

The Last Word™

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See, socialism really does work

Socialism works—when we’re allowed to use it. (Ooh, an Allowed Cloud!)

You shouldn’t have to be embarrassed to admit you use some form of public health insurance. Kentucky hasn’t had truly public health insurance ever since so-called Gov. Ernie “Hey Bert” Fletcher began requiring patients to sign up with an HMO to manage their healthcare. Yet the only major struggles I’ve had with receiving care lately have been when dealing with this for-profit corporation. The parts of healthcare that are still public have worked reasonably well.

There are fair reasons to criticize Obamacare—but its website isn’t one of them. The Affordable Care Act website worked spectacularly well. My HMO’s website did not. This company changed my default medical practice without permission, and their webpage that was supposed to let me change it back was faulty. I had to call my HMO at least twice to get them to change it back.

I have a major long-term disability—PTSD—and I take 3 prescriptions to fight a trio of other disorders. The wonder of public healthcare has let me spend no more than a few dollars each time I get them refilled—when it would have cost much more otherwise. I was so impressed that when I was at the pharmacy, I sent out a text blast saying, “Socialism works.” You can rightly argue that whatever public health insurance exists in America isn’t purely socialist—but it’s surely more socialist than disastrous private insurance.

Socialism means inexpensive medications, expanded choices, convenient appointment times and places, and effective treatment. Capitalism means HMO bureaucracy, broken websites, long waits for treatment, and endless attempts to wring every last dime out of patients.

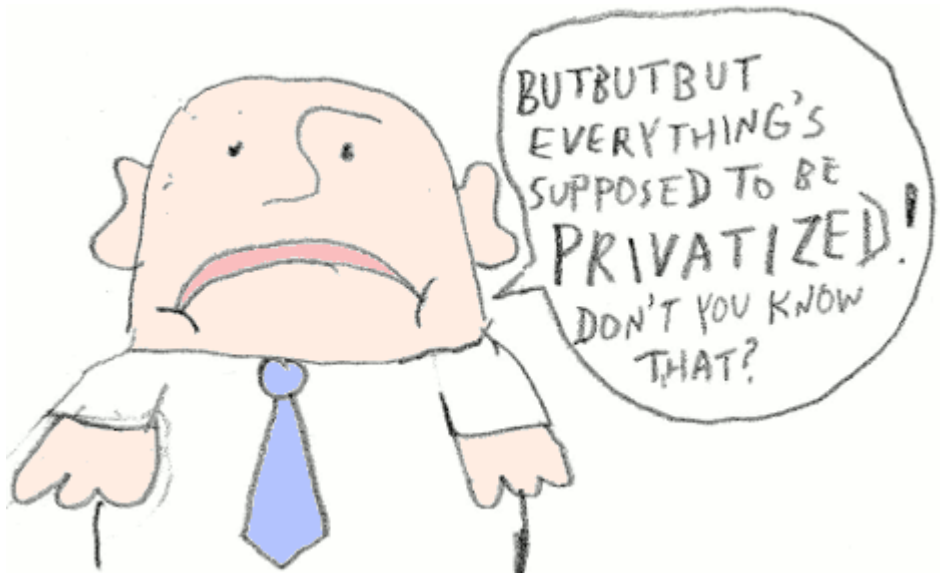
In my latest encounter with this HMO, it appears as if they tried improperly billing me a huge sum for life-saving treatment—and passing the buck to the bubble gum doctor. I had to make 3 calls to this HMO to get them to fix it. But if not for socialism, this fight with capitalism would be much worse: I’d have to pay 4 times as much out of pocket, which would bankrupt me within months.

If only we could go back to the way it was before this part of healthcare was privatized, we wouldn’t have to fight an HMO. Unfortunately, we’re accustomed to the failures of capitalist healthcare. A decade ago, American healthcare was at its absolute nadir, and I got so sick of reading human interest articles about how some rich yuppie or outright millionaire “opted” for this or that, when it was medically unnecessary. The 99% didn’t get to “opt” for anything. We had to march in lockstep with what our HMO said.

Hopefully, public health insurance programs won’t be privatized entirely. I came up with a great analogy for this, but the comparison is actually quite obvious. Suppose you live in a community with a fine public school system. Now let’s suppose the Department of Education abolishes public schools and forces you to send your kids to a shitpile like Bishop Brossart instead. That’s about what it would be like. Privatization robs us of choice—and forces us to pay more only to use an inferior system.

Not every public service works as well as public healthcare, but their major shortcomings have resulted from the unchecked pursuit of profit or discredited ideology—*de facto* privatization, if you will. Public programs are weakened when we run them like big corporations.

The debate is over. Socialism works. Those who obstruct progress towards strengthening healthcare need to shut up and get out of the way. (“Butbutbut something for nothing buhhh.”)



