausea. Maybe it was because the plane was less cramped, and the windows weren't in such a moronic position that I had to scrunch into a ball to look outside. (Luckily, I had window seats on all 4 flights.)

Flap flap flap! I flew!

Strabismus video uses magic word

Ruined!

Hey ruined!

Where are you, ruined?! Pooing?!

Everyone wants me to keep talking about how I have strabismus—the *cool* eye disorder. Luckily, I can always mine YouTube for useful strabismus media. I found a video on YouTube posted by a journalism student about strabismus. It's an interesting autobiographical clip she submitted as an assignment for a journalism class. It consists of gobs of still photos in which she rocks her strabismus...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y11BcX9tp9A>

As she narrates the video, keep your ears peeled for the magic word. It jumps out of nowhere and surprises you!

That's right, everyone: *ruined!* As she talks about her prom photos and senior picture, she says, "I wish they weren't ruined" by strabismus. Hear that, everyone? Ruined!

I don't think they're ruined. One or two of my high school photos were ruined by the photo studio touching it up and mutilating it without my permission or prior knowledge. The ruinment of my photos had nothing to do with strabismus. But they were ruined nonetheless.

Oh, and I'm still not doing anything about my strabismus. Why waste perfectly good *Sesame Street* sores?

Think. Do. Be.

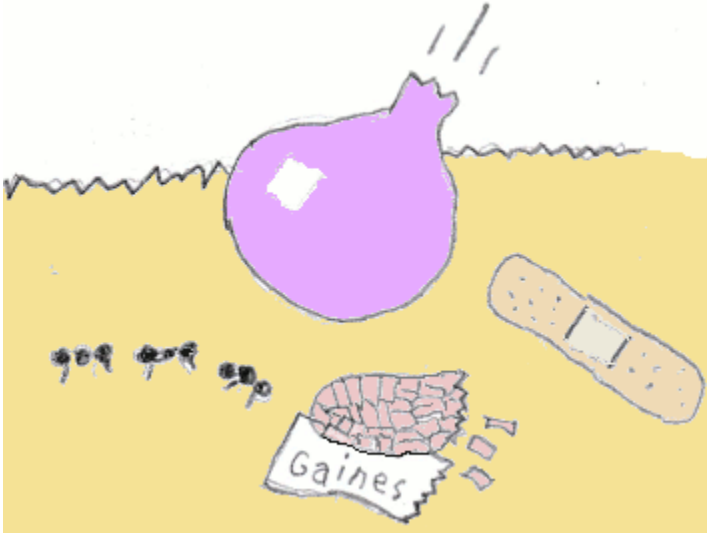


A person chewed gum off the carpet and thought it was funny

In recent months, people have *constantly* begged for me to write about 2 things: broken eyeglasses and bubble gum—and I oblige. I'm still getting responses to the demand for gum stories I made in the February ish! Even if you don't care about gum, you *know* you're gonna read my gum articles, because I write them so

uproariously!

A woman (not the same woman who regularly reviews this zine) e-mailed me about bubble gum. She once saw someone chewing this piquant, putty-like confection. Why, they even bubbled! (That means they blew bubbles.)



She told me she had 2 roommates in college, and one day, these 2 young women barged into the apartment together and began wrestling and horseplaying. One of them was chomping a gigantic wad of grape beegee. Nobody commented about the purple gum. When some people chew gum, they make a big deal out of it and talk about it constantly. Don't you? But some people don't actually discuss it. They just chew and blow.

Anyway, they were wrestling and laughing in the den, when the gum-chewing student received a big, friendly slap on the back from the other woman. She was in the middle of bubbling a small bubble, but the slap caused her to guffaw uncontrollably, and the bubble gum fell out of her mouth and landed on the filthy carpet.

The bubble remained inflated as the gum rested on the rug. She should have thrown it away—"discard!"—but instead she rushed into the kitchen, tried to clean the inflated wad by running it under the sink, and crammed it back into her mouth—laughing all the while!

She didn't *say* anything about the fact that she was gumming or bubbling. Nobody else approached the topic either.

I guess people were just too polite.

A grown man took a concrete slab from his high school

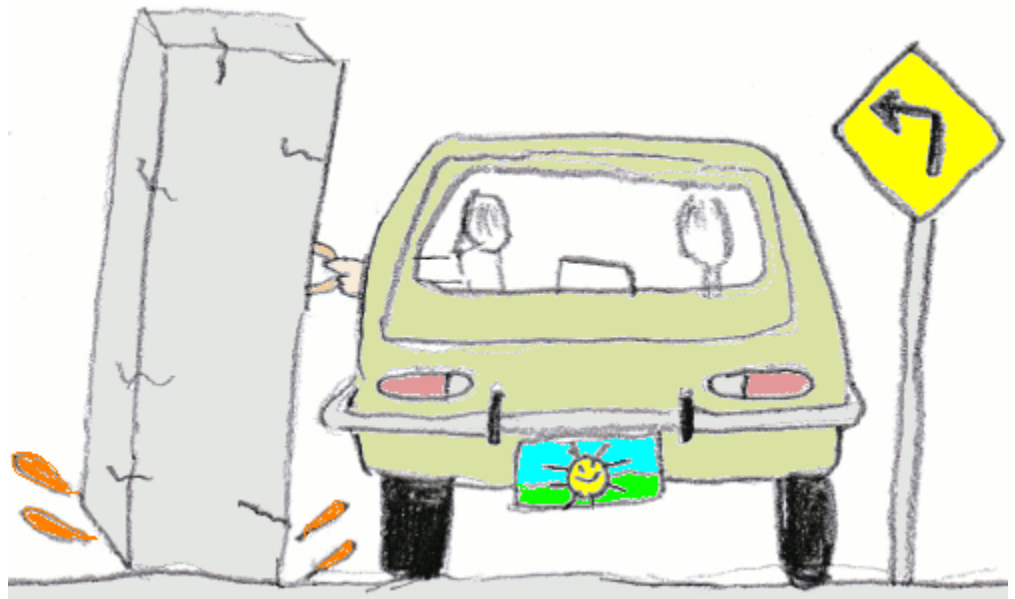
I asked for gum stories and got a story that has nothing whatsoever to do with gum. But it does have a lot to do with being ridiculous.

A man e-mailed me about something funny he did. Although he is a graduate of Covington Catholic High School, he was an adult when he did this.

A few years back, Covington Catholic had a gargantuan construction project. I hope it wasn't like Brossart, which incessantly adds buildings that sit empty and strain the local sewer system. Covington has had its own sewage backups (especially along West 19th) because of unchecked development in the suburbs on the hills above, but I sure hope school construction didn't contribute to the unending property damage and illness.

