

The Last Word™

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Little Bites and pizza insurance...Consumed by the fires...



My work appeals to a fan base that is generally suspicious of advertising and not easily induced into extravagant purchases. But advertising can be fun, even attractive!

A few months ago, my bizbud posted some TV commercial reviews on her blog. She reports being unimpressed. It's a truism that commercials aren't as creative or memorable as they used to be.

Inspired by my business partner's brief lowdown, I'm regaling you with some commercial reviews too! You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll be back for more (as Ratt would say)! Because we're older than 0, we don't go around saying unlearned and judgmental things like, "OMG an IKEA ad showed 2 mans!!!" We use creativity in our reviews.

First item: McDonald's. Some ads are based on a flawed premise. This is one of them. This commersh for your friendly neighborhood Ron McDon touts working at McDonald's as your "best first job." Well, whatever floats your boat, I guess. But this ad makes me feel *damn lucky* I was allowed to work at the library as my first job instead of being born later and forced at the point of a bayonet to take a job I hate. I got my library job through a federal jobs program that congressional Republicans later killed. I'm not a man of privilege, but this campaign unwittingly shows how things *could* have been even worse than they were, believe it or not—and our economic gatekeepers bully the public into accepting it.

Now, on to the Elk & Elk ads. Yes, this law firm still runs ads, which I only mention because one of their lawyers looks like Moe Howard. Similarly, Columbia Hyundai still runs ads with the Glenn Beck look-alike.

Next, let's examine the Little Bites ad where an SUV full of kids spills food everywhere. The mom driving the gas-guzzling SUV mumbles to herself, "Not in my car." Her reaction seems pretty mild, for the kids are spitting chocolate milk all over the upholstered seats. But they didn't forcibly spew the milk out everywhere in a projectile manner. They just opened their mouths and let big quantities of milk drip out, letting gravity do the rest (like the uproarious movie scene of the kid spitting out food in the hotel restaurant). If I'd done something like that in my day, I'd never hear the end of it!

Next ad: "Can you get rid of wrinkles in minutes?" There's people starving in the streets, and folks are worried about wrinkles? I hear "First World Problems" by "Weird Al" Yankovic playing in my head.

Next: NyQuil. Predictably, this ad encourages people to go on with life and spread germs at a children's party—because that's what ads for ineffective cold medicines always do, because they want to sell even more product when the misery is spread. An ongoing problem for decades. It used to be that colds meant bed rest. Now they sell you products that don't work and encourage you to distribute germs.

I also saw a Puffs tissue commercial that uses the word *slayed* instead of *slew*—which means we can use *beginned*.

The O'Charley's commercial with the bespectacled spokeswoman advertising "free pie Wednesday" would be much more effective if—instead of her standing there with a goofy grin—people got pies in the face.

This series of commercial reviews seems to have come right at the end of an ad campaign for some device that you order that magically straightens teeth. Cosmetic dentistry ad buys usually don't last long, because most people of normal means don't purchase these laughable products. This campaign is no exception. See also my remarks for the wrinkle cure ad.

How about a couple radio commercials? In recent weeks, I've heard an annoying ad for some seminar by some nobody pushing a real estate scheme that involves investing in buildings "using other people's money." Use your own damn money! And I heard an ad for some shooting club that offers "free gun rentals" but it sounds like "free gum rentals." Renting gum sounds like something they'd do at Brossart, judging by the prevalence of people chewing used wads of gum.

I'm saving the funniest commercial for last: a TV commersh for Domino's Pizza. This ad not only reminds me of the "free credit for spilled drinks" of the old Frisch's Big Boy commercial, but it uses the magic word too! According to this ad, Domino's now offers "carryout insurance" in case you destroy your pizza before you get it home. The commersh shows a man slipping on ice in front of his spacious suburban digs, flinging his freshly baked pizza onto his snow-covered lawn—thereby wasting it. The ad says that with this new insurance, "we'll replace your pizza if it gets ruined after you leave the store."

Hear that?! Ruined!!!

When I order a pizza, I handle it like it's a porcelain doll until the moment it touches my oddly arrayed chompers. 'Tis sad when foodstuffs get wosted. Why get "carryout insurance"? On the other hand, someone who commented on a blog about this new insurance said that Domino's pizza "belongs on the floor."

That's the most creative ad since the Gas-X commercial with the Hillary Clinton look-alike!

I'm comin' up so you better get this bubble started...



(Fair use, so tough toilets.)

Remember Pink?

Yes, I'm talking about the singer who gave an interview in 2010 in which she endorsed child abuse. "I think parents need to beat the crap out of their kids," Pink ukased. That's why I blackballed her from my MP3 scheduler (along with Ace Of Base and Erykah Badu).