I got parked by Park Hills

May 10. It was what cool people call a Wednesday.

The Road Ruiner and I embarked on a little bippus up to Fort Wright to witness the unparalleled Republican excess found there. With the Road Ruiner, bicycling isn't just for knee people anymore! (Now I'm selling and replacing the Road Ruiner, but that would be another story altogether.)

I braved the downhill slope of Dixie Highway through Park Hills—past Covington Catholic High School, which seemed to have no objection to filling the block with insufferable construction noise. The day was dashed to detritus though when I tried using the old path of Mount Allen Road.

Mount Allen Road is a residential street through Park Hills that ends roughly on the boundary with Covington. Until about the late 2000s, the road used to continue into Covington, as it twisted and turned downhill through the woods to the Big Two-Five. It was the site of NKU's Covington campus, and the university still owns surrounding parcels of land.

The path of the old road though is a public right-of-way—not owned by any institution, even a public university like NKU. It's legal to travel it. I took the Road Ruiner down this roadbed through the woods. Woods got watered, the hulking velocipede got caught in fallen trees, and mud got caked on pants legs. It took well over a half-hour to travel the old roadbed.

I had almost made it to Dixie Highway, when I looked back and saw a uniformed policeman walking towards me through the roadbed's mud and muck. (Another Y-96 flashback!) The cop was back pretty far, and I knew it must have taken him quite some time to walk this far from the end of the still-open portion of Mount Allen Road. The absurdity of police spending so much time to get after me wasn't lost. When I saw the officer, instead of continuing to walk my bike, I hopped on and sped onto U.S. 25. I pretended not to notice him.



I *flew* down that bad curve! After Dixie Highway became Pike Street, a vehicle roared to a stop behind me and laid on the horn. I turned around and saw it was a Park Hills police car. Two policemen directed me to stop my bike. Bear in mind, this was in Covington, not Park Hills. The *entire* unused roadbed is in Covington, in fact.

The cops approached me, interrogated me, and made me display my beer ID. They didn't actually say I was breaking any laws by traveling on the old roadbed. They really didn't even say why I was being stopped. Then they actually *frisked* me right there on busy Pike Street in front of some houses! They ran my name through the NCIC but came up empty—thus spoiling their day.

It was apparent right from the giddy-up that this was economic profiling. It's happened before. If I was wearing a neatly pressed polo shirt, this never would have happened. Polos usually don't go well with punk rocker teeth—which most people agree are my coolest poverty symbol—so I just rock whatever I have. It appeared that some 1% crybaby who lived in the subdivision above didn't want me using “their” roads—so they called the fuzz.

Whassamatter? Don't like us poor folks on “your” roads? Are we scaring you? Afraid you might catch poverty? Interesting how the 1%—which whines constantly about how “easy” the poor have it—are so afraid of becoming poor themselves. Tough toilets. This is America, and I'll go where I damn well please.

There's another possibility besides naked classism though. Since NKU owns land around the path, I wouldn't be surprised if they have spy cameras in the woods to catch those who “trespass” in “their” woods. NKU is sensitive about these things, as I discovered when I got arrested for using their library. I wouldn't put it past them if they're still trying to enforce that politically motivated “trespass” order from 1995. I was shocked they still enforced it after 22 *weeks*, but with the Tea Party hacks who run the place, why should I be surprised if they enforce it after 22 *years*? NKU is legendary for its political intolerance.

When I was stopped by Park Hills Police, there's no way you could think I was breaking any law and not

expect the case to be laughed right out of the courtroom by any judge in their right mind. A person with a very vivid imagination might say I was “eluding the police” when I pedaled away when I saw the first cop, but I don’t see how that can stick. I usually don’t fare too well in police encounters, so my reaction was natural. Stunningly, the cops who pulled me over noted that the Road Ruiner is an electric bike—which is banned in Kentucky—and I didn’t get skeeped at for it. If anything, I thought my goose was cooked when they noticed I had an electric bike. Kentucky’s electric bike ban is utterly idiotic, so I hope to continue to thumb nose at it.

The freedom to roam is a basic common law right. The 1% town criers can’t take that away with their Stalinist police state tactics.

I tried breaking my leg so I could miss church

It’s a shame I didn’t get to go to a cool church like some other cool people did.

Some coolsters tell me they actually *enjoyed* church when they were growing up. That’s because their church didn’t follow the Republican version of Jesus like mine did. I used to be required to attend Sunday mass. And if we had other obligations on a Sunday, we’d have to go Saturday evening instead. *To this very day*, my brother still fumes about how he had to miss a movie with his friends because we went to a Saturday mass.

Church was one place where you...did...not...fuck...around.

