

The Last Word™

Issue #532

February 2019

It all starts here...after it started somewhere else and I wasn't allowed to finish it

Hate to do a Wright brothers on your bubble, but I think it's time for me to forget about finishing college.

As part of my PTSD treatment, I was advised to make a list of several goals in life. These aren't cool things like visiting international waters or appearing on TV wearing vampire fangs made out of candy corns, but mundane things. I can't figure out whether these goals are supposed to be means or ends. But if one of these goals was to complete college, it looks like I have to throw in the towel.

I gave up on Kentucky's education system, which politicizes everything and has otherwise been proven to be an utter joke. The final straw is the discovery that a public college in Kentucky took a field trip to the Creation Museum. So I looked into enrolling at Cincinnati State instead. It's possible Cincinnati State would have turned out to be a positive experience once I got enrolled—but the steps to enrolling are so labyrinthine that I don't see how it's possible.

I've written complicated computer programs and earned some money making detailed maps covering a whole county—but I'm stumped by Cincinnati State's enrollment process. For starts, I must have my high school and college transcripts sent to the school. I have no clue whatsoever how to do this. I never had a problem with this at NKU or Gateway. But Cincinnati State provides no instructions on this.

In addition, I need to provide ACT or SAT scores. I've been told that the school would probably waive the requirement that the scores be recent, because I'm older and would have more life experience. Besides, I didn't think test scores had an expiration date. But I've got a little problem: I never took the ACT or the SAT. I took the P-ACT—a test that is so old that it doesn't even have a Wikipedia article. This was the test I was offered as a high school senior. I was never offered the SAT or ACT. I was offered the P-ACT—and that was it. Some websites say this test was given to high school sophomores—but I took it as a senior. I did take something called the P-ACT Plus as a sophomore, because Brossart worshiped this test—but more on that later.

I guess I could take Cincinnati State's placement test instead. But I already took a placement test 27 years ago. It's called the P-ACT!

I'm not sure why schools in my day weren't farsighted enough to realize that the P-ACT soon wasn't going to be honored at colleges. It sounds like they were so far behind the times that they were probably surprised they could buy record players that had speeds besides 78.

It's not the end of the world if I don't finish college. I saw a diagram that illustrates *ikigai*—a beautiful Japanese concept that means a reason for being. It has 4 overlapping circles showing: what you love, what you're good at, what the world needs, and what you can be paid for. This zine fulfills every category except the fourth. If I tried to please individuals who hate me by applying for a job that they refuse to do themselves, I *might* fulfill 2 categories—instead of *clearly* satisfying 3. Plus, I've already given society's economic gatekeepers plenty of chances to hire me—but they haven't done so in several years. That was *their* decision. But the capitalist secret police also fulfills only 2, because they're not good at anything, and the world doesn't need capitalism.

The fewer overlapping circles we fill, the more of our talent is wasted. Better 3 than 2.



Bourgeois meanies have lots of complaints and excuses—but no solutions.

National Geographics got ru

National Geographic had long been one of the most popular and respected magazines in this fine land. This was true until 2015 when one of Rupert Murdoch's companies seized a majority interest in the magazine. Historically though, *National Geographic* was known for the high quality of its articles and for being a pioneer of color photography. Many folks save old issues for decades on end.

But people keep letting them get ru! I don't understand it!

Schools always had copies of this publication laying around, and we were always expected to cut photos out of them for school projects. I don't think these were extra copies. So when they were gone, they were gone. When I went to Brossart, the school rigidly guarded incomprehensible religious magazines that we had to use for reports for religion class. Of course, that didn't stop people from ruining them—after all, it was Brossart, where nothing was safe—but these magazines were protected a lot more than schools protected *National Geographic*.

Eighth grade at St. Joe's was no exception to schools treating *National Geographic* as expendable despite the magazine's high quality. In fact, I remember a project where it was the only magazine we were allowed to destroy. Then the teacher who assigned this project had the nerve to accuse me of losing a copy of *National Geographic* that the school was going to let us ruin anyway. I replied that it must have been stolen, but she admonished, "*National Geographics* are not highly coveted books." Obviously they were, because somebody stole one of them. I have no idea who, but it wasn't me. In fact, I remember having to launch a massive search for it.

In my late high school years—after I was freed from Brossart—*National Geographics* continued to get wasted. The classroom had a whole shelf full of old issues. These magazines had lasted 30 years—but they were no match for what was in store.

Usually, we were never allowed anywhere near these magazines. But rules were made to be broken—and that we did. Classmates shook the shelf until the magazines tumbled onto the floor—where they were stepped on and shredded. They kicked them across the floor, flung them across the room, and crumpled them up and stuffed them inside their desks. I think they even stuck bubble gum in one of them once. (Imagine that!)

The destruction soared to unprecedented heights when a classmate across the room from me got a hold of one of these issues. He said, "Look," so I knew to look over to witness his latest act of mischief. He opened the magazine to a feature about Delaware—replete with a small map of the First State. He hawked loudly and spit a big, nasty, green langley squarely onto the page. He then closed the magazine on it.

Then he smiled.

Roads Scholarng wasn't my priority at that stage in life—because radio was. But one day, as I was paging through an ancient *National Geographic* in this class, I noticed a stunning photo of U.S. 40. I was lucky I saw it before my schoolmates demolished the magazine.