Anyway, one night, he and several friends got tired of a big concrete slab out in front of the construction site creating an eyesore and a hazard. So they tried shoving the slab into his car somehow so they could cart it away.

But it didn't quite fit. So they left it hanging out one of the back doors of the car while one of the group sat in the back seat and held onto it by a hook that was sticking out of it. They sped down the big curve on Dixie Highway at 35 MPH as the concrete slab rubbed on the pavement—creating an incredible shower of sparks. But the man hanging onto the slab could hold up no longer. He had to let it go.



The slab flew out of the car and fell to earth on the edge of the roadway.

This reminds me of the time some kids at my high school attached forklift prongs to the front of a car, lifted the blue public mailbox off the ground in front of the Highland Heights Post Office, drove around with the mailbox on the front of the car, and spilled mail all over the highway.

Glasses are snapped in two...And words are made to bend...

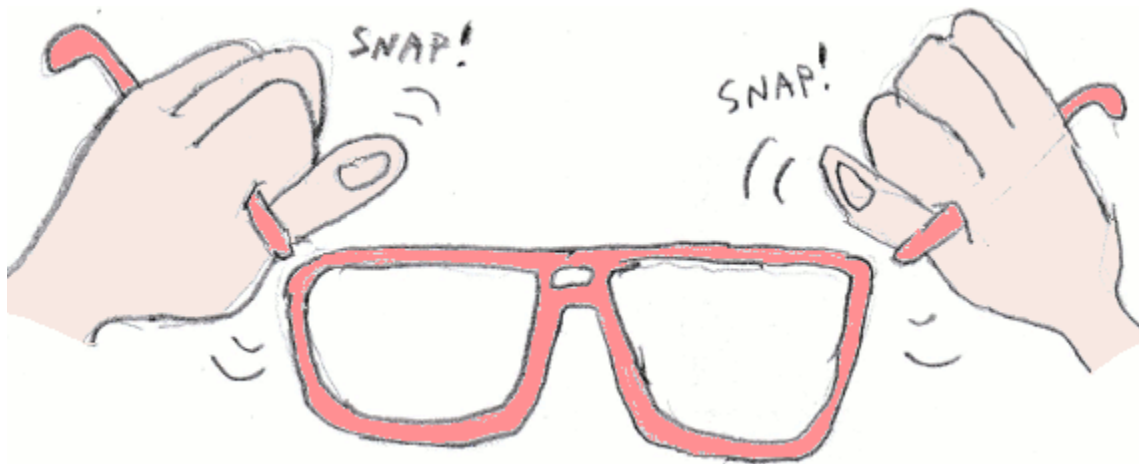
Eyeglasses got broken in America's lost decade! Utterly ru they got!

Authority figures call it a "bad attitude", but I call it fighting against capitalism. I've found another story like this on the Internet. This one appears to be from 9 years ago and it's still lingering around.

I can't imagine a child intentionally breaking their own glasses if the gafas improve their vision. All this does is waste valuable glasses-making materials. But if those specs hurt their eyes and don't improve their sight, what do you expect them to do? Blow a huge bubble with bubble gum and pop it all over their eye doctor's face?

This story was posted on an ADHD parenting blog—so I had to be wary of a bunch of Bush-era soccer parent bullshit stenographing the forced drugging lobby's propaganda. I know ADHD is a scam by the psychiatric racket. I know this because they pulled that fraud with me for years. The glasses story though wasn't the militant defense of psychiatry that I expected. It was just a little harangue from a mother lamenting her daughter's deliberate destruction of her own spectacles.

The daughter owned 2 pairs at once because one was always in the shop getting fixed because she kept repeatedly breaking them on purpose. In fact, both were usually in the shop. She liked to bite the nose pieces off her glasses and poke the lenses out. She would also grab each arm of the glasses in each of her hands and use all her might to tear them off...



That's a new one!

These death-defying acts took place at school, and happened at least weekly.

Ask the nearest glasses wearer how many times they've done the same. Go ahead. Ask.

A person chewed gum and made us all aware of it

This is one of my all-time favorite hilarious gum stories. This may fit better into my old "Brossart Wit & Wisdom" feature, but you want to read about funny stuff like bubble gum—not depressing topics like Bishop Brossart High School.

Anybip, this story took place at the infamous Catholic high school in Alexandria, Kentucky, that shall not be named again in the rest of this article. This was my freshman year, so it was 1987 or 1988. Bad local radio, bad sitcoms, and bad politics abounded. (I'll give radio credit for the "Dear Mister Rogers" song parody but not much else.) Of course, our '80s weren't always like the '80s in the rest of the country. Today you hear people talking about what were supposedly big '80s fads, but I don't even remember them.

But at least we had bubble gum—just like the '80s everywhere else.

This high school actually *fin*ed kids for chewing gum. You could bubble your way into poverty! But one day—for no apparent reason—our usually stern, angry history teacher tolerated beegie being chewn in his class. I'm not sure why. I figured it was because the cafeteria sold bubble gum lollipops that day, so he just threw in the towel in the war on gum. But if that was the case, people would have beegied much more than usual. I remember only one student gumming in history class that afternoon.

The student who gummed was a girl who sat a few rows away from me. As the teacher lectured and wrote notes on the chalkboard, the girl chomped that wad like a pro. Not only did she bubble, but she was obnoxious

about it. It was funny, of course, because it involved gum. Most things involving gum are. She kept blowing gigantic bubbles and snapping her gum loudly, and she cracked up laughing because a bubble burst and she spent the next minute or so peeling strands of burst gum off her skin.

Here's where the story gets *really* funny. It was then that the teacher decided he had enough—sort of. He admonished, "Just chew the gum. Don't make us all aware of it."

Then I **burst out laughing!** Or at least I came as close as I could to it while stifling my laughter and holding my hand in front of my mouth so the teacher wouldn't know I was laughing. The girl continued obnoxiously bubbling even after this warning.

That classroom was the same one where a student famously chewed a dirty stick of bubble gum he found behind the radiator. Also, study hall was in this same room with this same teacher. One day in study hall, I glanced across the room and saw a girl holding up a stick of Doublemint in its wrapper. She had a smirk on her face like she was going to chew it in violation of school rules. She was showing off the gum to everyone who could see it. Plus, people farted in that class a lot, which enraged the teacher.