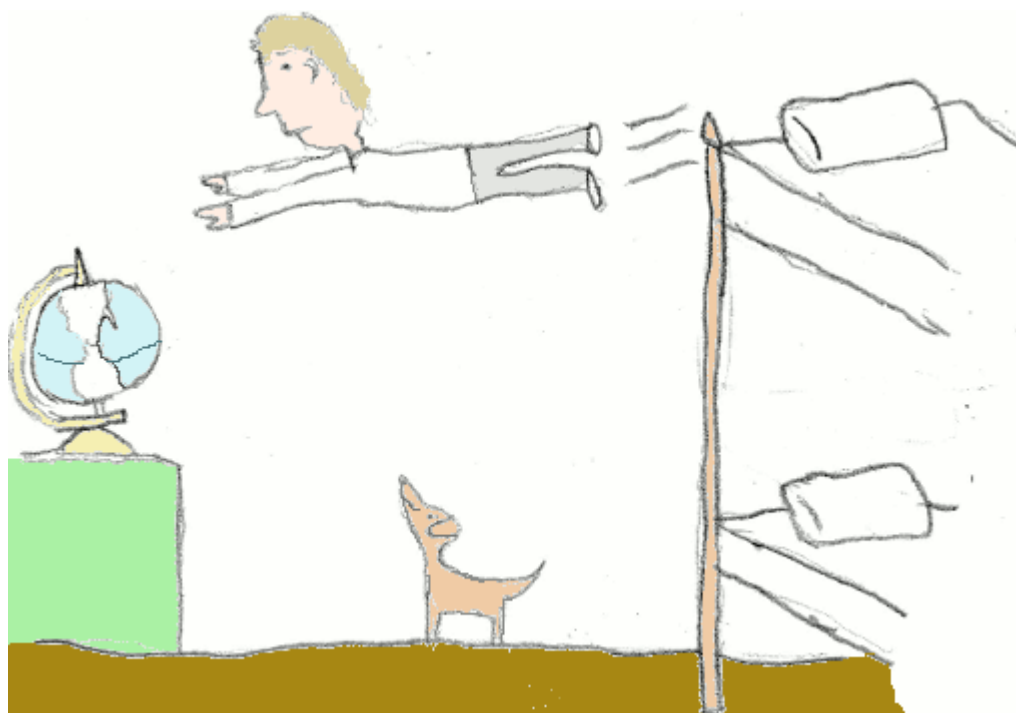
I detested going to church. I hated it so much that one Saturday evening—when I was maybe 8 or 9—I actually tried incurring a serious injury so I’d miss church the next day.

At the time, I had the top bunk of a bunk bed. Bunk beds aren’t called that because people rip bunker blasts in them—though they might as well be. Also, I mistakenly thought the footboard of the bottom bunk, which I used to climb onto the top bunk, was called a *postpone*, because that was a Speak & Spell word. I think I insisted on getting the top bunk because the dog peed in my bed when I had the bottom bunk, and people kept piling their garbage in my bed.

I got the brilliant idea that I should jump off the top bunk until I broke my leg so I could miss church. While my parents were in the living room watching *Sneak Previews*, I kept jumping off my bed and landing with a spectacular thud.

‘Twas a fail. I failed like a boss! Know what I didn’t fail to do? Fail, that’s what.

But overall, I’m a winner in life. Except in the years when ol’ Newtzi and GeeDumbya gunked everything up. Other than that, I’m a winner.



Courting a Snuffleupagus moment

YouTube has given us yet another Snuffleupagus moment!

When I tell people there used to be a Cincinnati-based TV show called *Juvenile Court*, they insist I’m making it up. Over the years, my face has been laughed in many times because people didn’t think this show was real.

Once again, YouTube saves the day...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_08Db-YKNs

Here’s a synopsis of that video, in case you’re afraid that if you watch it, Judge Paul Trevor will blow a

huge bubble with bubble gum that expands out of the screen and pop it all over your face. *Juvenile Court* was produced by Cincinnati's WCPO-TV—Channel 9—in the '70s and '80s. As the name vaguely implies, it featured juvenile court cases. Since juvenile cases are confidential, the show featured actors redoing real cases. Even the judge's name—Paul Trevor—was a stage name. He's actually the late Sam Wilson, a University of Cincinnati law school dean.

That particular clip includes a 1979 episode of *Juvenile Court*. The station had some technical difficulties during this airing, but a vast majority of it is watchable. This episode includes 2 cases, and most of the actors who portrayed the young defendants and their parents had very good acting skills.

Man, was the judge strict! He imposed tough sentences—and he closed each case in this episode with his catchphrase, "That'll be all."

Best all, the video opens with the "Brrring! Channel 9!" jingle and the squat, rounded Channel 9 logo.

I remember one case on *Juvenile Court* in which the judge skeeped at a girl for chewing gum in court. She appeared to stick the wad of gum under the table.