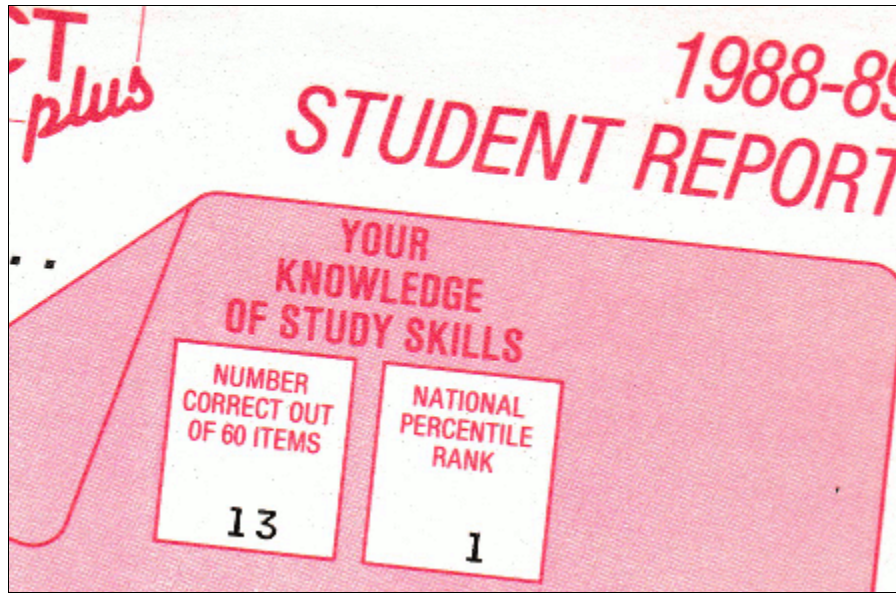
Just a few weeks ago, someone in a roads group on Facebook said they had a photo that was part of a 50-page *National Geographic* feature on U.S. 40. I thought to myself, "Please let it be that one!" Yes! It was! But this discovery was dampened by some sad news. The person who posted that photo said he had rescued numerous *National Geographics* that belonged to someone he knew who had stored an entire collection in their garage. But there were about 5 issues that had been completely destroyed. These issues had been eaten by mice or spoiled by chemical spills.

We have to consider that these fine magazines may have been ruined not by anyone who owned them but by others' careless or malicious actions. Perhaps mice invaded the garage after they were uprooted by an unreasonable construction project that was rubber-stamped by local planning authorities. Someone on the Internet says she had a collection of about 1,000 comic books—all of which were ruined when they got waterlogged in a flood. It would be eminently reasonable for her to sue companies responsible for climate change and media outlets that engage in climate change denial. It's ironic that a respected periodical like *National Geographic* was taken over by Murdoch, who also gave us Fox News Channel, which is America's leading sump of climate denialism and other right-wing propaganda.

Ru is forever.



I bombed on the P-ACT Plus



Not only did I take the P-ACT as a senior. Earlier, as a sophomore, I took the P-ACT Plus.

Bishop Brossart High School never met a standardized test it wasn't absolutely smitten kitten with. I had been thinking that when I was there, I only took the state-mandated tests, but it turns out it was worse than that and I had shut it out of my mind because it was so grueling. When I was looking for my P-ACT scores (which are lost or stolen), we came across my P-ACT Plus packet, and the bitter memories rushed back.

This test was thoroughly useless for academic purposes—but my parents threw an utter skizzum because I absolutely bombed on this test.

My math score was a 61 percentile—i.e., better than 61% of college-bound 10th graders nationwide—but that's the only bright spot. My science reasoning score was...26 percentile. Writing skills was 24. Reading was—wait for it—16. My composite score on the sheet was 30 because math wasn't weighted as much (of course).

A separate column lists my study skills score. Ready for this one? I scored a 1 percentile. *One*. That's a smoking gun that somebody had their thumb on the scale. I know this because this is the kind of terrible score I couldn't possibly get unless I tried very hard. I don't think I had much incentive or energy to try very hard.

Best all, I have the booklet full of test questions—the same copy I used. I wrote, "You're weird" in the space provided for doing math problems. On another page, I wrote, "It's no-stick bubble gum you're after!" And, "I'm gonna poke your eye out!" The latter was a battle cry we had at the time that was possibly inspired by the famous confrontation between Pete Rose and Dave Pallone.

The test was such a joke that I even included a few funnies on the form we had to fill out. I gave my Social Security number as 555-55-5555, and—even though my address didn't have apartment numbers—I listed the apartment number as "G" because of the battle cry "G! Gum!"

Go ahead! Act like you're 4 again! It's just the P-ACT Plus, so nobody will give a damn.

Checkbook dogmatists find more bullies to defend

And, boy howdy, have they ever!

It's been a long time—a *very* long time—since I've felt as bad for America's future as I do right now.

Days ago, at the misnamed March for Life in Washington, D.C., a gang of students from Covington Catholic High School donned pro-Trump caps and taunted a drummer at the Indigenous Peoples March. Because of course why not. The racist spectacle was caught on video.

This wasn't surprising to those who knew that Covington Catholic had included photos of teens in Trump hats in their recruitment brochure—in violation of IRS regulations on tax-exempt religious bodies endorsing political candidates. It wasn't surprising to those who knew the school recites a butchered version of the Pledge of Allegiance to make a political statement. It wasn't surprising to those who knew the school posted a video of students in blackface *on its own YouTube channel*. It also wasn't surprising to anyone who knew the history of scandal in the Diocese of Covington. During the Catholic Church's sex abuse and pedophilia scandal, this diocese had to pay out record settlements for abuse. Plus, bullying by schools in the diocese is well-documented—except by the right-wing media, which has swept it under the rug.

It should be even less surprising that some in the community have rallied around the pampered crisis

actors. Just like they always do. It's just like how they rallied around church officials who covered up all the pedophilia. This is also why there was at one time an official policy by local authorities to not prosecute clergy sex crimes.

The right-wing gentry needed someone to defend, because it had been a while since any racist cops locally had killed any unarmed civilians. We knew they'd take the wrong side. But this time, it feels—different. And much more dangerous. Since Facebook has made it clear that they're not serious about cracking down on hate speech, the usual suspects are using Facebook to muster support and intimidate local leaders and media outlets.

The real problems began when a longer version of the video in D.C. surfaced. I think this version reflects even worse on the students than the first versions did—but of course my belief isn't the "accepted" angle on things. The "official" stance is that nothing in the shorter videos really happened, simply because a longer video exists—even though it includes everything in the shorter videos. Think of how idiotic that is.

