

The Last Word™

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Our Annual Back-to-School Issue!

Bevin hack whines about teacher sickouts

I'm tired of hearing Matt Bevin's patronage appointees grumble about everything. They're as hostile to education as the school uniform zealots we've written about for 25 years, or the talking heads who complained that more than one university offering the same degree program is "wasteful duplication." Incidentally, the Bevin thugocracy is also getting on a "wasteful duplication" kick, as it seeks to eliminate college programs.

When Bevin stole Kentucky teachers' pensions so he could give tax handouts to the 1%, over 1,000 teachers throughout the state launched a sickout. Now David Dickerson—the nobody who serves as Bevin's labor secretary—says he's completed an "investigation" that has determined that this sickout was illegal.

How is it illegal? Media outlets say state law now bans work stoppages—but that law is unconstitutional. We don't even need a court to rule on its constitutionality, because it's unambiguous that it's unconstitutional. The Supreme Court can write, say, yell, sing, or bubble that it's constitutional, but that doesn't make it so. It's like if they say wood glue is a diet food, that wouldn't make it so.

Dickerson threatened fines of \$1,000 per day if the sickouts continue. The teachers received no hearing in Dickerson's "investigation."

The Far Right has always been against education. As other countries build new schools, conservaworld closes schools, enacts prison-like discipline, scares away the best teachers, and eliminates college degree programs. I guess we can expect this from the Bevin autocracy, as this is the same clown car of spoiled babies that squandered taxpayer funds on an ideologically driven report that demanded the federal government slash Social Security—something no state had ever endorsed before.

Boy the way The Last Word played...

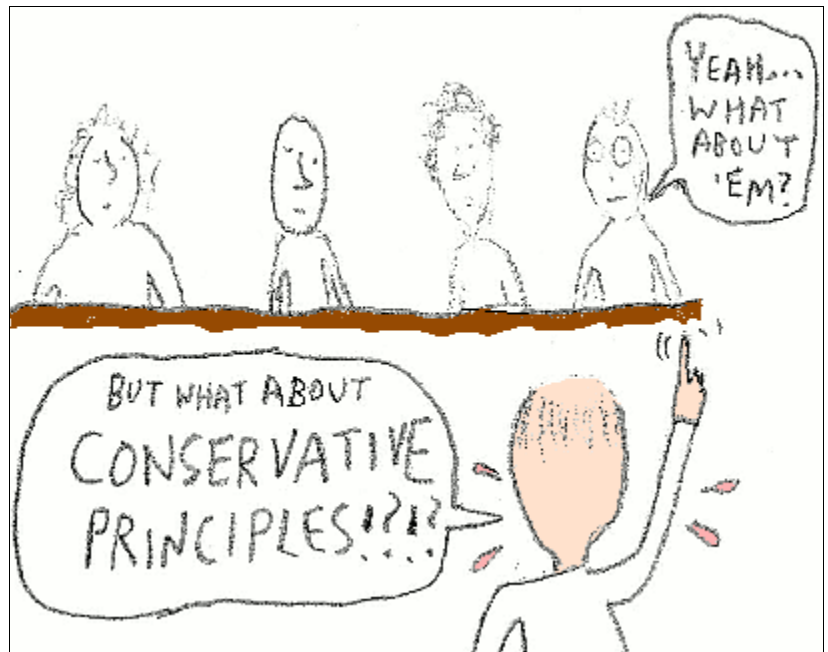
A few of our local cities and counties have begun passing laws that are actually reasonable for a change—and the right-wing politburo *can't stand it!*

Instead of unconstitutional right-wing hogwash like public school uniforms and misnamed "right-to-work" laws, some local jurisdictions have taken a more forward-thinking approach. One example comes to us from Dayton, Kentucky, which has just passed a new law that protects people from being discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity for things like employment and housing. This makes Dayton the first city in Campbell County with a fairness ordinance.