On several occasions in my youth, I was threatened with juvenile court, and I thought they meant the TV show!

With the rise of YouPube, the scales of justice have now tipped in your favor.

On the hunt for Runts

People on the Internet admit to ruining stuff.

Someone posted saying they once discovered a trick to rip off the Skee-Ball machine at Chuck E. Cheese's. Arcade games at this prekindergarten pizza place would spit out tickets that you could redeem for prizes. The poster said that if you yanked on the ticket a certain way as it was popping out of the machine, it would give you 100 more tickets.

I'm sure Chuck E. Cheese's has corrected this in the 30 years since. But the woman who reviews this zine says she has an equally funny story from her youth.

There was a local restaurant that had a couple locations in northern Campbell County. It still has one location, and my current business partner and her brother used to put the other location through all sorts of punishment. Much of this mischief centered on a vending machine that dispensed Runts candy near the restaurant's entrance.

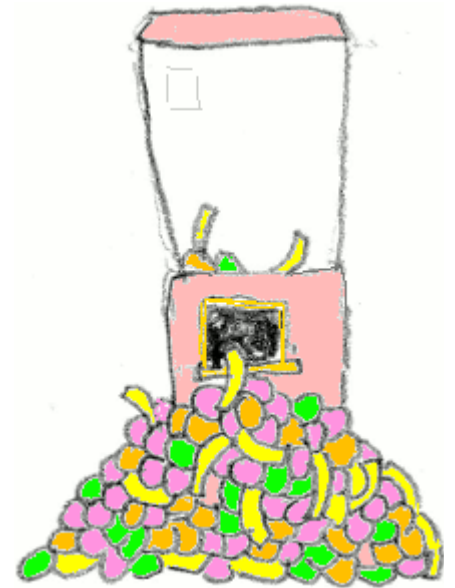
This Runts machine wasn't owned by the restaurant. It belonged to a phony pastor and self-described "Christian social worker" who was using revenues from it to hire prostitutes and go on gambling trips. This checkbook clergyman also ran a scam where he begged for items to be donated to his "church", but instead he sold the items to cover his own expenses.

My friend and her beloved sib somehow figured out how to make slugs out of video game arcade tokens to use in the Runts machine and get huge quantities of candy. Arcade tokens weren't like tokens on today's porn websites, which are just numbers that exist out in cyberspace. They looked like coins but were meant only to be used in game machines. The tokens did so much damage to the Runts dispenser that eventually it began ejecting the token along with the candy (just not from the same slot) so you could keep using the same token over and over and didn't have to buy new ones.

Best all, the restaurant knew this was going on. They didn't give a shit, because it wasn't their Runts machine. They wanted the minister to have a reason to remove his Runts dispenser from their establishment, because they were tired of him showing up and preaching at customers.

What happened to all those Runts? My friend collected them in sterile boxes and sold them at yard sales and the like—not unlike a lemonade stand. It helped pay for a Pet Shop Boys record and other goodies.

That would have been in the era of all those televangelist scandals, so it's not like many people would have been sympathetic to the disgraced preacher whose Runts machine got destroyed.



Trump probably doesn't know how to bubble

Donald Trump probably doesn't know how to blow a bubble with bubble gum.

Why would he know how? Bubbling is something people of normal means do—for beegie is a neet to eet treet that appeals to the proletariat. What incentive would a spoiled brat like Trump have to figure out how?

I bet the Donald has gummed, but I can find no photographic evidence that he has ever bubbled.

Working-class folks like us have many reasons to bubble—and are more likely to be in situations conducive to bubbling. If you're a struggling actor who wants to portray Pete Rose in a biographical movie, you best know how to bubble. Pete came from a humble background, so he has probably spent his whole life bubbling. He bubbled fluently and with peerless dispatch during his incredible baseball career.

But *Donald Trump*???

Why???????????

Trump *always* had it made in life. He had no incentive to learn how to blow a blasted bubble! Sure, he had plenty of time, but just no reason to do it.

My business partner who critiques this zine is big on economic class consciousness, and she says economic travails helped promote better bubbling among her peers. The other side gets the stupid, but our side gets the beegee!

I've mentioned many times that rich kids from Bishop Brossart who harassed me chewed gum they found in garbage cans or stuck under desks—because they were weird, not because they couldn't afford fresh gum—but did these kids ever bubble?

Of course, there are exceptions to the rule that links economic deprivation with bubbling knowhow. Despite his lifetime of being pampered, George W. Bush bubbled. But that was probably because—according to witnesses—every time he got angry, he locked himself in his office and munched on huge wads of Super Bubble. These temper tantrums surely gave him many chances to teach himself how to bubble. Rick Perry has also been spoiled his whole life, yet he bubbled during Trump's inauguration ceremony. George Washington—one of the wealthiest Presidents—probably would have been a better bubble kablamoer than Trump, even though he rocked dentures that were made of wood, ivory, and other people's teeth.