As for the girl who bubbled in history class, she talked about the episode for years after. She always mentioned it to me because I laughed at the teacher's remark. The following school year, around New Year's, I was forced to make a special visit to the school to take a test that the school had caused me to miss. (I ended up flunking the test anyway.) The girl saw me outside the school and began talking about the gum incident. In college, I saw her again, and she brang it up again. Years later, when we were both about 30, I saw her at a local park, and guess what? She was still talking about it.

She Chewed Gum And Thought It Was Funny.

Tea Party Freedom Day

Much rumpus is generated by the alt-right about what they call Tax Freedom Day. That's the day of the year that the 1% chortles the loudest because they claim it's when their tax burden for the year is paid off (even though a wealthy individual pays a smaller percentage of their money in taxes than the average person does).

How about if we have Tea Party Freedom Day? That's the day when we're finally done paying for the year's many Tea Party boondoggles and crimes.

Taxation with representation is an important government power. The government is entitled to levy progressive taxes because of the services it provides. Our society has more poor than rich, so the poor deserve more

representation under the principle of "one person, one vote." That's not unpaid labor. Taxation is a basic charge of government.

The propping up of the Tea Party, however, is not. But government officials tolerated the cancer scam that lasted for 7 weeks in 2015, which victimized me and bankrolled Tea Party tyranny. I know how much is still owed to me even with my lawsuit victory. Based on this—and counting from when I caught on to the scam—I've calculated when Tea Party Freedom Day was. It passed well over a year ago, but I'm still angry about it.

Quite frankly, I'd much rather the defendants in my lawsuit have my money than the Tea Party have it. But the defendants don't have it, because the woman I sued squandered it on the type of poison that's being sold by Tea Party members. That's a verifiable fact, not speculation. In fairness, it reflects worse on the Tea Party than it does on the defendants.

Right after the cancer scam was unearthed, a couple of my family members begged and begged me to tell



them *exactly* how much money got flushed down the donicker, and finally I gave in and told them. They didn't do anything with this information except repeatedly remind me that I could have spent it on something much more useful. I could have spent it on several stronger pairs of glasses to wear all at the same time—if I wore regular glasses, which I don't. It could have covered the cost of a few teeth on a set of dentures—lest my teeth suddenly fall out in the hilarious scene you're hoping for. Maybe I could have purchased a bunch of 13-sided Dungeons & Dragons dice. You've always got the time when your number's prime! Maybe I could have gotten a "WE ARE THE 99%" tattoo—wait, I did anyway. Maybe a bad polo shirt and ridiculous flowered shorts—if I thought it was 1986. Perhaps a drone to fly over right-wing rallies—though the participants would probably just shoot it down, since they like to carelessly misuse guns so much.

Community values means people helping people. It doesn't mean the Tea Party gets to prey on someone's addiction so the person ends up conning others into loaning them money, which is never paid back. Just because I wouldn't have spent my money *immediately* doesn't mean someone should swindle me out of it. I'll admit the woman I sued is smarter than many of my high school classmates—and the Republican brain trust. I didn't believe a word of the GOP's trickle-down propaganda when I was 12, yet I believed this woman's cancer scam when I was going on 42. That's street smarts on her part, and you have to respect it. But I wanted to save my money and spend it on projects that would have made the community better. Instead, the Tea Party got my money and are using it to make the community *worse*. A little bit of Midwestern thrift can go a long way when right-wing organizations and policies don't stand in the way. I'm so cheap that what most people would call an old rag, I would call a good washcloth.

Maybe the real story is that I'm doing *so well* after being conned like that. I was financially (keek!) ruined but recovered pretty quickly. I'm a winner. I don't have that sheepskin that most Americans my age have, and I'd have a hell of a lot less money than them even if I hadn't been ripped off. I've even lived alone for 24 years. But I am a *winner*. Nobody experiences comebacks quite like me.

It's a shame incompetent policing allowed the Tea Party to get away with so much, but justice is coming. Just you watch.

People bubbled with stuff that isn't gum

You don't always have to be a gummer to be a bubbler.

Ever blow a bubble with the bun of an Arby's roast beef sandwich? It's feasible.

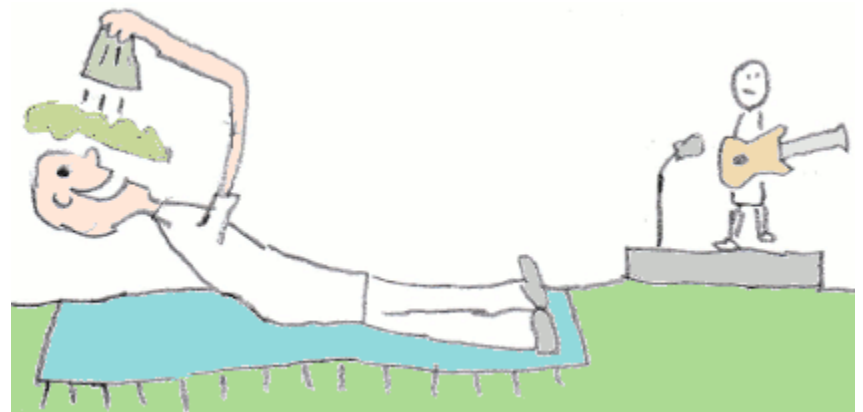
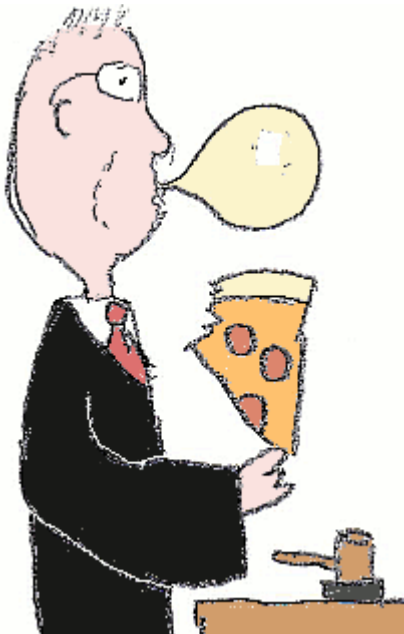
Around 1988, our local Sunday newspaper ran a human interest story in which they reviewed various brands of frozen pizza. The panel of reviewers included courtroom judges and other luminaries. Weight Watchers pizza received a poor review because "the crust is so chewy you can blow a bubble with it." I got the image of a very dignified judge in a black robe blowing a bubble with a pizza crust.