The town criers have offered several defenses—all of them ridiculous. Some have argued that the videos are hoaxes—which contradicts even statements by the school community. They've also argued that "kids will be kids", even though misbehavior by younger kids that is far less serious would never be tolerated. When I was 15 or 16, I heard a radio commercial that used racist imagery about Native Americans, and I felt uneasy about it. That was 30 years ago, when society was supposed to be less enlightened—but I was more respectful of other cultures than the teens in this video. When I was in high school, I thought that not being a militant racist was at least a basic requirement in life. I did stupid shit, but I never tried to intimidate someone at a march because of their cultural background.

Another moronic defense is their claim that the incident did not end in violence. True, it didn't end in violence. But that's really a gimmick we've all seen. The videos show a student smirking just a few inches from the drummer's face. We've all seen this expression before, and it's one of intimidation, designed to invoke fear of a physical altercation. If a person whose path is blocked marches forward, *they* end up being accused of violence.

In other words, regardless of your reaction, you lose.

Facebook caters to a few types of people in our community who support this shit. One is those who are invested in it because their congregation worships the Republican version of Jesus. Some pastors fight for human rights—but the checkbook clergy does not. Another is those who grew up as spoiled brats who had everything handed to them—so they defend those who are like themselves. Another is those who don't possess the intellect or reasoning skills that you and I have—regardless of how well-educated they claim to be.

Meanwhile, a high-powered lawyer has vowed to represent the students *pro bono* if they "sue the media" for reporting the story—although all the media did was simply show the videos. Plus, anonymous donors have reportedly set up a scholarship fund for the bullies. It also turns out that the family of one of them hired RunSwitch—an expensive right-wing Louisville public relations firm—to flood social media with a far-right propaganda blitz about the incident. One partner in RunSwitch is Scott Jennings, a right-wing columnist at the Louisville *Courier-Journal*. RunSwitch also worked for Mitch McConnell's 2014 Senate campaign. The media is getting its marching orders from RunSwitch. This is reminiscent of a campaign by the FBI in the 1960s that leaked fabricated information about groups it opposed to newspapers in an effort to manipulate news coverage.

All of this was before a video surfaced showing that one of the students visiting Washington, D.C., yelled to a group of teenage girls, "It's not rape if you enjoy it!" The Far Right's so-called defense for that is that the student wasn't from Covington Catholic. But more credible sources say he is. A separate video reveals a student engaging in sexual harassment.

The type of conduct captured by the videos is a longtime problem throughout the Diocese of Covington's schools. In light of this, I think all of the diocese's schools should have their accreditation revoked until they straighten up their act.



AIM event prompts far-right meltdown

I wonder if Covington Catholic is proud that their school is now being supported by actual, live Nazis.

Every time new details emerge, this scandal gets worse and worse. At this point, the extreme Right needs to lean back, relax, and treat themselves to a nice, frothy glass of shut-the-fuck-up.

Tuesday, January 22. It was bitter cold that morning, and the local chapter of the American Indian Movement conducted an event outside the Diocese of Covington's offices calling for an end to racism. My friends didn't want to come, because they didn't want to miss work just to see me get into an inevitable altercation with counterprotesters—which did transpire, because it was inevitable, after all.

The school canceled class that day and said it was because of threats against the school. But there were no threats. It was just saber rattling by a grandstanding prosecutor. I suspect the real reason they canceled was so their students could join the counterprotest. I rolled up on the scene on the Peace Bike and expected to see that the school had schlepped a bunch of kids there to shout us down and be wasteful, but there were actually very few counterprotesters.

Still, it was more than enough. A confrontation with a small group of them occurred immediately. I argued with them, and a man stomped towards me and called me a "pedophile." We almost got in a brawl, but somebody—probably from a news outlet—had a camera rolling.

Here's a photo of the guy...



The *real* event drew about 100 supporters to the cause of fighting racism. Not surprisingly, counterprotesters followed participants down the block. While speakers were speaking, a couple of guys loudly chattered about how the big, mean world was being unfair to the students in the video. A few people who were openly alt-right also showed up to argue with us. Plus, one of the counterprotesters tried to waste the Peace Bike by shoving it from the side. A younger man told me he saw him do it and said he'd keep an eye on the man in case he kept it up.

Still another man loudly argued with us and falsely accused someone in the group of assaulting him. He was scared away with a single blast of a police siren.

I also got a photo of the license plate of the beige 2003 Pontiac Montana van covered with right-wing slogans that belonged to one of the organizers of the counterprotest.

Why would anyone launch a counterprotest against an event that fights racism?

The following Friday, Randall Terry breezed into town for a small—and I mean *small*—demonstration supporting the students' bullying. To refresh your memory about this washed-up dinosaur, Terry was the founder of the far-right Operation Rescue, once led a counterprotest against a gay rights rally (because he hates gays), and has endorsed criminalizing all forms of birth control.

You'd think the aftermath of this story would be pretty bad for local Catholic schools. Now that the specter of pampered preps intimidating a man and telling rape "jokes" in public has been caught on video, students who are on the receiving end of harassment by classmates in diocesan schools should feel vindicated that this behavior is now visible to the outside world. Their parents—who are responsible for enrolling them in school—can't just brush it off. But don't worry, the media's private school protection agenda is sure to stay in high gear—where it always is.

WellCare waste

I've said it before: Socialism works—except when it's privatized.

As you may know, WellCare is an HMO that Kentucky forces many folks to use to manage their medical coverage. A few years ago, WellCare changed my main doctor without asking me first. Their website that was supposed to let me change it back was broken. It was much worse than the Obamacare site—though the right-wing media never reported on it. I never had problems with the Obamacare site—the media's fake news to the contrary notwithstanding—but WellCare's site was unusable. I had to call WellCare repeatedly to get them to change my doctor.

Recently, WellCare mailed me my 2019 medical card. I noticed that they had once again changed my main doctor without asking. The doctor they changed it to was someone I'd never even heard of before. WellScare had finally fixed their broken website, so I was able to change it back, but this meant they had to waste paper and materials sending me a corrected medical card and accompanying letter.