City council approved it 5 to 0, but Team Tyranny is less than enchanted by it. One frustrated reactionary posted on Facebook, "This is stupid just another agenda pushed by the leftist morons."

The idea of Dayton City Council being called "leftist morons" is hilarious. Let it sink in for a moment. Are these the same "leftists" who rubber-stamped Manhattan Fubar?

The Far Right's aggrieved privilege is also on display for the whole wide world to ogle (beep) regarding the local syringe exchange program. In a stunning vote a few years ago, Campbell County Fiscal Court approved it 3 to 1, and it's been a success at saving lives. Recently, someone in a Bellevue group on Facebook mentioned the arrest of a heroin addict. The lone commissioner who voted against the syringe program stampeded into the



group and replied, “He probably shot up with a free needle given to him by the county.”

A while back, my business partner began openly referring to this politician as “Archie Bunker”—because he bears a physical resemblance to the ‘70s sitcom character and shares his general outlook on life. This nickname stuck. Other people also started calling him that. In fact, when I clicked on one of his YouTube videos, one of the clips recommended with it was an Archie Bunker scene. Because this former county commissioner was dragging his nonsense into a Bellevue group where nobody wanted to read it, I responded to him with the first line of the *All In The Family* theme: “Boy the way Glenn Miller played...”

He’s now a *former* commissioner because he ran for judge-executive and was so thoroughly trounced that all you could hear was an upstairs toilet flushing. He lost because the people don’t give a shit about “conservative principles”, which is just a right-wing rallying cry. Also, while he claimed to be a champion of fiscal responsibility, he helped approve unconstitutional handouts for private school transportation. Not only were *public* schools strapped for money, but *private* schools were already swimming in dough—and were tax-exempt. Then he had the nerve to complain that private schools weren’t getting enough free Toy Money from the taxpayers.

The notion that Campbell County Fiscal Court is a big liberal organ is laughable—but this claim is an evergreen in Tea Party circles.

Fluuuuusshhhhh!

Operation KroGum finds Super Bubble in back-to-school aisle

Super Bubble is a bubble bustin’ brand of gum. This beegee was once included in specially marked boxes of Cocoa Puffs and Count Chocula, and it was the brand George W. Bush chomped when he locked himself in his office and threw his little temper tantrums. Super Bubble also figured prominently in YouTube’s early days. One of the very first videos ever posted on YouTube was titled “Blowing a super bubble with Super Bubble.”

Reports vary widely about this brand’s bubbleability, but I almost never see it being sold around here anymore.

Recently, however, I went to the friendly commune Kroger supermarket and noticed there were huge tubs of Super Bubble being sold in the back-to-school aisle. They were scattered on different shelves. True to the back-to-school spirit, most of the rest of the back-to-school merchandise was other kinds of candy.

All the items were scattered. One shelf might go something like this: Twizzlers, backpack, Twizzlers, Super Bubble.

Needless to say, it was pretty damn funny. But I didn’t buy any of it. What was I supposed to do? Bubble with it? Actually yes, because it’s gum. But I still didn’t buy it.

This isn’t the first time Kroger has made us heehaw uncontrollably by classifying bubble gum as a back-to-school item. Last year, I was informed that another Krogie-Wogie store had Dubble Bubble in the back-to-school section. People were smitten with it. In fact, when I went Krogering again after noticing the Super Bubble, I discovered that bags of Dubble Bubble bubble kaboomin’ gee had been added to the back-to-school selection.

It’s a good thing bubble gum is considered a back-to-school product, for beegee is quite harmless compared to everything else America’s young people get into these days. It’s the sort of thing the people who make those corny family vlogs might frown upon, because they tend to be petty about stuff. But cool people think otherwise.



Doing what they do worst!

You hate big banks, utility companies, and health insurers. If you didn’t, you wouldn’t have been reading

this zine for the past 26 years. What other type of big corporation fits into that category? If you remember '70s commercial slogans, you may be able to guess from the title of this piece—and what specific company this article is about.