Food isn't the only thing you can bubble with. Remember a toy called Slime? Introduced in 1976, Slime was a goo that came in a little plastic trash can and had a boogery texture. It was usually green or purple. Some versions of Slime contained plastic worms or other enhancements. A website once called Slime one of the most disappointing toys ever made, because after you had it for a few months, it would dry up and become a smelly husk. Someone e-mailed me saying they went to an outdoor concert once and brang along a can of Slime. During the concert, they leaned back in the grass, held the can

above their face, and let the Slime cascade out of the can and cover their smiling visage. As their face was coated with Slime, they blew a huge Slime bubble by exhaling with their mouth. Oh, apparently they were an adult when they did this.

When I heard that story, I had another laughter marathon like I did when I heard the laxative gum story. I can't believe they did something like that *in public*!

Perhaps no substance is as similar in consistency to gum as mounting putty or wall tack—the sticky goo you use to hang posters and maps on your wall. True to form, I found a



story in which a person tried chewing a big wad of this stuff and blowing a bubble. The stuff tasted disgusting, so they removed it from their mouth, stretched it over their lips, and bubbled that way. My conclusion: The person is a fucking weirdo.

One Internetter says they used to chew Silly Putty “solely because i liked the way it popped when you chewed it.” Another person says they “used to chew on silly putty like gum because I liked the way it would make a squeaking sound and go between my teeth.” Someone replied, “That is exactly why they made gum!” Still another person says they chewed Silly Putty and tried to bubble with it, and it “tasted like an old wallet.”

All of the above information is handy in case you’re the person at the office who—for some unknown reason—is “not allowed” to gum. Now you’ll know to bring Slime or Silly Putty to work.

The lunchbox goes round and round...

Airport mischief and ruined eyeglasses in the same story? You betcha!

We went on a field trip to Cincinnati’s main airport in kindergarten. It was an absolute barrel of laughs—like the 2nd grade field trip where a boy spit hunks of a caramel-covered apple all over the seat of the school’s van.

Back then—even now—you could get up close and personal with the luggage carousel. I didn’t really understand air travel yet or why they needed a carousel. It seems like it was around the same time *Sesame Street* traveled by air on a fact-finding mission to Hawaii, so I somehow thought of it in that context. Even back then, however, grouches were required to take their trash can through the metal detector. (But I was too young to understand the risqué jokes in the metal detector scene on *Sesame Street*.)

Anybip, when we got to the carousel, my classmates promptly began grabbing each others’ belongings and throwing them onto the carousel—losing them forever. Some kid threw a schoolmate’s lunchbox onto the conveyor. To this day, there’s probably a *Six Million Dollar Man* lunchbox lodged back there.

Also, a child grabbed a classmate’s eyeglasses off his face and tossed it onto the carousel.

Imagine the mystified looks on travelers’ faces if they ever saw the lunchbox or glasses going around on the baggage carousel.



Zestacles are the bestacles!

We’ve got another New Language entry, so hang on to your underpants!

Zesta is now a verb. I didn’t come up with this, by the way. But what it means is to chew up Zesta crackers and open your mouth to reveal the resultant paste of crackers mixed with saliva. It can be used in declarations like: “I’m gonna Zesta.” Or: “My girlfriend just Zestaed.” Or: “I got in trouble in the cafeteria for Zestaing.” Or: “I’m a better Zestaer than you.”

Maybe you can have a Zestaing contest with your friends to see who can Zesta the besta!

For those who’ve never witnessed a Zestaing, it’s as hilarious as you might imagine. Maybe not as funny as the time in 8th grade when some girl at school chewed up potato chips and stuck out her tongue, but it’s a guffaw inducer nonetheless.

Gum timeline

People want me to keep talking about gum. They chew the stuff, don't ya know. That's what people do.

An influential woman told me of her own personal records for how long she has chomped a slab. She doesn't chew gum very often, but when she does, she thinks it's dynamite stuff. She claims that when she has gone to baseball games, she has munched on the same wad through the whole game. Her personal record for how long she has continuously worked a wad is 7 hours. Must have been a doubleheader!

She also said gum has a predictable timeline when being chewed. After approximately 1½ hours, it starts tasting of rubber. She later elaborated and said the gum also takes on a balloon-like texture. After all, gum is essentially a balloon, for it contains rubber. After 3 hours, even the rubber taste is gone, and there's no flavor left at all. But you can still pant out a mean bubble! She later said 7 hours is about the absolute limit, because then the gum tastes "musty."

I have a vague memory of tasting musty bubble gum once as a youngster. I don't think I chewed it for 7 hours though. I do remember when Cocoa Puffs included a piece of Super Bubble, and the cereal box said, "Enough gum for great bubbles all day!" I don't think they meant the *whole* day.

Living in a box

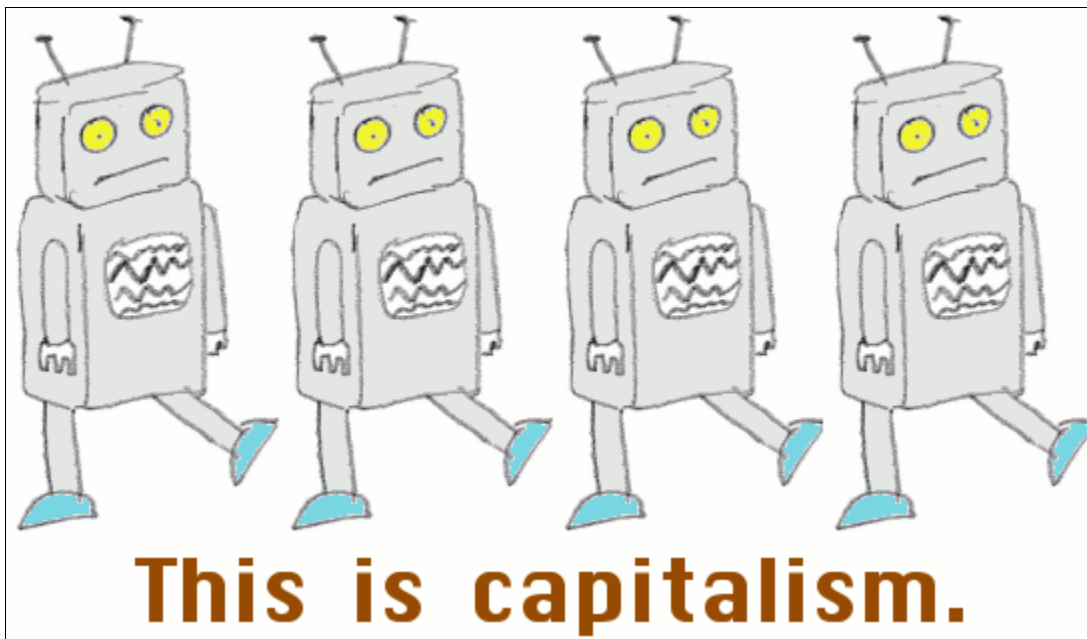
I've been forced to hoard steel boxes, and I don't like it one bit.