WellCare's wastage bastage of valuable resources is vexing. It reminds me of when my bank kept merging in the '90s. There's no fewer bank mergers now, and big banks still don't have to pay a sales tax for buying smaller banks—even though *we* have to pay the sales tax on everything else. (Another handout for Big Business.) At least with the recent mergers, I didn't have to order new checks. But 20 years ago, banks got new routing numbers when they merged, forcing me to buy new checks about once every 2 months. Every time I bought new checks, it wasn't long before I had to buy more because the bank merged again—wosting my hard-earned money and several pads of checks each time.

The banks should have been fined heavily on the grounds that they were wasting paper and ruining the environment. They're lucky they didn't live in the 18th century, because back then, the bank's board of directors might have been sentenced to eat the wasted checks. I can just imagine an old law printed on parchment that says that anyone who facilitates a bank merger “fhall be made to ete” the ruined checks.

That was also in the era of the scariest corporate slogan ever: “Bank without boundaries.” That was the mating call of Star Bank, a major culprit in these uncontrolled mergers. I'll never forget the creepy commercials that concluded with a chant that went, “Bank without booooundareeees!” It sounded sort of like the “Magna Doooooodle!” chant. I remember making fun of the Star Bank chant during one of my bonfires—when I had to burn the checks I couldn't use. In addition, I think that was in the days when Q-102 used the “dlloooldlloooldlloooll” bed music for its traffic reports.

A bank *should* have boundaries—as should an HMO. They're corporations—not people. We live in a society where individual rights are trampled fluently, and those who dissent are quickly swatted down. It's only fair that big corporations should have their wings clipped every now and then too.

A person lost their glasses back around 1914



Another person apparently threw away their eyeglasses because they didn't like wearing glasses even though their glasses were brand new but they may or may not have needed glasses.

A few days ago, I once again bicycled to the friendly commune Kroger, with the intent of picking up some prescriptions and dancing around and singing, “Listen to the scissors cutting all around...Don't you love the sound of the price coming down,” like the T'Pau sound-alike commercial they used to have. (Forgot about that one, didn't you?) As I zoomed down Poplar Street, something glistened saliva-like.

Why, it was another broken pair of glosses! This time, it looked like an old pair from the Woodrow Wilson era.

I bet I know what happened. Back around 1914, the glasses probably belonged to a small boy who was traveling through the city in a horse-drawn carriage, wearing short pants and an Uncle Al hat and holding a balloon. His parents probably told him he must discard the balloon, for it might burst, and the vibration of it might shatter his shiny new gafas. So he ripped his specs off his face and threw them out of the carriage onto the street.

The balloon probably ballooned until it could balloon no more! In my day, a popular storyline in children's books was a child carrying a balloon everywhere until it was destroyed by either an animal or a gang of toughs, so a similar fate may have eventually befallen this balloon too. But at least its useful life lasted longer than that of the glasses.

Idiot admits felonious assault

Did you know I'm a charter member of the "Liberal Justice League" on Facebook? That's not a name we gave ourselves. Just after Christmas, this name was given to a group of us by a disdainful, spiteful crybaby who accused us of "hating the majority"—even though the majority votes with us in election after election.

This jeremiad prompted some bonus stupidity from one of his spoiled cronies—who I'd dealt with in person earlier in life. This Brossart alumnus bragged that—during our youth—he attacked me on the school bus because I didn't have as much money as he had. In the very next sentence, he had the nerve to complain that I "tried to bully" him after the attack. Then he boasted that he subsequently punched me in the face.

He bullied someone and then whined that the victim "bullied" him back? He can dish it out but can't take it.

Listen close, millionaires: Don't want to be "bullied" by someone you bullied first? Act now and get a fucking job!

Best all, this pampered aristocrat just admitted to a felony: assault. Punching somebody in the face is assault. That's in addition to an unrelated charge of driving under the influence he had pending when he posted that. He's amassed reams of mugshots with a stupid, defeated look on his face.

I almost decided to rush down to the courthouse to bring assault charges. Kentucky has no statute of limitations on felonies. Admitting to a crime is a smoking gun. You can't go around boasting of a crime and then backtrack once you realize you can be punished for it. But I decided against going to the authorities. I figured they wouldn't do anything, because the crime didn't involve watching porn or writing rubber checks to a store that sold spoiled Apple Jacks. Then again, he was such a little weakling that he didn't do any damage when he punched me. I also vaguely recall that I fought back—and got kicked off the bus for the rest of the year because the school system took his side.

More importantly, his admission blasts a Jupiter-sized bazooka hole through one of the biggest defenses that the assholes' apologists use—namely, their claim that I was never physically assaulted. Uh, he just admitted he punched me, dumbasses. A variant of this bogus claim is that physical assaults were carried out only by kids from public schools—never private schools. But this guy was private through and through.

Why file charges over an assault that took place 30 years ago? Because he still brags about it 30 years later. Duh! There was no provocation for him to squeal on himself. I hadn't posted anything that was directed at him or had anything remotely to do with the attacks at school—so there was nothing that prompted him to start talking shit. The Hatfield-McCoy feud lasted "only" 28 years, and it has role-playing games and monuments dedicated to it. But for the fact that it would reflect poorly on the right-wing politburo, I *guaran-damn-tee* you there'd be a monument to the fabulously insane grudge against me eventually. In some ways, my enemies remind me of Boss Hogg and Rosco spending years going after the Dukes—while stumbling and bumbling throughout.

The admitted assailant is a member of a local family that owns a large business. He claimed to be management there—but that was a lie. Following his earlier public meltdown against bicyclists, family members in charge of the business said he does not work for the company or represent it. The family reportedly reached out to local bicyclists and vowed that they would support cycling projects.

Meanwhile, back at the Hall of Injustice, the first complainant against the "Liberal Justice League" continued to begrime his Underoos. He charged that "liberals" were lashing out because they were bullied in school and that "social media is their way of getting back at people." Then what do you call what you're doing, fartpipe? And didn't his pal just accuse *me* of bullying *him*, instead of the other way around?