If you're President, you should know how to bubble. The Constitution requires the President to be a natural-born U.S. citizen at least 35 years old, so I propose randomly selecting a person who meets these requirements to compete with Donald Trump in a bubble gum blowing contest. The winner gets to be President.



A gum caper that was out of our element

Back when I was about 8, I thought the 4 food groups were Bubble Yum, Dubble Bubble, Hubba Bubba, and Bazooka.

Noting that bubble gum could inflate, I came up with a splendid idea back then. I discussed with a neighbor kid the prospect of placing a chewed wad of beegee on a helium pump to see how big of a bubble the pump could blow. Because helium is a finite resource, you occasionally hear complaints from scientists about helium from the National Helium Reserve being squandered on frivolous things like balloons, so I'm sure they wouldn't be jumping for joy over this plan. (It doesn't help matters that in 1996, the 104th Reich rammed through a law to privatize this reserve, which hastened the wastage of helium.)

I asked my boyhood pal if his parents had a helium pump so we could try out this idea. He said they didn't. But he said they did have a hydrogen pump!

I thought that would work even better, because hydrogen is the lightest chemical element of all. Even when I was 8, I knew this. It would also work better than a lithium pump or beryllium pump.

Although lithium and beryllium are also lightweight elements, they're not gases. (Since these are lighter-than-air solids, how come we never see chunks of them floating in the air?) You can also forget about heavier elements like a scandium pump (which incidentally was not named for the band Scandal). Sorry, tennesseine.

However, my brother warned us not to use the hydrogen pump to inflate bubble gum, because hydrogen is flammable. Gives a whole new meaning to "Burn gum, it melts!"

So my plan went up in smoke. But no bother! In my day, beegee was chewed by all, and bubbles were publicly kaboomed. No obstacle to bubbling was too great to overcome. We were the risk takers!

(In a separate event, a kid from school who lived part-time a couple blocks over rode his bike up to my street and gave a big speech about bubble gum in the intersection. "I'll be chewing some later!" he declared, loud enough for the entire neighborhood to hear him, as if anyone gave a shit.)

Did a person bubble in church?

It's another captivating Brossart whodunit!

There's a very real possibility that a person once bubbled in church. People farted in church, so why not?

When I forcibly went to Bishop Brossart, they made us attend mass regularly. Usually, it was in the school's infamous bingo hall, but once in a while, we'd walk to the church up the street. Since the school wouldn't control the troublemakers, this trek was a problem in and of itself—I was chased into traffic or hit with rocks many times—but I don't want to dwell on it.

I don't think I've ever asked anyone if it's good manners to chew gum in church. Most schools prohibit gumming, so I'm sure churches would frown on it too. Someone posted on the Internet, "I think as long as you aren't chomping your gum or blowing bubbles, or doing anything else disturbing, that it's ok." Well, guess what? Someone bubbled in church. Somebody posted on Yahoo, "I chewed gum and blew bubbles in church, is that OK with God?" Someone replied that this is acceptable because: "God made gum. God made bubbles. God made church."

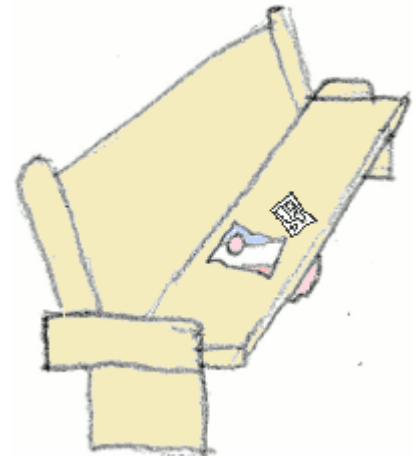
So now we know that a person bubbled in church, but my question wasn't about whether *anybody*, *anywhere* did it. I want to know if people actually bubbled at any liturgy I attended.

One day, when Brossart dragged us to the church up the street, I noticed someone had deposited a bubble gum wrapper onto a pew. It rested there throughout the mass, smiling its ass off. It might have even had the Bazooka Joe funnies with it. Why would anyone bring along a gum wrapper unless they chewed gum? Why would anyone chew gum unless they bubbled?

When I saw the wrapper, I looked around to try to see whodunit. I didn't see any jaws in motion. I didn't see anyone pursing their lips like you do when you're about to bubble. I didn't detect any actual, live bubble gum bustin'.

My freshman history teacher was sitting nearby, and at the end of mass, he calmly said to another student something like, "When we leave here, do me a favor and pick up that gum wrapper." It was a friendly request, not an accusation. This is hilarious on at least a couple fronts. It means a teacher saw the wrapper and knew someone had gummed in church. This no doubt angered him to no end. It also means the teacher didn't know who. Otherwise, he would have angrily skeeped at the offender.