Anyhow, Pink recently Chewed Gum And Thought It Was Funny.

As part of the 1% program of thought policing, I've been lambasted for supporting those who physically fight back against bullying. But those who criticize me for "violence" are the same ones who support Pink's views on parenting—so that's probably why Pink was invited to sing the national anthem at the Super Bowl.

In doing so, she almost bubbled...

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

Yes, Pink threw her bubble gum onto the Super Bowl field in front of millions of viewers—at the start of what was the most widely watched Super Bowl in years!

In that video—as the singer prepares to perform "The Star-Spangled Banner"—she purses her lips as if she is about to blow a bubble with her gum. Then she realizes she's on camera, so she thinks better of it. Instead, she removes the gum from her mouth and tosses it down on the field. Then she smiles.

Apologists for Pink say it was a cough drop, not gum. But you can't blow a bubble with a cough drop. Besides that, everybody hates cough drops, and cough drops don't work anyway. #itsgum.

A good monster costume got wasted

Let's take a trip back to my favorite year: yesteryear!

I just remembered a frustrating little vignette that occurred around 1988 or 1989. Brossart was bad enough, but I shouldn't have been forced to drag the despair associated with high school into other areas of life. But I was, and the gossip I heard from adults back then only twisted the knife in further.

Grownups in my part of town were gearing up for a gargantuan Halloween bash! In the run-up to Halloween, that's all they talked about. Little kids had trick-or-treating, big kids like me had Cabbage Night, and adults had a costume party!

I was informed that one of the peeps who planned to attend this party invested big bucks in a homemade monster costume. This wasn't something you could buy at a store. No sirree! The wig and all the other accessories were acquired separately. In the immortal words of Ronald McDonald, it's a work of art! Probably a few years later, someone told me that a couple planned to dress as Bert and Ernie at a Halloween party and tried to make their own costumes instead of buying them already made. This was sort of like that.

Anybip—because this was when spreading germs was becoming a favorite local sport—I could see from a mile away what was going to happen with the monster costume. The moment I was told about the costume—which was weeks before the party—I *knew* exactly what would occur, but I just didn't say it. In my mind, I thought to myself that the person was probably going to catch some serious illness just before the party and not be able to go. Illness had already spoiled one important event after another, and everyone was cajoled into tolerating it.

Sure enough, it happened.

Later, someone mentioned in a matter-of-fact tone that the person came down with a Ronald Reagan supercold that kept them home from work, costed them money, and prevented them from going to the party. Worst of all, the monster outfit went to waste. The costume included perishable materials, so it couldn't be saved to be used the next year. Not even the wig could be repurposed as a toilet lid cover—even though I think it *was* a toilet lid cover.

Welcome to the hideous world of capitalist healthcare getting in the way of all recreational, educational, and economic activities.



A person farted in the kitchen and it stank

Some of my fondest memories involve the unstoppable humor of flatus.

One day when I was about 8, I was in the kitchen with some family members as a special holiday dessert was being prepared. Raw dough filled mixing bowls, and the dog was surely daydreaming of where he could find his next Band-Aid to chew up.

Then it happened. Yes, a bunker blast. A loominsky. A rock snake. A backdoor breeze. An air biscuit. It was a silent-but-deadly, my friends.

This wasn't just your standard stinker. This was the kind of bunkeroo that could peel the flowered wallpaper off the walls (and probably melt the wall tiles with the Zorro silhouettes behind the sink). It smelled horrible. Absolutely rotten.

We were all gathered near the end of the kitchen table near the phone when the aroma was detected. An accusation was made, but the accused could only wryly laugh.

Sure it smelled awful, but it was funny! The kitchen used to be plagued by mysterious foul odors that apparently only I could detect, but this was a stench that everyone could enjoy!

Relax. It's a fart!

A person played with their gum during Trump's speech

When Donald Trump gives stupid speeches, how should you react? By playing with your bubble gum.

Much as I refused to view George W. Bush's fascist State of the Union addresses, Trump got a similar treatment for his recent address. Trump's speech is widely considered a white supremacist incitement and won praise from racial racketeer David Duke. For this speech, I left the TV on but with the sound off, so I could see when the Democratic response was starting. (I'm *still* waiting for the Democratic response to Bill Clinton's 1996 address, which was a right-wing speech.)

But my bizbud must be tougher than I am, for she tells me she left the sound on during Trump's speech in case the so-called President dropped an ethnic slur or two. However, to stave off the nausea of seeing Trump's ugly mug on the TV screen, my friend occupied herself wisely, saying she "played with my gum the whole time." That is, until her roommate bopped along and grabbed the gum out of her hand and threw it away.