In the '90s, the National Guard was summoned to Gary, Indiana, to clean up crime there. The same should have been done here. Not only did we have just as much crime, but most of it was organized under the auspices of powerful schools. The type of crime we suffered here is also different from urban street crime because it's less likely to be reported. Why? Look at how victims are treated when they report it. Instead of making sure the



perpetrator is punished, the community rallies around—even *worships*—the assailant. The government squanders so much military power on unwinnable foreign wars when some of America’s greatest enemies are hiding in plain sight on American soil. There’s your national emergency, Trump!

These guys on Facebook have money and ridiculous bravado. But at least I have brains. It’s pretty clear that I’m a hell of a lot smarter than these right-wing moochers. That would be obvious to anyone just from reading that thread. We’re dealing with total idiots. Think of what a loser someone would have to be to bring up a confrontation on the school bus from 30 years ago without any prompting whatsoever. Sadly, our society has been run more and more by the least qualified individuals, so their lifelong incompetence is considered an asset, not a liability.

This story is yet another that shows that personal responsibility glides off the privileged class like water off a duck’s back. The only thing missing is an expensive PR firm to cry to the media.

You’ll go bananas about this funny banana story!

Few would dispute the necessity of public transportation—even in an area where transit routes have been slashed furiously for decades. When I attended the far-right Bishop Brossart High School, I was forced to intermittently rely on bus routes provided by TANK—called Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky by those in the know.

The school didn’t reimburse me for TANK fares, even though other students got to ride the Campbell County Schools’ buses for free. Worse, when preps from Brossart found out I was riding TANK, they started riding it too so they could attack me. I was told to just suck it up.

I’m sure you know the story of the time one of them grabbed a used wad of beige bubble gum off the floor of the TANK bus and chewed it. But these TANK excursions weren’t just all about the gee (even beige gee).

There was a group of about 3 or 4 girls from Campbell County High School who always rode TANK too. I always overheard them telling funny stories. One afternoon, they started ribbing each other about all the disgusting—and therefore funny—things they had done lately. The Brossart criminals probably weren’t on the bus that day, because if they were, they’d probably be creating such a scene that I wouldn’t have been able to hear the Campbell County kids’ stories.

One of the teens said to one of the others, “You spit out banana all over your mom’s arm.”

The image of a person who was old enough to know better spitting out a banana was uproarious. I don’t know any other details of this story. Did she spit out the banana because one of her pals slapped her on the back? Was it because someone did something funny and she burst out laughing? Was it because the banana was rotten? Was she trying to blow a bubble with it? Was it a projectile spitting, or did she just open her mouth and let gravity do the rest?

Vague details can be deduced from the fact that it was not referred to as “*a* banana” but simply as “banana.” It was as if it was an amorphous substance—not an object that could be counted individually. This indicates that the banana had been chewn sufficiently so that it was no longer a solid but a goo.

Example #54,438,289.012,765,932,108,303,579,292,345,487 of why even Campbell County High School would have been better than Brossart.

Sears seared itself with ridiculous commercial (a poopysism)

This is a blast from the past, a poopysism, and a Snuffleupagus moment all rolled together into one convenient amulet!

Sears was riding high back in 1980. So much so that their optical department put out this roll-on-the-floor hilarious TV commercial...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBDn3-q_od4

I remember seeing these ads back when I was 7 and bursting out laughing! In more recent years, everyone said I was making it up, but YouTube once again saves the day! For a long time, if you recalled memories of something strange that you knew was real, people would shrug it off and say, “Yep, whatever.” YouTube has put a halt to that. However, I’m still waiting for George H.W. Bush’s “cough drop nation” remark and the “Kentuckeeeee Derbeeee Festival” ad—although, to my surprise, a family member actually remembers the latter.

Why is that Sears commersh so uproarious? It’s because of all the random “whoosh” sounds that make their way into the ad—plus one instance of a sound that resembles the old PBS bumper sped up.



And that proved to be a problem for Sears. The commercials prompted complaints from an advertising watchdog group that said these sounds distracted so much from the rest of the ad that viewers wouldn't pay attention to the exorbitant price of the product it advertised. Fifty-nine dollars for contact lenses is nothing these days, but in 1980—before a wave of stagflation the following year—that was *a lot* of money! The group also argued that the music was mixed so loudly that it was hard to hear the woman announcing the price.

Sears responded by saying the sounds were unintentional. According to Sears, the sounds were created by either the microphone or the camera, but the retail giant left them in because they seemed to work so well with the jingle. I guess the microphone and camera had a mind of their own.

Another amusing aspect of this extravagant ad was that it advertised contact lenses as a holiday gift. This ranks right up there with the gasoline gift card.



How the media lies about unemployment

When we speak of the right-wing media, we don't just mean media organizations that are generally recognized as right-wing. The media overall has an extreme right-wing bias.

And there are few subjects that the media is as outright dishonest about as unemployment statistics. The media spreads fake news about the numbers in order to portray right-wing economic policies as a success. It's when the economy is the worst that the media's arrogant smirk grows the widest. During times of lowest unemployment—though the real rate hasn't been low in nearly 40 years—is when they claim it's the worst.

You can usually tell how the economy is doing by going by the precise polar opposite of what the media says. That's why the Big Lie that America has the lowest unemployment in 50 years is outright laughable.

Even going by official statistics, the media could report more accurate employment numbers if only they chose to. The more accurate figures are the *effective unemployment* rate—which are never reported. The government provides these numbers but the press won't report them to a wider audience—because it doesn't fit their agenda.

What the media reports is known as the U3, which only counts some unemployed and does not count the underemployed. There's also the U4, which also includes those who have not looked for work lately because there are no jobs available to them. The U5 includes all the above workers plus an additional category of unemployed. Finally, the U6—the effective unemployment rate—includes all of the above plus the underemployed and part-time workers who desire to work full-time. The U6 is the most accurate of all these numbers—but is never reported by the media.

The U6 was apparently never compiled before the mid-'90s, so it's hard to compare the new economy with the old—which provided more secure employment. But for as long as they've been compiled, U6 numbers have always been significantly worse than the U3. The U6 unemployment rate is twice as high as under U3—and this ratio is growing.