My conclusion: A person probably bubbled in church that day.



Bring back the stigma for gutter classism

Cool people know I'm dirt poor. I don't mind if people know this. I don't feel as if I carry a negative stigma just because of my many signs of poverty. I know you all love me, and that's a goodly reason why. I release an air of authenticity. The 1% releases air too, but not that kind!

I'm avoiding the temptation to write about the showiest self-indulgence by the 1% that I've seen on YouTube lately. I want to talk about something about more serious: classist hate speech—and the favoritism that the 1% nobility benefits from.

The normalization of bullying began when society began stigmatizing the poor in mainstream venues. The stigma used to be carried by the rich. America used to have values. There was pride in hard work and the working-class markers that went with it. There was shame in wealth and indulgence. But no more. At some point, it became taboo just to recall that classism ever was taboo.

I don't understand the appeal of pervasive and *intentional* classism. I've never thought it was anything other than plain old meanness. It's mean to spread made-up canards about the poor just for its own sake. The

“crisis” of welfare abuse in the ‘90s was a hoax by the right-wing media designed to whip up support for more rigid economic and social policies. There was no widespread welfare abuse taking place in America—and there were no states that were “welfare magnets”, the Far Right’s shrill bleatings to the contrary notwithstanding.

Even after policies to punish the poor were enacted, the Evil Empire still didn’t get all their violent classism out of their system. They turned to Facebook. Someone on Daily Kos criticized Facebook for tolerating so much right-wing hate speech even though it would seem to violate Facebook’s stated “community standards.” Someone said of Facepoo, “They have a real problem dealing with racism and misogyny. Those *are* the community standards.” In practice, that’s true, unfortunately. And it’s just as true with classism. Instead of spreading their hatred only among a small clique, the classist thought police now smashes it in people’s faces on Facebook. (This is the same Facebook that deleted my business partner’s account repeatedly because she disagreed with these liars.)

These gutter bigots are *professionals*. Some prep who I knew as a youth became a *pharmacist*—and now fills her Facebook page with classist hate speech. She’s been going on about the same thing for years.

Why do we tolerate brownshirts like this in professional fields? Someone like this has no business being a pharmacist, of all things. A pharmacist must show good judgment and ethics. How can I trust my health to this person? Everyone is entitled to their own opinions—but they’re not entitled to their own facts. Just as bad, she was allowed to coast through school because of her family connections.

There should be an independent effort to keep tabs on thuggish totalitarians like this and make sure they never hold a decent job again. A good tool to help relieve America’s crisis of poverty and income inequality would be to bring back the stigma against militant classism. Occupy made more progress on this than any other movement in a long time—before it surrendered. The Tea Party held rallies that looked like riots, but Occupy was denounced by the right-wing media for far less than what the Tea Party got away with—even though Occupy events drew many more participants. The alt-right continues to threaten and instigate violence against dissenters, yet nothing is ever done about it.

The German government has urged Facebook to crack down on hate propaganda. When will America do the same?

You’ve been bubblin’ in your sleep...

Keek! Ruin!

I still get e-mails rife with funny gum stories. Did you know bubble gum once got stuck all over a wall hanging, which ruined it utterly? You betcha!

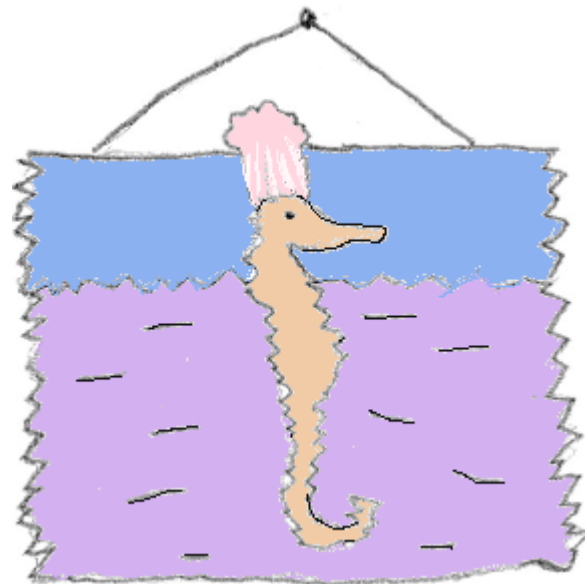
A woman e-mailed me and told me she chewed beegee once. She also possessed a futon that was against a wall that had a beautiful wall hanging that depicted a seahorse. In the immortal words of Ronald McDonald, it’s a work of art!

As she was masticating her bubble gum, she fell asleep. Later, she woke up gumless. She had forgotten that she had been chomping this zesty confection. But she was reminded of it in a big way sometime later when she was rearranging the room. That’s when she found her precious wad of bubble gum tangled along the top of the wall hanging.