My business partner sculpted little snakes and a lasso out of her chewed wad of beegum—because that's what intelligent middle-aged people do when they buy green bubble gum.

Whipped cream on the scarecrow...Blood on the plow...

My bizbud ruined a scarecrow and thought it was funny. Then she danced around and repeatedly said, "Keek! Ruin!" Just joking about that part!

My terrific business partner longs for the hijinks of her youth. She's got 20.63 trillion stories—all of them uproarious. It's hard to top the time she got kicked out of the theater for popping popcorn when her 8th grade class went to see a movie, but that doesn't stop her from spending a lifetime trying.

One blustery winter day when she was elementary school age—many decades ago—she got together with some neighborhood pals to wreak havoc on her beleaguered little town. She and her kick-ass gang trudged down the road to a secluded little lake. She lamented not wearing her ice skates, because the lake was frozen over.

But no bother! The shore of the lake was adorned by a life-sized scarecrow. One of the group kicked the post for the scarecrow, toppling it. Someone had also brought along a half-full can of whipped cream. My bizbud promptly grabbed the can and sprayed the entire contents of the can squarely onto the scarecrow's face. Under normal circumstances, clumps of whipped cream probably would have fallen right off, but it was outdoors, so it was cold, and the cream froze to the scarecrow's smiling visage.

Then the group took turns sliding around on the frozen lake, hoisting the heavy, cream-covered scarecrow high in the air as they spun around.

That was too much for the Old Guard to stomach. A man appeared and yelled at the group, "Get off my lake! And put back my scarecrow!" But it wasn't his lake any more than it was anyone else's. If this was the lake we think it was, it was a public water. That's because it formed from a creek, and Kentucky law says flowing waters are public. The land around a lake may be private, and standing water such as a small pond may be private—but this lake was part of a flowing stream.

It gets funnier. The angry man walked away, and the group of kids including my bizbud left too. They proceeded to parade the scarecrow—still coated with whipped cream—through town. It was so cold that day that the streets were deserted. Until a police car rolled up. When the officer saw the kids, he yelled that he was about to tell their parents "and you kids won't be able to sit down for a week!" It's unclear how the cop planned to notify their parents, because apparently the police didn't know where the children lived or who their parents were.

The kick-ass crew continued slogging through town. Now that they ran off with the scarecrow, what do they do with it? They should have thought of that beforehand, right? They couldn't just throw it into the street, because then the police would find it and know they did it. They considered leaving it at one of the kids' houses, but that wouldn't work either. What would their folks think if they found a scarecrow sitting on the living room couch?

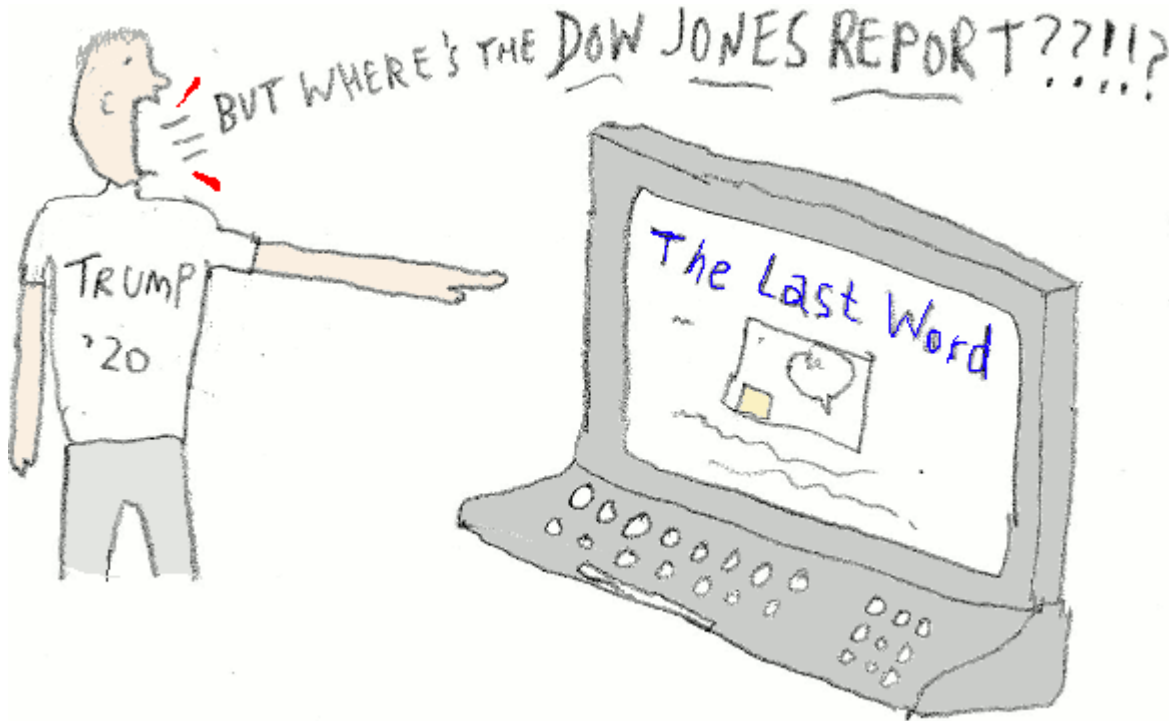
So they laboriously hauled the scarecrow up the street to a convent. They placed it in a window of the convent, and the scarecrow's face clung to the glass because of all the whipped cream. The nuns got