We should propose a U7—which would also factor in the ratio of the U6 over the U3. By measuring income inequality, this is perhaps a more telling economic indicator than any of the above numbers. But with the media's longtime blackout of income inequality, don't expect the U7 to be reported. The ratio alone may be more accurate than even our proposed U7, for this inequality means that low-income workers are having to pay higher prices for goods and services.

Can the right-wing media's fake news and gaslighting be stopped? If poo. It's hard to believe there was a time when the FCC took action against TV and radio stations that distorted the news. Spreading fake news used to be considered odious and horrid in all circumstances. If the American media since 1988 had been free of fake news, we'd be living in a society much freer and fairer than what we have.

A person threw gum on the floor in high school

Every time I mention gum, you fall out of your chair in a helpless fit of guffawing. It's guffawy stuff!

Things were looking up for me when I was a junior in high school—mainly because I didn't have to go to Brossart anymore (and because that's when Bernie Sanders first got elected to Congress). But it's not like school did much for me in the long run that year. All I got out of it was a whole lotta laughs!

Although the classroom's prohibition against gum grew ever stricter, people gummed in that class. Why, they even bubbled! Before the ban extended to gumming in general, the teacher had a specific rule against bubbling. It was one thing when a very dignified professional such as a teacher mentioned gum, but when they mentioned people blowing bubbles, it was roll-on-the-floor hilarious!

One day, I was sitting at my desk when I noticed that, on the carpeting to the left, somebody had deposited a big, pink chew of beegee. It was slightly to the rear, so I didn't see who did it. But I began snickering, and some of my classmates noticed it too.

We gathered around the chewed wad of bubble gum—like it was going to do something. Was it going to sing and dance? Was it going to give us the answer to the universe? Nope! It just sat there being funny.

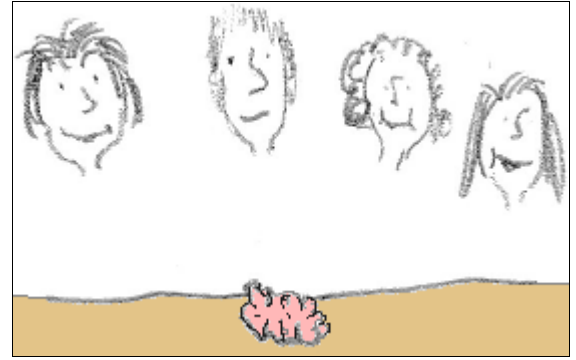
Nobody knows the history of that mysterious quid of gee. Who put it there? Did they bubble with it? How come nobody noticed anyone placing it there?

The teacher noticed us staring at the floor and giggling. So she stomped over to the center of the action!

As we were all hunkered over the wad of gum, a scowl grew on the instructor's face. She angrily asked, "Who threw gum on the floor?"

Nobody answered. Nobody even *knew* the answer. I'm not having much luck narrowing it down. I'm quite certain that every student in the class was capable of chewing gum (for they all possessed teeth and a tongue), and I'm guessing that a majority regularly partook—and inevitably bubbled. There has to be no fewer than 5 possible suspects. Their names and faces are etched in my mind after 28 years.

I'm pretty sure this was the incident that led to the ban on all gumming. I know it wasn't the last time someone threw gum on the floor in that class though. I remember a later occurrence when the teacher found gum on the floor. By that time, however, she knew better than to make a big spectacle of it.



'Sesame Street' sore inventor called "vain"

I'm proud to say I invented the *Sesame Street* sore—which appears to be a form of hyperkeratosis afflicting the top of the foot. I call it that because I first experienced it one day in my childhood while I was watching *Sesame Street*.

It's there to stay, and I know how to rock it!

I've been the target of a "waste/hoard" dichotomy: Those who have accused me of "hoarding" money if I saved it would also say I was "wasting" money if I spent it on anything that cost more than \$5. Similarly, I've also been targeted by a "vain/unvain" dichotomy: Those who criticize me as not "vain" enough because I accept the appearance of a *Sesame Street* sore also accuse me of being "vain" for other reasons.

Recently, at an important family gathering, a family member said I was "vain" because—instead of getting regular glasses—I bought sunglasses with vision correction. For the 10 billion zillionth time, I had to explain that regular glasses do not fit my head shape.

"Vain"??? How can the inventor of the *Sesame Street* sore be "vain"? It's not just the *Sesame Street* sore. If Richard Nixon invented teeth, it was I who invented punk rocker teeth.

Know what this is really about? Economic class. Calluses like the *Sesame Street* sore represent hard work, and nobody works harder than the poor. Has everyone gotten so highfalutin that they just can't even *conceptualize* someone accepting their poverty markers, let alone being proud of them?

Think. Do. Be.

Hackers and liars...Consumed by the fires...

My policy is: The buck stops here. The Far Right's policy is: The buck stops somewhere else.

This publication was once much more political, and in its early years, it was a shiny object to those who would try to discredit it—thus an easy target. A friend of mine once told me that this was a great publication because nobody else did anything like this before the blogging boom.

I don't regret starting this zine—because if I hadn't, I would have regretted that more. (I've wondered what this zine would be like if I'd started earlier—perhaps as a high school junior.) And I have a fairly accurate memory of what I write for this zine—even if it's something I regret later. So I know when I've been hacked. A few months ago, I noticed I was the target of a hacker, and I have been investigating. It appears I was targeted by something called a remote administration tool (RAT).

The Far Right doesn't get to rewrite history about anything that's appeared in these pages—or the motivation behind it. Their revisionism depresses me. It makes me think this zine could have been so much more if this hadn't happened. One of the reasons I revived this project as a more humorous endeavor is that it wipes the slate clean of what little negative baggage this zine had.

These dangerous reactionaries had evil and bigotry in their hearts. I am not going to grovel to these bullies—or to those in the community who rallied to their side. They reap what they sow. Cowering to them is not healthy. They don't have magic powers to make me disappear. They look doubly stupid because they couldn't have hacked very much—unless they wanted to hack articles, pictures, and music that had been downloaded from somewhere else.