There's several reasons why you might buy a fire-resistant steel box that requires a key to open. One is to prevent valuable documents from being pulverized in a disastrous fire. Another is to stop your goodies from being stolen by home invaders like those who were allowed to roam the town 7 years ago because it would have required an expensive Sherlock Hemlock hat to catch them. Yet another is to keep nosy family members from pawing through these private items after you die—or even while you're still alive.

I have 4—possibly 5—of these boxes. All but one—the newest one—are (keek!) ruined for good. One of the ruined boxes has a broken lock because it was cheaply made. The others are ruined because the keys were lost when a family member cleaned my apartment without permission. Unless the keys can be found 16 years after being lost, I think this family member should reimburse me for the ruined boxes—for these boxes *require* a key. They don't even *close* without the key. (Luckily, the boxes were open when the keys were lost. Otherwise, everything in them would have been locked inside forever.)

I'm not even sure if all my boxes are even fire-resistant! I know the first one I got is, but it's among the ru. The one that still locks might not be. That means I have to buy a new one—unless I can confirm that the one that still works is fire-resistant.

You don't have many things besides your punk rocker teeth that you can truly call your own. Someone else owns almost everything you have. Being part of the 99% and living under the osmium thumb of capitalism is like being in jail—worse in some ways—for you're not allowed to have all the belongings you need. Since the capitalists won't let you own much, you have to protect the few things you have.



Operation ProGum

You've all heard of Operation KroGum. Why, every cool person knows all about it. But we might as well also have Operation ProGum.

I was floored to discover that Bass Pro Shops has a better selection of bubble gum than Kroger has. Why would a store specializing in goods for outdoor activities like hunting and camping beat a supermarket hands-down in any category of food?

When I pointed this out to a family member, they didn't seem too surprised: "Of course they have bubble gum." Indeed they did. Baste Pro Shops sold small bags of individually wrapped Dubble Bubble—but the bag also bore Bass Pro's own brand.

I also noticed a stand full of gum with a big sign that said something to the effect of, "Wrigley's For The Outdoorsman." I was reminded of the old Freedent commercial with the man in the small fishing boat talking to the viewer—which probably doubled Freedent's nationwide sales to approximately 4 packs per year.

Seems like all the wind, cold, bugs, and shitting birds might make it difficult for an outdoorsman to bubble.

Blip Blop Bloop Bleep

Do Blip, Blop, Bloop, and Bleep bip?

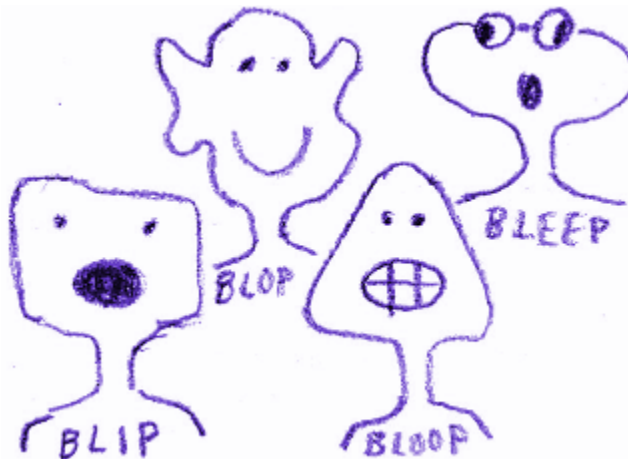
Lately I've been searching for older school worksheets online—and not just the ones that intelligent people shaped into paper airplanes.

Remember, the bulk of my school years were in the 1980s, so we still used those purple mimeograph sheets—in addition to photocopied pages. I think the mimeos (often marred by mysterious creases) were usually sheets that were for use *specifically* in schools. Photocopied sheets might have had other uses, maybe more like that little puzzle book Hi-C put out.

Occasionally, mimeos would attempt to include a photograph, and of course they didn't turn out—unlike the photocopies. Most mimeos would include drawings instead. One of the most memorable was a math worksheet in middle school that featured Blip, Blop, Bloop, and Bleep. They were 4 creatures—perhaps robots or space aliens—that were sort of like the gremlins who chased Pac-Man around, but actually more like the Teletubbies.

It was childish. Math was my best subject, and they were giving me worksheets with something as babyish as this?

I think I found the text of this worksheet online, but not the pictures or the worksheet itself. The gremlins looked something this...



(Fair use, so tough toilets.)

I made a paper airplane at least once in that class, but it wasn't with this sheet. I saved the sheet for years because it was so idiotic.

I've also searched the Interpipes for a math worksheet from high school that included one of the dumbest puzzles I've ever seen on a school assignment, but I can't find it. This was in a very advanced math class my senior year at Holmes High School—which back then was one of the area's best-performing schools—so you'd think it would be beneath our level. Anybloop, this worksheet had us solve math problems that would spell out a riddle at the top of the page. The riddle was: "Why is a poor man always thirsty? He has no propertea."

Get it? Get it? Get it? Get it? Get it? Get it? Get it? Get it? Get it? Get it? Get it?

Don't you get the joke? I was a poor man, so I had no property! And since the last syllable of *property* sounds like *tea*, I must have been thirsty! Go ahead! Laugh it up at my expense! I was the guy with torn shirts from the thrift store who still hadn't discovered compact discs. (By then, it was the '90s.) Then again, my humble life wasn't a problem at Holmes, which was a real school back then, so nobody harassed me over it. My classmates just thought I lived in a log cabin because I lived in Highland Heights. (I just now remembered that there was a girl in this class who almost dislodged her dentures with her gum.)

Why is a poor man always thirsty? Because of laughing too long at the stupidity of these worksheets.

Nobody bubbled at bubble gum doctor

In February, I went to the bubble gum doctor—as I have on many occasions of late—but nobody bubbled. They gummed—but they didn't bubble. Patients and receptionists have bubbled there before. But not this time.

In the waiting room, some woman was there with 2 kids waiting for the dentist. They were all chomping some beegum. But they dared not bubble.

Another woman was at the front desk telling the receptionist that biting into a large gumball was rough on her dentures. But she did not demonstrate. Because she did not gum in the waiting room that day, she could not have bubbled.