to enjoy a scarecrow covered with whipped cream spying on them through the window.

Whew! Lots of close calls in that story! As far as anyone knows, that was the end of it. Nobody ever got spanked for this life-enriching prank, despite the policeman's warning. It's unknown what happened to the scarecrow after the nuns found it. I don't know how a group of kids managed to lug a scarecrow across town for probably a whole mile without more people noticing.

Lower economic status a big source of pride



The rumors are true: Some of us are still class-conscious enough that we not only vote our economic interests but also take pride in them. Yes, kids, we do exist.

We all long for economic improvement—because it would make a hard life a little less frustrating—but that doesn't mean we should be ashamed of our financial status. Those of us of a lower economic status must work harder just to live. The fact that we're still living at all proves we've had to overcome serious hardships, so we should be proud.

It's so meta.

Some people have no class consciousness. Worse, some listen only to opinionated loudmouths whose outlook is diametrically opposed to our class interests. But I try to make this a “poor-positive” zine. I wouldn't seek any political or spiritual guidance from anyone who'd make me feel bad about myself because of my economic status. I feel very confident about my class.

I wouldn't even know how to react if I was lavished with luxuries like a country club membership or a Learjet. Satisfaction comes not from hoarding luxury possessions and flashing money around but from living in harmony with nature and humanity. Why would a guy who has lived in the same efficiency apartment since 1997 be interested in buying a yacht or a monogrammed polo horse and bragging about it? Let this sink in for a moment: the same *efficiency* apartment for **21 years**. If you were born into above-average means, you probably can't even *imagine* that!

If only most folks of modest means could still afford their own real property in this area, I'd love to buy a splendid parcel in an urban/rural hybrid zone—not one that's suburban in character, but more like parts of Highland Heights, East End, or North Fairmount—and spend my precious leisure time connecting with my free-floating fight against capitalism. An authentic environment free of bourgeoisie excess and spoilage is the best to raise a family or connect with friends.

Naturally, not everybody gets it. Some are hopelessly mired in the rut of right-wing class warfare. Lately, there's been a discussion about class pride and consciousness in an online political forum. I rhetorically asked what's wrong with being proud of being working-class, and some economic royalist replied...

“What’s wrong with being proud of being wealthy?

“‘Working Class Pride’ is really just being proud of having a victim complex”

Stay classy, Grey Poupon.

As the discussion turned to pride in one’s own visible poverty signs, someone responded with the inevitable...

“Fighting capitalism by not getting braces was my favorite part of the *Communist Manifesto* too.”

Was it? The chapter where Karl Marx bites his orthodontist’s finger is a real page turner. No wonder so many high school libraries have banned the book!

I guess I first conceptualized class consciousness when I was about 12—around the time someone explained to me the failure of Reaganomics. It would have also been the same year the school system fought me. Wait, that was *every* year! I was having more and more experiences at school and elsewhere that highlighted economic disparities and how to react. Who can forget the spoiled brat in 8th grade who got to miss a week of school to vacation in New England?

I’m sorry I don’t fit the cookie-cutter suburban mold that the bourgeoisie demands. If you want to think like a robot, you can always get your “news” from CBS or *Investor’s Business Daily*. I have pride in my hard work, and I won’t let that be taken away to appease those who hate me.

Think. Do. Be.

Inspector 12 shall get mad and blow a big Bazooka bubble

Welcome to the abyss of northern Kentucky, where playing air guitar gets you kicked out of school, but where a gang of preps chasing a schoolmate into traffic is considered not just free speech but also art.

I recently regaled you with our crooked games of Monopoly that took place when I was a high school junior in a class for “bad” kids (which around here means anyone who disagrees with their principal). It was sort of like an alternative class. But as little as attending this class accomplished in the long run, it could be a barrel of yaks on some days.