History is what it is. We can't revise what has already taken place. Those who already have no credibility can't expect to be believed, especially after they've said and done some of the most inane and stupid stuff imaginable. We chug forward with ethical values. If there's even a *hint* that this zine lets these values down, the first time is the last time.

Frosted Flakes got spilled everywhere

Cereal got wosted, and not everyone is laughing.

You may have imbibed Kellogg's Frosted Flakes. This cereal has been around for many a year, and its boxes and commercials have featured Tony the Tiger smilin' his ass off.

But once, about 20 years ago, one of my family members saw what can happen when Frosted Flakes land in prying young hands. One evening, the tiny tots were using the basement living room. By then, however, the tiny tots were teenagers—maybe even young adults. So they had all their rowdy friends over.

It was a Frosted Flakes party!

They ate so many Frosted Flakes that it's surprising they didn't turn into an animated tiger! And they probably spilled even more than they ate. When they were done, the room had clumps of Frosted Flakes mixed with milk everywhere.

I don't know if anything was permanently ruined. Frosted Flakes and milk can waste a good record album on contact. However, it could probably be easily removed from a TV screen without ruining it.



Not impressed by my student press

The more I read about what high schools in normal areas of the country were like, the more I realize just how thoroughly I got shafted by the zip code lottery.

One cool feature of many high schools is the student press. People from other parts of the country ask me what sort of student media I had in high school, and I have to rub my neck and say, "Well, um, student media? What's that?" It was slim pickings.

Bishop Brossart did have an occasional—*very* occasional—newsletter with a few articles by students. It was on green letter-sized photocopied pages, and I think most articles were written on a typewriter or dot-matrix printer—which was fine back then. Most of the content though was corny stuff—not anything mature high school kids would be interested in. In addition, I don't remember students in the lower grades being allowed anywhere near this project. (Ooh, an Allowed Cloud!)

Later in high school—after Brossart—I attended what was sort of like an alternative class. Student press there was every bit the joke we could expect. One day—and I only remember getting to do this *once* in 2 years—the teachers got all of us together to write a little newsletter. Wikipedia says that one purpose of a student press is to "serve as a watchdog to uncover problems at the school." There was no way in hell we'd be allowed to get away with that! Instead, the teachers hovered over us the whole time—and made us use most of their ideas instead of letting us use our own.

In full view of the teachers, one of my schoolmates said something like, "Looks like it's gonna be a boring paper!" And it was.

I wrote a few sentences about a town in Ohio where a right-wing mayor tried to ban MTV, but the story was nothing you couldn't find in a major newspaper. All I did was add the fact that MTV had been overrun by talk and commercials by then anyway. I'm sure the school didn't let me call anyone "fascist" (even if they were).

We were high school students, but this was being treated like an elementary school project. This project was far less advanced than what I've seen in media projects from other high schools.

In an article you can read above, I said that I speculated about what **The Last Word** would be like if I had started it while I was a student in this class. I wasn't interested in writing back then, but I can imagine the controversy. The school pawed through our desks when we weren't around, so I think all copies would have been confiscated and thrown away. That the school searched our desks isn't mere speculation. The teacher admitted once that she searched a desk and found a sheet of paper that had a song that went, "Something something poo-poo" (in her words).

If we were around then as a humor zine, I'm sure a top story would have been a class visit to downtown Cincinnati. As we walked through one of the city's leading department stores, a classmate approached a man who he thought was a mannequin, slapped him on the back, and said, "Hey, look at this dummy!" Our teacher then angrily told the student, "If that man had turned around and hit you, I would have stood there and cheered!"

If we were a political zine, the top stories would have been the same as they would be now, because right-wing meanness and bigotry have a long history. However, I started school there a few months after Dan Quayle made a bomb joke at an airport, so that would have been old news then.

Whatever the weather, the school was unlikely to tolerate this zine. At Boston University in the 1970s, Alan Dershowitz and John Silber connived to suppress criticism by eliminating funding for student newspapers. (Because of this and other stances, why does anyone call Dershowitz a "liberal"?) So it wouldn't have been unheard of if my school had also silenced anything it disagreed with. Ben Shapiro was given his own national column when he was 17—but that was because his idiotic views were favored by the right-wing KGB.

As I said, I've seen high school publications that were much more advanced than *anything* I had when I was in high school. Some of them were published years before I even started high school when the technology wasn't nearly as good—but the content was much more age-appropriate.

My business partner said she wanted to start a zine a few years after she was out of high school—and make copies using the mimeograph machine at her former school. I doubt that would have been tolerated either. NKU probably had computers with word processors and printers, but I'm sure this project wouldn't have passed NKU's ideological litmus test.

Hopefully, student media will survive the glut of YouTube foolery. It seems like most videos now on YouTube are from 8-year-olds who inevitably start each clip with, "Hey guys!" Videos from different people who each post about the same topics as each other all seem to follow the exact same format—with no innovations or new information.

A person shoplifted gum because they thought it was a sample

What were the makers of Test gum thinking?

People go spoony over gum. Every person who has ever lived in the history of the planet has molded their entire lives around their plans to blow a bubble.