I too elected not to gum—thereby mathematically eliminating me from bubbling. The bubble gum doctor would be chagrined to discover this, for it was they who recommended bubble gum to treat TMJ disorder.

Because the bubble gum doctor offers effective medical care, I'm clinging to this medical practice for dear life. I'm waiting for something to happen to force me to move to Ohio to see if I'm still allowed to use an out-of-state doctor as my default provider. In the '90s, it was allowed, because I visited a doctor on the north side of Cincinnati even though I lived in Highland Heights. I can attest that I visited him as my default physician on April 20, 1995—the fifth anniversary of my expulsion from Brossart—when he prescribed a drug for an ear infection. That is a fact. So if using out-of-state doctors isn't permitted anymore, that's something else that's on the Republicans.

Me 1, cosmetic dentistry 0

I'm a funny guy, and I have a funny hobby—and its latest development is as hilarious as you might expect from me.

I visit YouTube from time to time, and—for no apparent reason—about 20% of the videos they “recommend” to me are ads for cosmetic dentists. I mentioned this on The Online Lunchpail a few months ago. I was concerned about these ads—which are marketed to men, women, and children alike—for several reasons. For starts, I don't want people to be shamed for crooked chompers. I've always been proud of having punk rocker teeth, and I rock them. Cool people consider crooked teeth attractive. Secondly, cosmetic procedures are too high of a priority in American medicine. It took me 26 years to find effective treatment for PTSD, and it also took years to find answers to conditions I had that caused unbearable physical pain. Yet we're supposed to be worried about little aesthetic anomalies that don't cause any medical problems?

I understand there's people missing most or all of their gnashers, but in these cases, treatment is more functional than cosmetic. These ads usually aren't geared towards those who truly need treatment.

Like I said, until a few weeks ago, the chance that I'd ever fly on a commercial airliner was about 1 in 1,000. But the chance I'll ever use cosmetic dentistry services is *zero*. Not 1 in 1,000 or even 1 in a million. Zero. This despite the fact that when I was about 19, a family member said my dentist should demand hazardous duty pay.

Confronted by these ads, I invented a new hobby: I began giving a “thumbs down” to every cosmetic



dentistry commersh I could find on YouTube. Occasionally I stumbled upon a TV news report promoting cosmetic dentistry. That earned an automatic “thumbs down” *and* a negative comment. America is being led by a rogue regime that *literally* has at least one scandal per day, and the news wastes airtime *begging* people to get their teeth “repaired”?

Many of these videos had already received a lot of downvotes. I think many of them were from angry patients of these specific practices. But there’s nothing more satisfying than being the vote that gives the video more downvotes than upvotes. It’s like the local election a few years ago that was decided by one vote. That vote was mine (assuming the voting machine didn’t toss my vote, which is possible, considering the Republicans’ record of rigging elections).

Pooing is cool.

Lately, it’s gotten even better. I noticed YouTube “recommended” some cosmetic dentistry commercials that had *just been posted*. These videos are as idiotic as all the rest. They had zero views before then. When I watched them, I was the first. Yes, I downvoted them. The first viewer was also the first viewer to downvote! How cool am I for that?

I guess YouTube doesn’t know its audience, as they keep steering me (of all people) to those videos. WGRR does the same thing. They run old *American Top 40* shows from the ‘80s on Sunday nights, and half the ads are for cosmetic dentists. Most people interested in music from 30 years ago are old enough that they’ve either thrown in the towel on having perfect pearlies—or they never gave a shit about it to begin with. At my age, you might as well get dentures. The ad blares, “Don’t let crowded or crooked teeth get in the way!” I don’t know what they get in the way of. Bubbling? WGRR and YouTube must assume I hate my life.

Smile! Think of how you’ve fought capitalism by not having your beautiful, sexy chompers “fixed”!

(Also, every YouTube video posted by Dr. Phil or any “therapeutic boarding school” for teens receives an automatic downvote from me.)



People wave food around and it’s rude

“You sure you don’t want any more rolls? You sure???”

After my exciting gallbladder infection of 2011—which caused some good old-fashioned upchuckin’—I’ve pleaded. I’ve begged. I’ve implored.

Stop waving food in my face at every dinner gathering and trying to induce me to eat what I can’t eat!

When I’m done eating, I’m done! Because my gallbladder was ruined by my repeated refusal to waste excess French fries at restaurants, I literally *cannot handle* meals that are too big. The way some people stare at my eye like it’s some sort of curse or medical emergency, you’d think they’d be cognizant of my need for gentler meals. I think they must have taken cues from the junk health insurer we had when I was a teenager, which wouldn’t cover needed medical care when I caught the flu 10 times a year, yet it covered quackery I didn’t need, like psychiatrists.

Encouraging me to overeat is *rude*!

Family members who try to induce this needless gorging would probably be the first to try to enforce an unreasonable Allowed Cloud.

There’s people out there starving, so we can’t afford to waste food.

A person made a funny and thought it was funny

A person made a funny and thought it was funny. Best all, it has to do with...

Are you ready for it?...

Bubble gum! You *never* would have guessed!

The woman who critiques this zine each month has a blog now, and when the Evil Empire discovered this, they immediately piloted into a temper tantrum. Predictably, some buffoon who was too fraidy-cat to use their real name commented that myself and this woman must actually be the same person—even though I am male, and my friend has had her current Blogger account for **9 years!** She didn't magically appear from thin air just 8 months ago. I just *knew* it was only a matter of time before someone trotted out that old chestnut about being an Internet sockpuppet. Being falsely accused of being a sockpuppet is as predictable as Republicans attacking opponents as "liberals." It's stale.

I didn't even dignify that accusation with a reply longer than a single sentence. Then the accuser responded that the woman is "just an old pack of gum that bubbles."

In other words—as an apparent reference to our advanced ages—a person was said to be an inanimate object that somehow performs a specific action on its own accord. Think of what a ridiculous image this is. Suppose you have a pack of gum just sitting there on the shelf smirking its ass off. And let's suppose that it sits there so long that it attains the threshold of spoilage. Those pieces of Super Bubble that were included in Cocoa Puffs boxes during my youth were kind of like this, except they were individually wrapped. We usually hoarded them on the kitchen hutch until neighborhood kids borrowed them. Now imagine that the pack of gum on your shelf inflates on its own. Every so often, at irregular intervals, the pack of beegie just expands into a bubble—much like how you always blow big bubbles with your gum.