That's right, peeps! I'm talking about airlines—in this case, American Airlines in particular.

These days, I try to use negative stories about airlines sparingly. Remember, this is a zine for the working poor—who travel by air only rarely. Why should we care if someone with more money than us has their vacation wasted by an airline's incompetence? Because the airlines have even more money than whoever had their trip ruined. They even got free Toy Money from the government in a taxpayer-funded bailout.

This brings us to an interesting discussion about airlines' self-granted powers. To set the stage, peep this vid...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MztT0dkPW4&>

That clip was posted by a man dealing with American Airlines in an attempt to fly from Miami to New York. The airline stranded passengers on the tarmac for 3 hours for no apparent reason. Then the replacement flight was delayed by another 10 hours—forcing passengers to stay overnight in the airport. American Airlines referred to it as a delay, not a cancellation—because if it was a cancellation, they'd have to give customers their money back.

During the clip, an airline employee harangued the man that he wasn't allowed to record video in the airport. (Ooh, an Allowed Cloud!) She threatened to call the police on him. Later, another passenger said his flight had been canceled 4 times—causing him to miss a connecting flight. The airline also announced it was keeping passengers' bags overnight—depriving passengers of items they needed. It appears as if the man who filmed this clip eventually decided to just give up and forget about flying altogether.

Make no mistake. Airlines aren't allowed to stop you from recording in the airport. You may record in the airport regardless of what the airline thinks. I pointed this out in the comments. But someone replied that that's not really the case. They didn't militantly defend the airline—because YouTube isn't a local BBS in 1995—but they said they did some research that contradicts what I posted.

They said that when you buy an American Airlines ticket, it contains a clause prohibiting recording of “personnel, equipment, or procedures.” There's a big problem with that though. That part of the clip took place inside the airport—not on the plane. The airport can't just be deeded out to an airline any more than Devou Park can be deeded out to George W. Bush's roadies. I'm sure people waiting for that flight bumped elbows with passengers and employees of other airlines—unless American has a monopoly in Miami like Delta does in Cincinnati.

Tough toilets, American Airlines. You lose.

Mister Rogers got mad and swore

I thought it was uproarious when a video surfaced of Mister Rogers extending his middle finger—yes, the clip was real—but when it rains, it pours.

Now a video has appeared of the usually mild-mannered children's TV host swearing on his show. Fast-forward to 2:10...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nh4wQhbVCvI>

Here's a synopsis of that video in case you're afraid a giant coloring book will fly out of your computer screen and gobble you up. The clip is from a 1969 episode of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. We see host Fred Rogers putting together a jigsaw puzzle of a tree. Mail carrier Mr. McFeely bips along to take the puzzle away to be delivered elsewhere. As the frenetic postman babbles about the puzz, we hear Mister Rogers muttering, “Dammit!” Then he gives a quick glance up at the camera as if he was thinking, “Oops!”

It's unmistakable. *Mister Rogers swore on the air!*

Yes, that was left in the original broadcast—of a children's show, no less!

After Mr. McFeely leaves, Mister Rogers stewes about him taking the puzzle and angrily pounds a ball of clay.

Also, a few years ago, I had a dentist who resembled Mr. McFeely, but I don't think he's with that practice anymore.



Another right-wing fake news blitz on Wikipedia

If the omnipotent, omnivorous Wikipedia won't lower the boom on right-wing trolls who fill entries with fake news, maybe its nonprofit status should be called into question.

The recent mass shooting in Dayton, Ohio, was another tragedy in the nationwide pandemic of mass killings. It was quickly discovered that the gunman was a Donald Trump admirer who had made right-wing Twitter posts. Former classmates also said he had extreme right-wing views.