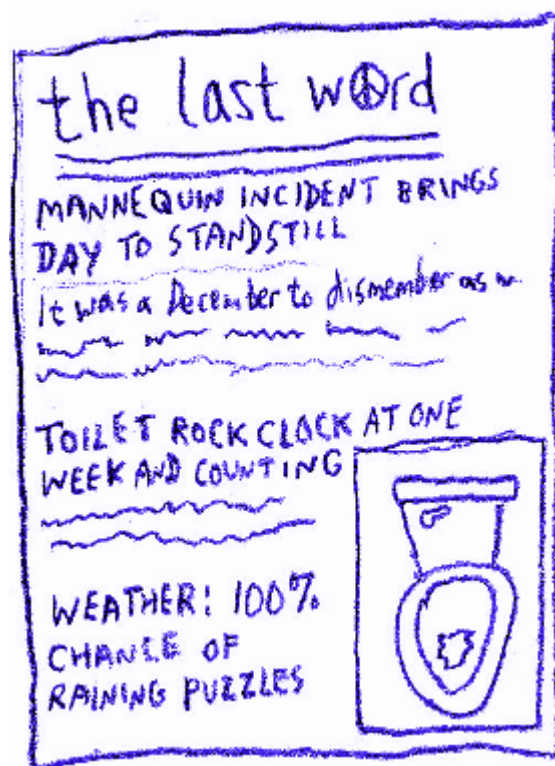
A decade ago, someone on the Internet posted that they accidentally stole a pack of Test gum. They said they went to a supermarket and found one lonely pack of Test sitting in the candy aisle, smilin' its ass off. So they grabbed it and walked out of the store without paying for it.

Why? Because they thought it was a free sample—simply because the brand name was Test.

The customer was promptly caught by a store employee, handcuffed, and issued a citation by police for theft. The store also mailed the customer a \$200 civil demand letter—all for a pack of gee!

Maybe it was called Test because they were testing to see if people would steal it!

I don't know how many people stole it, but I guess there weren't many people willing to *buy* it, because Test gum sure didn't last long. This brand seems to have gone to the gum graveyard, like so many other brands over the years. When was the last time you saw Increda-Bubble?



No brand of gum is guaranteed to last in perpetuity. One day, probably in the late '90s, my mom told me that kids at the time just adored Cinnaburst. I was skeptical of this claim, because Cinnaburst wasn't explicitly a bubble bustin' brand. What's the point of gum if it doesn't blow good bubs?

I recently found an Internet forum where people said they would chew Cinnaburst wrappers along with the gum. One person said, "The paper absorbs into the gum and there's really not much difference except that the gum is a bit tougher than it would normally be."

I do remember people chewing Cinnaburst, but I think it's only because it was so widely available. I don't remember anyone really *liking* it. But this brand of gum vanished just as quickly as it appeared.

At least it wasn't as big of a failure as Test was.

Sunny day...Sweepin' the calendar away...

I save old goodies forever and forever amen—except now I've run out of room, so stuff has got to go.

When I attended that class in my late high school years, my classmates and I were each given a *Sesame Street* calendar—even though we were all much too old for it. I hoarded mine, and it surfaces every time I search in my closet for important documents that have been lost or stolen. Now I know I have to get rid of this calendar, because I can't keep things forever.

The calendar is dated 1992—which means the school must have given it to us when I was a high school senior. I've mentioned that the school treated us like preschoolers, but this takes the cake.

This old calendar has an outdoor theme, and the cover features Big Bird hobnobbing with some small, parrot-like avians in a forest-like setting...



The calendar contains stickers, and I used many of them to mark ridiculous events on the calendar. For example, I used a "Don't Forget" label featuring Bert to mark the anniversary of the Great Toilet Paper Fire at Brossart, my previous school.

You'd think Children's Television Workshop would have wanted anything featuring adorable Muppet characters from the ol' Sesaroo to be made in the good ol' U.S. and A. nation. But the printing of this calendar was contracted out to a publisher who printed it in Singapore. I know it was the publisher—not CTW—who offshored this task, but offshoring American jobs to sweatshop dictatorships violates the very spirit of *Sesame Street*.

Each month of this calendar has a bright, cheery photo of the *Sesame Street* kick-ass crew on a camping trip. We see Oscar the Grouch admiring a skunk's scent and the Count collecting leaves.

High school seniors at other schools at the time were bippin' and boppin' around like there was no tomorrow. But because we were being treated like 3-year-olds, I instead loafed in class and defaced the back of the calendar like so...



Notice that some genius in my class accidentally slopped food on poor Big Bird—boldly defying the school’s fiat against food in the classroom. If this had happened at Brossart or St. Joe’s instead, I’m sure I would have been blamed for “causing” someone else to spill food.

Sadly, I can’t afford to let this calendar Sessify the joint forever. I have consigned it to the recycle basket to be made into new goodies—possibly even *Sesame Street* calendars for future high school seniors.

Car dealership finds itself in stinky situation

This story is from a few months ago, but it’s about bunker blasts, so we can’t sit idly by and ignore it.

A headline in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* blares, “Car salesman farted in coworker’s office, pinched his nipples to ‘reinforce dominance,’ lawsuit says.” In this story, a car dealership in Texas was the target of a lawsuit by an employee alleging all that and more.

The suit said the workplace was “sexually hostile”, and the boss was accused of “weaponizing his own farts” (as the *Star-Telegram* put it). The suit also said he repeatedly pinched male workers’ nipples. The original lawsuit petition says, “He reinforced dominance over his subordinates by regularly entering their enclosed offices, intentionally passing gas and then laughing as they were forced to breathe soiled air.”

The lawsuit also says the boss falsely accused the plaintiff of being a sex offender. And it says that after the boss was fired, the company continued to allow him to loiter there and harass employees.

Now that America has been turned into a giant reality show, who’s surprised?

I do things people tell me not to do

As I resolved to ignore those who mumble or obnoxiously mouth their commands, another nuisance came to mind.

I’m talking about people who warn you not to do something incredibly stupid, and then say, “I’m not accusing you of anything.” Well, you just did. To warn someone about something like this is an accusation.

Another gimmick they have is to warn you not to do something that’s probably harmless, but which you hadn’t planned on doing. They usually do this after forcing you to do something that’s many times as dangerous. My response is to go right ahead and do what they warned me not to do.

Perfect examples of this are when people warned me not to go grocery shopping at night or go bicycling in supposedly high-crime neighborhoods. This was after they had exposed me to situations that were much more perilous. One day, when they warned me about one of the above activities, I calmly said to their face, “Well, now I’m gonna do it.” And I did. I hadn’t planned on doing it—until they told me not to.

It’s kind of like the “no game” in 1st grade.

One of these days, I’m going to watch TV in the dark and see if it ruins the TV set.