How in the Wide, Wide World Of Sports did bubble gum gravitate from the futon all the way to the *top* of the wall hanging? She must have sleepgummed! Either that or she sleepbubbled, and the bubble floated out of her mouth, landed on the top of the wall hanging, and burst.

She scraped much of the gum off the wall hanging, but some of it could not be removed. The wall hanging remained on the wall for quite some time before she sold it at a yard sale.

So—much as some kid got a toilet t-shirt after the Fritos shirt that got put in the toilet got sold—someone out there now has a bubble gum wall hanging with a seahorse.



“Is We Is” isn’t

*Is we is or is we isn’t
Gonna get ourselves a prison*

Another Snuffleupagus moment courtesy of YouTube!

For years, I’ve been telling people that there was a town in Illinois that made its own ridiculous rap video

to try to land a new prison. People insisted—*insisted*, I tell you!—that I made the whole thing up.

Once again, YouTube proves me right and everyone else wrong...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2w-pgn9DwmA>

Here's a synopsis, since you're afraid you might accidentally click on a video with a scary Ernie and Bert. Back in 1987, town officials in Flora, Illinois, wanted the state to build a prison there. I understand that unemployment was and is a big problem in many American communities, but who wants a *prison*? At least build the local economy on something constructive instead of on punishing people.

Rap music was *really* a novelty in some parts of the country in 1987. For years after, pop radio stations in smaller Midwestern markets were still late to add rap records—even when they were fast on every other type of music. Undeterred, Flora officials made a rap video to promote their cause. Radio used to be influential, but it clearly wasn't radio that inspired them, because—by all accounts—rap wasn't big on any of the few stations that regularly reached Flora. Officials even gave their rap ensemble a name: the Barbed Wire Choir. Get it? Prisons have barbed wire!

The Choir's song was titled "Is We Is" and included the stirring refrain, "Is we is or is we isn't...Gonna get ourselves a prison."

Among the town luminaries who rapped in the video were the mayor, police chief, and newspaper writer. The mayor looked like Boss Hogg! He had the same suit, hat, and convertible with the horns on the hood. He even hit his chauffeur with his hat when he got mad!

In 2012, the town sold a 25th anniversary DVD of this video to raise money to rebuild the train depot.

"Is We Is" wasn't, isn't, and won't be. It failed to attract a prison to Flora.

People's faces got farted in

Have you ever had a big, stinky bunker blast ripped squarely in your face?

I was on the business end of a powerful loominsky in 8th grade, when I attended the miserable nun-run empire of St. Joseph's School in Cold Spring.

There was a student in many of my classes who enjoyed releasing air biscuits. I suspect him of letting loose with an uproarious SBD in church once. I detected a stench that was so strong that I thought the kneelers would melt. He was sitting right next to me, and I noticed he was stifling laughter. He also offered a wide buffet of LAP trouser sneezes. They sported different lengths, frequencies, and rhythms.

One day, we were all given an art project that we worked on in our homeroom. The student in question was goofing off as usual. I was sitting at my desk when he approached the student in the next row to have a little chitchat. When he leaned over the other desk, his ass was pointed plumb at my face. It was only about a foot away.

I knew what was coming. I didn't know if it would be an SBD or an LAP, but a pooteroony was imminent. Questions about its duration and syllable count also remained.

Then came the stink. Oh my. I thought it would vaporize the ceiling fan. It was then that I wished a gas mask was part of the dress code that the school was so obsessed with enforcing. (But it might have made it hard to bubble.)

In high school—Brossart again—this student went on to crack many noteworthy bunkeroos. In art class, he ripped a wafto that sounded like someone trying to tune a broken guitar underwater.

He was a pooter.



Gum has bad hair day

Getting gum in your hair and getting hair in your gum are two different things.

I don't understand everybody's obsession with bubble gum lately. I mentioned gum once last summer, and now everyone just wants to discuss it constantly. Occasionally, they even chew it. Can you fathom that?

One day, I witnessed a person somehow getting a strand of their own hair stuck in their gum. They continued to chomp this plug of beegie—pushing the hair to the front of their gum with their tongue so they could blow two bubbles side by side.

I posted about this on a road transport forum on the Internet. I was curious about what people do when they get hair in their gum. Do they throw the gum away—"discard!"—or do they blow a double bubble as if with a forked tongue? Or do they try to pry the hair out of their gum?

Unfortunately, people misunderstood this question. It was almost unanimous. Most thought I meant getting gum in your hair—not getting hair in your gum. They suggested everything from peanut butter to WD-40. Right answer, wrong question. One person did suggest peanut butter for the *right* question, but it seems like it would just dissolve the entire wad—thereby wasting it.

In Soviet Russia, you waste gum. In America, gum wastes you.