It didn't take long for these discoveries to be swept under the rug. Later, Heavy.com—a tabloid website on par with the discredited Drudge Report—reported that posts supporting progressive causes were found on the shooter's Twitter feed. Conveniently, Heavy.com waited until after Twitter had closed his account, so nobody could verify whether that was true.

Heavy.com is so specious that not many news outlets even picked up its unverifiable claim. One exception is CNN, but that's because CNN has become little more than a carbon copy of Fox News. This is not the CNN of 30 years ago, when the channel had a reputation for credibility. Heavy.com is like the tabloids in the grocery checkout lane that nobody buys—except that it blindly accepts bogus stories from outside writers instead of using its own. But—the media being what it is—reports of the gunman being a Trump supporter were consigned to the memory hole.

It took a whole day after the shooting for Heavy.com to make its phony claim. Not only was it after the Twitter account had been yanked, but it was also just enough time to make a fake screenshot of the account. If it was real, it wouldn't have taken a day—and other outlets would have found it right away.

Naturally, alt-right trolls instantly edited the Wikipedia article about the shooting to reflect Heavy.com's claim. The only source given was Heavy.com. So I reversed this vandalism.

When I reversed it, the poo-poo plopped. One of the right-wing trolls who spends the entirety of each day adding fake news to Wikipedia immediately sent me a message threatening to block me from editing it...

“Please stop your disruptive editing. If you continue to blank out or remove portions of page content, templates, or other materials from Wikipedia without adequate explanation, as you did at 2019 Dayton shooting, you may be blocked from editing.”

Uh, letting readers make edits is what Wikipedia is for, stupid. So fuck off.

The far-right intelligentsia allowed someone to blank out an entire article and replace it with just the words “Sesame Street is gay”, but they throw a fit when somebody deletes one or two sentences of right-wing propaganda.

This isn't the first time fake news has been allowed to clog Wikipedia. Sadly, Wikipedia doesn't seem to want to do anything about it.

Smell reality: stuff stinks!

A few years ago, I wrote in these pages about a series of horrendous odors that I was confronted with. These intolerable aromas filled the eye doctor's office, a high school classroom, and even the kitchen at home. I think these smells were related to the stench that filled the movie theater when I saw *E.T.*

I'll bet you a barrel of bizcream that somebody out there thought I was suffering from a strange disorder because I noticed these smells at all. I'm sure *you* didn't think that, because you're at a higher level of processing than those who deny these odors. I truly believe that there are some people who cannot process certain bad smells, and that they're destroying their health by breathing harmful chemicals. The fact that these scents existed was unmistakable.

These folks seem to have a disorder. Everything else these days is a disorder, so why not? I'm not sure what it would be called, but it's not normal for people to be completely oblivious to foul stench. Since you and I have a functioning sense of smell, we know to stay away from poisonous chemicals. Not everyone is so lucky. Pity them indeed.

Now I want to talk about a different bad smell—one that has long plagued restaurants. When I'm out



roaming the city by myself, I usually don't eat at restaurants. I usually buy food at a grocery store or gas station and enjoy a little picnic on a bus bench or the curb of a city street. One reason is that restaurants are more expensive, but another is that many eateries are filled with bad odors. One stink in particular has irritated me for almost 40 years.

I'm talking about a greasy scent that comes and goes during your meal. I first noticed it at a Frisch's Big Boy when I was elementary school age. It had to have been 1980 or 1981. I used to enjoy eating at that Frisch's, but it was around that time that everyone started making fun of Frisch's relentlessly. When I stopped liking this restaurant, my family did of course decide to eat there a lot more.

On Fridays during the summer, we often went all over Campbell County visiting yard sales. Back then, summer break was much longer. I finally realized restoring our summers was a lost cause when that school district in Alabama made a bunch of kids repeat 8th grade because the school lost their grades. In my day, however, this was still America. Anybip, the garage sales were around the time I soured on Frisch's. So when we were debating where to go for lunch, guess where we usually went?