When nobody answered that comment, the accuser then threatened to report the blog. For what reason, I have no idea. They essentially admitted to repeatedly reporting my friend's Facebook account too—for the thoughtcrime of disagreeing with them. The fact that Blogger hasn't removed her blog weeks after the accuser complained is proof she isn't doing anything wrong. It's just like how some self-righteous crybaby threatened to have my "Brossart Wit & Wisdom" page removed *years* ago, and it's still up.

Republicans are so desperate to prove voter fraud exists that they actually *commit* it. Likewise, they're so desperate to prove Internet sockpuppets exist that they actually *make* them: *A majority* of the right-wing hate speech that fills the comment section of articles on news websites is from phony accounts—usually paid trolls.

But my friend is "an old pack of gum that bubbles." Hey, there's an idea for her next Halloween costume!



Lawbreaking cosmetics firm gets bad reviews

L'Oréal has just done the impossible! They've discovered a way to get me to write about *cosmetics!*

They accomplished this by not paying back the \$10 fee for a garnishment order they illegally ignored. Even after they received a phone call about it, their excuse was that they cash every check they receive and stupidly don't bother to see what it's for. That sort of extreme stupidity is criminal. There's no legal or ethical defense for it. They also said they mailed the garnishment money I'm owed to the courthouse, even though the paperwork clearly said they're supposed to send it to me. After the courthouse sent the checks back, L'Oréal managed to lose them.

Because I'm a cool person, I threw an absolute shitfit about the \$10 L'Oréal stole.

Clearly, I'm not part of L'Oréal's customer base, but I'm going to make damn sure they lose business because of this.

I went on LOL-for-Real's Facebook page and discovered their customers are giving them bad reviews. A woman reported that their mousse has such defective packaging that it can't be used. The top of the bottle is often cracked, so it won't spray. Thus, the product inside can't be extracted, and is wasted. All that mousse, wastage bastage! She says this has happened 4 times in the past year.

Another woman reported that L'Oréal's lipstick breaks for no apparent reason. Plus, the tip broke off their eyeliner the first time she tried using it. She said of their overpriced products, "\$10.59 shot plus \$12.49 for lipstick." She also said she tried calling L'Oréal to complain, but nobody answered.

Another person called out L'Oréal for testing cosmetics on animals. LOL-for-Real says they no longer do this, but they used to. There was no excuse for it. None. A brand new article on a website that opposes animal cruelty in the cosmetics industry says L'Oréal is full of shit anyhow: They just offshore their animal experiments to China and say it's because the law there requires it.

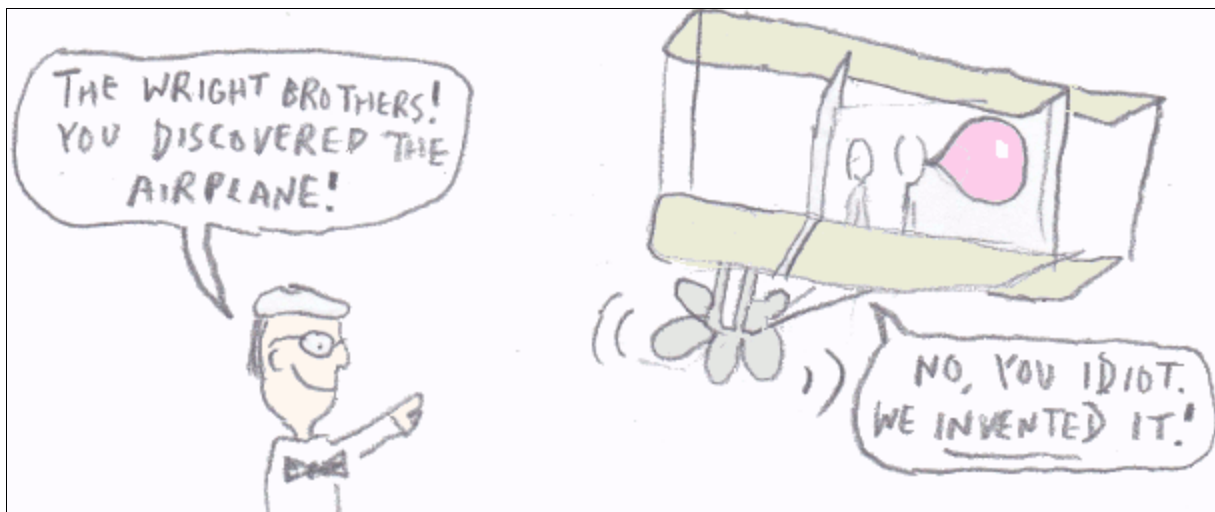
I gave LOL-for-Real a bad review too—not for any product, but for their choice to pocket \$10 for a garnishment order they thumbed their nose at...

"Your company is run by a bunch of thieves and liars. You ignored a garnishment order, which forced me to file it again and send you another \$10 check. Months later, you cashed the \$10 check for the original order (the one you ignored). We called you about this, and you still refused to pay back the \$10.

"Your company is worse than the people I originally sued."

If you don't understand why L'Oréal is wrong, ask an adult.

Operation AirGum cleared for takeoff



Gum. It's fun for the whole pamm dlanet!

The week before leaving on my top secret fact-finding mission to Washington, D.C., I—not unlike the Hardy Boys with more cussing—donned my sunglasses and visited Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport to scout out the air travel situation. I'm new at this. Watching the metal detector scene in the Hawaii trip on *Sesame Street* helped too.

While I was at the airport, I wandered into a small shop that sold a general selection of goods for folks getting ready to embark (arf-arf!). When my trip was being planned, I was advised to chew bubble gum on the flight to keep my ears from hurting from the changes in altitude (and changes in attitude). This advice referred to it as gum, not *bubble* gum, but the point stands. Various websites also recommend beegee, though there's just as many comments from people desperately scrambling to find a substitute because they're "not allowed" to gum. (Would it kill you to enjoy the blasted gum already?! Geez!) Plus, there were comments from parents who wouldn't let their kids gum (who are clearly old enough), so they planned to pump them full of Sudafed instead—even though they didn't suffer from any ailment treated by Sudafed.

The TSA's website says bubble gum is permitted on flights—and yes, they actually call it *bubble* gum. Wow! Something that's actually *permitted* on flights! Is this 1978 or something?

The \$98.26 question was: Did the store at the airport sell gum, and did they have the good bubble kerpowin' gums that have become so scarce lately? Hilarious news first: They sell gum. Sobering news second: All I saw was Orbit—which seems to compete with Freedent for being the least popular gum in the land. Indeedity-doodledy, Orbit was invented just to be an inferior brand! It was introduced by Wrigley's during World War II because they had trouble finding the right ingredients for their main brands, and didn't want their main brands to be used for an inferior product.