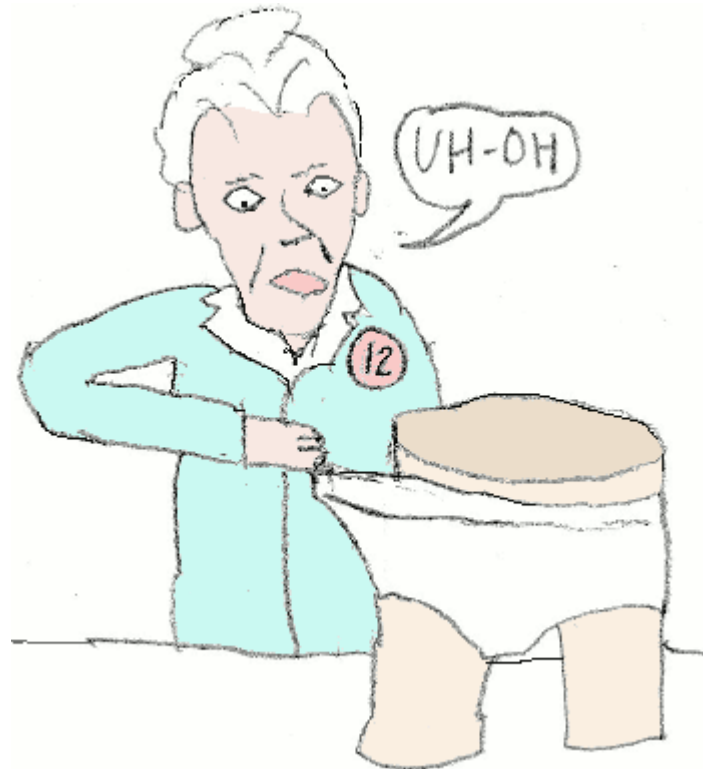
My fondest memories of junior year were courtesy of a student who was in my class and who rode my school bus. He was *uproarious!* One day in class, he taped his own mouth shut with “SUPPORT OUR TROOPS” stickers. The teacher ordered, “Take ‘em off.” So the student began taking his shirt off! He was the same kid who threw jigsaw puzzle pieces across the room and said, “It’s raining puzzles!”

He was known for his funny sayings. When he had to blow his nose but there were no tissues around, he’d blow his nose on a sheet of notebook paper and say, “Have to improvise.”

And yes, some of his sayings had to do with—are you ready for it?—bubble gum. In that class, people did chew bubble gum—in stark disobedience of teacher orders. Why, they even bubbled! One day, we were in the cafeteria, when my hilarious classmate suddenly declared, “Me blow big Bazooka bubble.” He said it very rapidly: “Meblowbigbazookabubble.” Maybe a couple minutes later, he repeated it. But he wasn’t chewing gum, and there was no gum anywhere in sight. I have no idea what prompted him to say it.

I thought that this—sadly—would be just a one-time thing. I didn’t know it was a saying he regularly uttered. But one morning, we were on the school bus, and someone mentioned gum. My classmate responded excitedly with a speech about how the person probably goes to IGA, buys gum, blows bubbles, and yells out, “Me blow big Bazooka bubble!” Again, he said it very quickly in his trademark way. He mimicked a bubble bursting by clapping his hands together.

After the positive reaction he got from this speech, he knew he could count on laughs from his saying. So, in the ensuing months, he came up with variations of it. One



version was designed to imitate tough guys like John Wayne: “I’m a gonna blow a big Bazooka bubble, do ya hear?”

When someone discarded a torn pair of underpants with a thick wisp of shit in them onto the floor of the school bus, my classmate said, “Inspector 12’s gonna be mad!” It was a reference to the beloved Inspector 12 character in the Hanes underwear commercials. He repeated this declaration later and added, “Inspector 12’s gonna blow big Bazooka bubble!” Because that’s the sort of mature thing 17-year-old high school students say.

Encouraged by the good response to the variations of this battle cry, he worked Bazooka into another saying. The school had a level system: Each student was assigned a level that dictated “privileges” (referred to as “rights” elsewhere). The level system was the most idiotic thing that existed at the time outside of George H.W. Bush’s Cabinet or the Toy Money commercial. My amusing classmate came up with a saying that mocked the bottomless stupidity of this system. In a drill sergeant voice, the saying went, “Hey! Is that Bazooka you’re chewin’?! Down into the fiery pits of level 1 with you!”