I'm too cool for Kings Island

I thought I outgrew size requirements at Kings Island when I was 14 or so when they realized they couldn't keep raising their "Must be this tall" statues each year.

Now—in a policy that appears to be new—they won't let visitors who weigh more than 225 pounds on many of their rides. Guess what? Last year, I weighed 226. I'm at 199 now, but the point stands.

That's their idea of "overweight"? It might be above average, but it's well within common range. Since Kings Island did not have such a strict weight policy in my day, it's clear the purpose of it is to impose what it considers proper standards of morality and appearance—not for any other reason. Kind of like Matt Bevin's effort to gut Medicaid. The Far Right presides over a cockamamie program of policing others' personal behavior to meet their own moral code—not for any health concerns—and this is part of it.

Just thought I'd warn you in case you're rolling in dough and can afford to visit Kings Island at the price they charge today.



Martha Quinn bubbled

Remember Martha Quinn? She's best known as a VJ on MTV in the 1980s.

We used to watch this channel back when they aired, you know, videos. But I haven't had cable in 24 years. About all I missed since then is some kick-ass public access shows, I'm told.

One day, Martha Quinn gummed. Not only did she gum, but she also bubbled! My family and I were gathered around the set watching MTV, when Martha appeared between videos. This was back when MTV still had all those warm, cozy props like the back room of a record shop. And Martha was chomping bubble gum.

Every so often—between sentences—Martha bubbled. How professional!

I didn't say anything about it, because I didn't think I needed to point out what was obvious. But then—after Martha blew another bubble—my mom got an annoyed look on her face and asked, "Hey, is she chewing bubble gum?" That's when all hell broke loose. I burst into laughter!

My parents weren't keen on MTV—to them, anything harder than "I'm Easy" was "noise"—but they probably liked it even less after seeing one of its VJ's display what they considered unprofessional behavior. I was interested in pursuing a broadcasting career, and they probably wanted Martha Quinn to set a better example.

Martha Quinn proved to millions of viewers that day that she is eminently capable of bubbling. Now people are going to insist she doesn't actually exist, just because I mentioned that she knows how to blow a bubble, and everybody knows real people don't actually know how.

Kmart shellacked when it stopped selling records

I wasn't a big Kmart guy, but this "discount" store chain is its own worst enemy. Kmart stores used to be everywhere, but where are they now? In the toilet?

Central to Kmart's slow-mo failure is the fact that it didn't sell common items despite claiming to offer a general selection of goods. A major example: records. Kmart stopped selling records (as opposed to tapes or CD's) when they were still by far the leading music medium.

I was spoony over 45 RPM singles. Local Kmart stores used to sell 45's of the top 30 or so tunes. When they ceased record sales, it was years away from the average person even *thinking* about switching over to CD's. Other people say the same thing. You might argue that we were just kids when this happened and didn't do anything but stretch huge wads of bubble gum out of our mouths with our fingers, so we weren't mature enough to see the reality of the situation, but it's been confirmed by multiple people. There was a record shop with a much better selection, but you had to travel much further to get there. The point here is that Kmart made a bad business decision that caused customers to buy records elsewhere.

Kmart is also known for caving to efforts by right-wing censors to yank certain music and video games based on their content. Considering it was roughly 1987 when local Kmarts stopped selling records, I suspect the reason they stopped was so they'd have an excuse not to sell "I Want Your Sex" by George Michael, which was banned from Cincinnati radio. (Censoring a George Michael record might not seem like a big deal, but it was one of several cultural or political stories in that era that weakened my morale, since it highlighted that we weren't allowed to have what other cities had. The ultimate blame for it lies with the anti-everything stalkers at Citizens for Community Values for threatening to picket stations' advertisers if they played the song. I learned about this on a radio website only a few years ago.) That's the only remotely plausible explanation I can think of for not selling what was still the dominant music medium for years to come.

That's about as intelligent as gesturing as if you're turning the crank on a camera every time the movie industry is mentioned.

Shell game

With Operation KroGum in full swing, why not Operation ShellGum?

When I go to Roads Scholaring in Fort Wright—the same outing that was pulverized by my encounter with the Park Hills Police—I bopped by the Shell station on Dixie Highway to look for something fascinating to devour.

Not only did the food mart there have a vague aroma of a certain flavor of Bubblicious, but it also had a slightly better bubble gum selection than Kroger has usually had lately. Not *much* better, but a tiny bit. I dared not purchase any of it, however.

Many gummers though will be disappointed because Shell sold sugarless—but not regular—Bubble Yum. Folks my age are especially careful about this, because middle-aged people who chew bubble gum are more worried about cancer than rotting their teeth (which have usually ceased to be). But children should be careful too.

Blow your own bubble—not somebody else's, which is what you're doing when you chew the sugarless stuff.