I didn't buy any of their ridicule-evoking Orbit—let alone bubble with it. The planes on this trip were so cramped that there was barely any room to bubble! Before I left, a family member had recommended a "group

activity” with fellow passengers to pass the time on the flight, but I did not challenge other fliers to a bubble gum blowing contest (or a “group blow”, for that matter). The tight conditions on these planes would have also made it difficult to test whether you can puff out a bigger bubble at 30,000 feet in the air.

When I went on my trip, I noticed a candy store in the “secure” area of the Cincinnati airport did sell goodgum—not just Orbit. But the “secure” parts of the Atlanta and New York airports seemed to be as lacking in bubble bustin’ brands as anyone. America’s airports are like a Superconducting Super Collider of inferior gum. I didn’t notice *any* gum being sold at the D.C. airport, period. But it may exist.

Outrageously, some airports forbid shops from selling gum. Just because. They’re Moral Majority control freaks. Several right-wing counties in Florida even *passed a law* to ban airport shops from selling gum! I’m pretty sure we covered this in our *very first ish* back in 1993.

So if you’re a bubble kablammoer who insists on torturing themselves by traveling by air, bring your own beegie. I didn’t suffer ear pain on my flights, but I think it’s a good idea to chomp this viscous treat to relieve motion sickness. (During my trip, I had several e-mail exchanges about whether bubble gum staves off airsickness.)

Gummers don’t let the Far Right’s war on gum burst their bubble. During my layover at the Atlanta airport—which was lengthened by a needless flight delay caused by Delta—a woman who was about 30 took selfies of herself bubbling with orange gum and laughed uncontrollably about it. She Chewed Gum And Thought It Was Funny. At this same airport, I noticed someone had blown a bubble with a wad of pink beegie and placed it atop the automatic flusher mechanism of a urinal in a men’s restroom.

G! Gum!

Gasp! I was wrong!

The Last Word—your road atlas to freedom, folks, and fun—was actually wrong about something once: The situation at hand may have been even worse than we said it was!

In the ‘90s, when drug courts first became popular, I was desperate for our government representatives to put their eye on the ball about the ongoing harassment I was suffering. It seems like I couldn’t walk out my front door without getting physically attacked. I beat my head against the wall about this. Over and over. If you weren’t around then, you really don’t know what the bunker mentality back then was like.

This harassment was like an open wound back then. Now it’s just an angry scar. I’ve been treated for PTSD in recent months, and now I’m confident that what people said about me in 1984 was a bunch of shit. Their sayings were not based on facts. While trying to get a grip on what occurred, I really wanted to assess this zine’s ever-growing paper trail, and be grownup enough to admit if I was wrong about something.

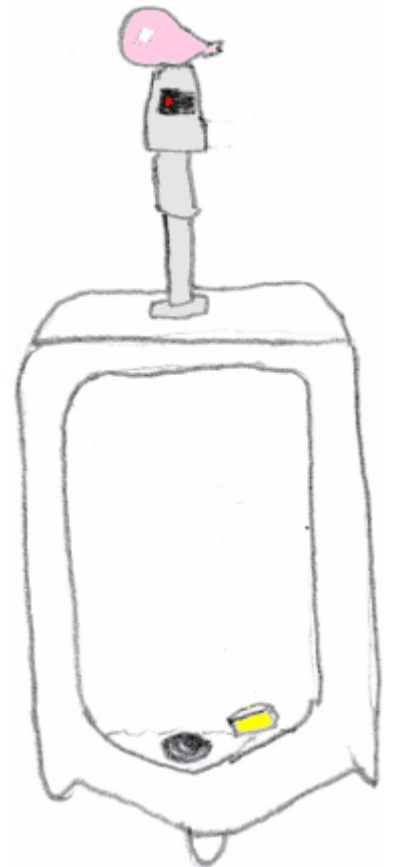
I’d been thinking drug courts were a positive development—but now I’m not so sure, because it might just be a windfall for confinement programs, albeit primarily for adults. I don’t think “tough love” hogwash works. Drug treatment should be based on science. I strongly suspect some of the treatments ordered in drug court are based on the same failed model as the abusive confinement facilities I’ve fought against. That’s worse than jail. If a jail subjects its inmates to some of these methods, there’d be a lawsuit so fast it would make your head spin on its horizontal axis.

I’d be more supportive of drug courts if they use treatment methods that are backed up by science—and if nobody is locked in an abusive program. Admittedly, this isn’t a topic I’ve done much research about—probably because by the time I realized drug courts might be propping up institutional abuse, there were so many other stories of abusive programs that I couldn’t process them all.

I believe in second chances, and some may need many more chances than that. But I cannot in good conscience encourage abuse in the name of drug treatment.

More Democratic Blunderground fail

Some of you probably think of us as a Democratic zine, because we oppose Republicans so trenchantly. It’s true that I’m a registered Democrat. After seeing how the Tea Party took over the Republicans—like when you blow a bubble inside a bubble—I changed my party registration in late 2015 from Green back to Democratic with the expectation of the alt-left staging a similar coup within the Democratic Party. The Democratic establishment can soil itself for all I care. I for one am marching right past the party establishment that nominated a candidate who lost to Donald Trump, of all people. That’s why I voted for Bernie Sanders in the primary.



A popular website called Democratic Underground seems to champion establishment Democrats who have repeatedly set the party up for defeat. I used to post on DU, but I stomped off because they harped so much about Democratic scandals but not Republican scandals that were far worse.

This record of fail has continued lately.

Recently, Trump cultists held a rally in Omaha supporting the embattled so-called President. It drew just as many counterprotesters. Since Omaha doesn't seem to have a First Amendment, at least 3 counterprotesters were arrested. Police used pepper balls to disperse the rest.

You'd think DU regulars would criticize the cops for suppressing free speech. Instead, DU talking faces went ballistic on the counterprotesters. One of them said of the dissenters, "These 'masked' individuals need to be identified. I'm sick of this shit."

Well, you can always move to Russia, ya know. Or maybe Singapore.

The wimpy, toilet-minded attitude by some at DU sure isn't helping us fight the Trump thugocracy. The last thing we need is 2 Republican parties. Sure, there's still useful material posted at DU—and it's shameful that right-wing hackers knocked DU offline for days after the "election." Few things demonstrate the need for the government to lower the Kraken on alt-right thuggery better than that. But it's far worse than disappointing for DU regulars to defend police suppressing dissidents' free speech.

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