As much as he talked about bubble gum, he seldom chewed it. I never saw him again after the day he staggered into school clearly drunk, but his concern with beegie influenced the class for at least a year thereafter. Discussion of bubble gum is contagious. My other classmates frequently talked about this riveting viand long after he was gone, even though the teacher had imposed an Allowed Cloud against chomping it.

Now I think I’ll become a doctor, engineer, or lawyer after attending that lovely school and having it on my résumé.

‘90s bombast a no-go with modern audiences

It’s tough enough that we progressive thinkers face political persecution that nobody on the right has to worry about, but we also have the challenge of keeping up with evolving ideas. It’s especially hard when you’re a writer, who leaves a paper trail. You can amass reams of hot air that you wouldn’t dare touch nowadays. It might not be a problem if this was 2003 when America was being dragged backwards—yes, things were probably even worse then than now—but it’s a real hindrance in the long term.

Things change. I’m forward-thinking enough that I know some of my past work would be out of place today. Some observations I made in these pages 20 years ago I wouldn’t make now. It’s like how sitcoms that were groundbreaking in their time included jokes that nobody thinks are a damn bit funny today.

If you’re not at least my age, you may be surprised at some of the things that were once said even by professionals. When I started college at NKU in 1992, I went to an orientation where a highly paid university official started his speech by telling us how his high school counselor tried to discourage him, but he had the last laugh. I’m not going to repeat what he said—I don’t even remember word for word—but the entire auditorium full of students *pealed with laughter* when he said it! It would be hard to imagine today.

I’m not some highbrow who analyzes people’s words just to open a debate. I’m too real to be bogged down by that. Of course, it’s *worse* when those on the right try to act smart, but that’s another matter.

It’s easy to say that after the harassment campaign I was force-fed earlier, I was right to fight back. In fact, there’s a lot of truth to that. You don’t get to be part of the leadership of a name-calling high school and then complain when I respond in kind. It’s also easy to say I should have waited until I had time to “mature” before I started this zine. Um, no. It needed to be done. Some of my writings served as a coping mechanism to fight against an intolerable and traumatic series of events.

I’m not perfect. Nobody is. But, for years prior to the founding of this bulletin, the assholes freaked out on at least a daily basis. After each incident, they pointed the finger at me. Their victim-blaming and gaslighting is not a good testament to their character. If they don’t like something I said later, all I need to do is remind everyone what they did before. They shattered their moral authority over 30 years ago, and it can’t be mended.

We move forward. The Evil Empire stays stuck in a bygone era. When people are only in their teens, their personality is usually set in stone. In any normal environment, the assholes’ behavior at that age would have been seen as mighty fucking stupid—not something to be rallied around as it was. Judging by their Facebook pages, they haven’t changed.



Breakin' every rule with Rulebreakers

Genius is 99% perspiration, 1% inspiration, and 100% bubble gum—and now I'm being praised as a gum marketing genius!

You either said you wanted more articles about gum, or you wanted fewer articles about gum but meant you wanted more. So I'm happy to oblige! Recently, someone on the Interpipes lamented the decline of the bubble gum industry. People said gum just isn't advertised nearly as much as it used to be—especially its bubble blowing powers.

So I came up with an idea: a new brand of bubble gum called Rulebreakers. Until the mid-'90s—when the corporate empire muscled everyone into unquestioning compliance—America sported a healthy spirit of defiance and rebellion. Americans my age remember the kid in school who was always talking about how they weren't gonna do what authority figures told them to—and who followed through. You may recall the college classmate who walked on the coffee table in the student lounge to bypass folks who blocked the way. We remember insurgents of all ages who might seem quaintly loud and undisciplined in the later lockstep America, but they got shit done.

The only time I can recall offhand seeing this powerful spirit any time in the past 20 years was the Occupy movement in its heyday.

Rulebreakers to the rescue!

This brand of beegum would be designed to appeal to the rebel in all of us. It would be marketed to children and adults alike. It would contain natural sweeteners instead of toxins like aspartame. Best all, it would be specially formulated to blow obnoxiously enormous bubbles.

The TV commercials would feature people chewing this brand of gum in places where it might be forbidden—such as school, church, a workplace meeting, or Singapore. The star of the ad would whip out a morsel of this gum, blow some big bubbles, and dance around to a catchy jingle. At the end of the commersh, the ad's antagonist—the teacher, preacher, boss, or President of Singapore—asks if they can borrow a piece of this delicious gum.

Genius! Pure genius! Everyone said I was brilliant for coming up with this idea!

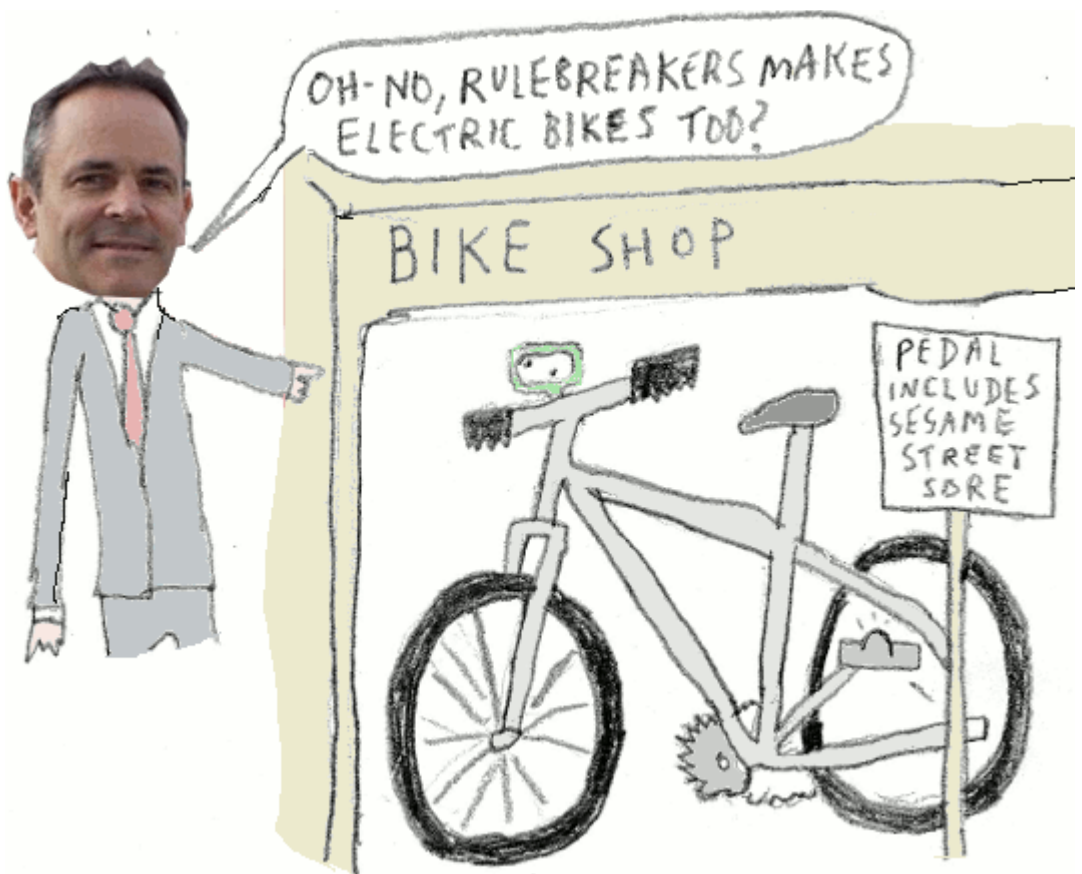
I also stand for high ethical standards, and I don't see anything unethical about marketing Rulebreakers to people of all ages. It's fucking *bubble gum*, for pity's sake! How much harm can bubble gum possibly do? In fact, gum has therapeutic purposes: It soothes indigestion, motion sickness, and TMJ disorder. If Skoal can call one of its smokeless tobacco products Skoal Bandits to make it sound like its users are cool insurrectionists, what's wrong with appealing to rebellion to sell bubble gum? I was only about 12 when the Skoal Bandits commercial aired. How can they try to sell tobacco to 7th graders if you can't sell bubble gum to *everyone*?

Have a Rulebreaker!
You'll be glad you did!

Hit 'em up stylus

Everybody in 2018 needs a stylus for their stereo turntable. But not every website that sells styluses is honest enough to enjoy the privilege of its webmaster not getting poop smeared on their contact lenses.

About a week ago, I needed to buy a new stylus. I found one on Amazon—but quickly canceled the order



because of the news that the seller is a con artist. This seller has reportedly been repackaging old styluses, lying about the brand of the needle on eBay, and fibbing about other details of the product. One website says of this stylus, “Those are crap.” Having had this brand, I agree. I just didn’t know that this brand was being fraudulently repackaged as something better until it was almost too late.

You may recall that I sued someone over a cancer scam and won a settlement. The defendants in that lawsuit were more honest than some of the people out there selling turntable parts. The people I sued at least had something remotely resembling an excuse—even though it was caused by bad choices in life. There’s no evidence that the companies repackaging bad styluses have any excuse whatsoever.

Some businesses have no ethics or pride. State and federal agencies—let alone eBay—are no longer serious about enforcing consumer protections. So we live in a “buyer beware” society these days. Your new clothes hamper just electrocuted Grandma? Tough luck.

It gets worse.

I found a different stylus from another website for about \$25—plus about \$9 for shipping. The website *specifically* said it fits the brand of turntable I have. But when it arrived, I discovered that it does not fit. I was also flabbergasted that such a small needle was shipped in such a huge box—which cost me more for shipping. I e-mailed the website about the stylus not fitting, and they insisted that it was because the cartridge for my turntable had been changed. But the cartridge has never been changed. In fact, the cartridge is soldered onto the tone arm, which in turn is welded to the turntable. The cartridge can’t be changed.

They wanted me to send them a photo of my cartridge so they could send the right stylus. So I did. Then—even with the photo of the cartridge staring them in the face—they insisted the cartridge was missing. Then what do they think it’s a photo of? A toilet?

Then they said that perhaps the stylus didn’t fit because the plastic was worn from repeated attempts to install it. Uh, if they’d sent me one that fit, there wouldn’t be repeated attempts. They told me to send it back—at *my* expense. They said that if they find that it’s defective, they’d replace it with the same product, but they wouldn’t replace it if didn’t fit because of “user error.”

For one thing, I’m not paying shipping when they sent me either a defective or incorrect item. Plus, I didn’t want the same product, because it didn’t fit. I wanted a refund. Besides that, I knew exactly where this was headed. It was clear by this point they were going to claim it was “user error.” I could tell because they’re so thickheaded. It’s like when Kmart gave a sheet of paper to customers that blamed them for the store’s horrendous photo processing.

And worn it is. I examined the stylus using a magnifying glass with a bifocal lens, and it looks like it’s been through a gravel mill. It looks like a secondhand item, even though it was sold as new. For the exorbitant price they charge, how can they sell it as anything but new? I have a strange feeling that if I sent it back, they’d just sell it to someone else without refunding me. Later, I found that this website is the target of a flurry of complaints for its sharp practices. At least one reviewer says this company charged a restocking fee after sending the wrong item. One person says this firm shipped him an empty box.

I visited a popular record kaboomin’ message forum to ask about where to buy a stylus that fits. Nobody knew where to find one, and I’ve searched the Internet and haven’t found any. Users of this forum suggested buying a whole new turntable since you can’t find styluses for this one anymore. My good turntable is now useless. It’s not an antique. It’s *maybe* 10 years old. There’s no excuse for them to stop making needles for a fairly recent turntable like this. Another website sells 3 kinds of styluses that cost *even more* that supposedly fit my turntable, but these needles have been accused of shredding the styrene 45’s that became standard because of record labels’ lack of pride in their product. If I wanted that, I can probably find a 50-year-old Close ‘N Play for a nickel.

In the meantime, what about the \$34 I spent on a stylus that doesn’t fit? That money has to come from somewhere. What am I supposed to do with the useless stylus? Bubble with it? No, because it’s not gum. So you can’t even use it in a Joan Jett tribute video!

So that’s why I bought a brand bippus-busting new turntable. And get this: It comes with the type of stylus I just purchased—which is fine, because I assume that needle fits *this* turntable. At least now I’ll have a mutilated secondhand stylus for when the stylus that comes with the new player wears down.



Whack the stack

Do they still even make turntables that let you stack up records to be played one after the other? I sincerely hope they don’t, because I think the concept was a recipe for danger.

We had one of these in my day. It was built into the living room stereo. You could stack up 6 records at a

time. A family member once thought it could do 10 at a time, and they were thankful I warned them it was only 6. The records would be stacked on the spindle, and the tone arm would hit the edge of each record, causing it to slide down the sloped spindle onto the platter.

Often, this turntable would drop down more than one record, thus skipping a disk. Much worse than this though was that it literally *dropped* the records—which risked breaking them. I’ve heard that stackable turntables also scratch records by playing them with other records underneath.

Plus, once in while we’d buy a 45 RPM single that had an off-center hole. The risk of stacking those was that the needle sometimes landed on the bare platter.

For added ruinment, when I was on WRFN, some of the other DJ’s often marched into the studio while I was on the air and sprayed the records with water while they were playing. This spoils records by clogging the grooves with grime as the record dries. I once thought water itself would ruin records. One day when I was growing up, we went to a yard sale where albums with no jackets were out in the open when it began pouring down rain. Later, we kept talking about how the people who ran the sale were a bunch of stupid weirdoes for leaving records out in the rain. It’s like when I had neighbors who left brand new books out in the rain, and a man who always visited said, “These books are ruined. You know why they’re ruined? ‘Cause nobody gave a shit about ‘em!”

Stuff got ru.

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