Decades later, I noticed this same stinkage at the Kentucky Fried Chicken in Newport. Not long after that, I was on a roadtrip in Texas, and this funk of 40,000 years afflicted one of the fast food places they have there.

When I say something stinks, I mean it. Mean it like a dictionary, I do.

People who aren't fun can't be monsters

Americans are getting wise to the Far Right and the media that cheers them on.

Not long ago, you could be a right-wing President who picks fights and talks about their own phony piety, and your approval ratings *might* still be above water. *Maybe*. (Remember though that pollsters adjust their samples to reflect previous elections that the Republicans or the Russian government rigged.) This time, it seems to be different.

Enjoy Trump's downfall while it lasts. Heaven knows what right-wing creepo the media has in store for us when he's gone. For the Time Being, however, nobody seems to be buying the snake baste the capitalist thought police is peddling.

Public opinion is going our way, but the sharp practices of our coddled overlords aren't. With job ads like those that have run lately, it's no wonder more people realize America has become a gag country. My bizbud was looking for a seasonal second job so she could afford the \$11 lunchmeat and \$150 electric bills that have become the norm lately. (The government won't do anything about the high cost of food and utilities, because in conservaworld, government exists only to regiment personal behavior and give handouts to the 1%.) She told me she found an ad for a haunted attraction hiring people to be monsters, and she burst out laughing because the ad said you have to be "energetic and fun."

A "fun" monster? Can you picture a zombie roaming around in a cemetery and singing and dancing to a happy song like "Abracadabra" or "Sussudio"?

Obviously, I wouldn't be qualified for this job, because my personality isn't "energetic and fun." Don't be fooled by this zine. People who know me in person know I have a very dark personality. I'm not the happy monster that employers these days are looking for. It takes a lot for me to laugh.

That's the problem these days, and that's why I'm usually self-employed. It's also why I think utility companies should be required to pay a royalty to independent writers, but that's a whole other matter. (People spend money powering devices to read our work, but we don't see a penny of it.) The problem nowadays is that *every* job expects you to be "energetic and fun." You're supposed to be a people person. You're not allowed to have an ingoing personality anymore. You must have perfect eye contact and a peppy tone. Punk rocker teeth are not tolerated. Cool people like you and me consider strabismus and crooked teeth to be comforting and attractive, but they're deemed unacceptable in today's tyrannical corporate world.

In my America, merit and competence meant something. Now it's taken a back seat to form. And who the shit wore a tie to a job interview? When I went to the interview for my library job, I sure as hell didn't wear one, and neither did anyone else. I truly felt like I was fighting capitalism by not wearing a tie. I'm not a capitalist, so why should I follow capitalist dogma?

It's also a damn shame that someone has to try to find a second job because the cost of living has gotten



so high. Not like that job search will be successful, as most people I know can't even find a *first* job.

America has become a giant reality show—one where money rules. I have a right to expect reasonable compensation for producing this zine, but that's different from the whiny 1% hogging wealth as a sign of prestige and status. We live under a system that's not sustainable. It relies on a growing pool of people to be exploited for the comfort of the 1% totalitarians. This pool is not expanding. It's amazing that we now have technology that dwarfs anything most Americans had just 3 years ago, but our economic system is stuck in the feudalist era. But hey, who really cares when the only thing that's important is sticking by such a discredited system even in the face of bottomless evidence that it's a failure?

We need a revolution that upends this obsolete system. Our cities and neighborhoods can be a sanctuary for smart, progressive policies based on modern standards and economic security. Frankly, we can't afford not to do it. If this revolution scares a few spoiled crybabies who live in sheltered exurbs, tough shit. I'm tired of the 1% talking like they're such big individualists but getting free money from hard-working taxpayers.

Think. Do. Be.

Shop purposely ruined rare comic books

More rare comic books got ru! But this time, it was on purpose.

I found a post on the public Internet from early this year lamenting an online comic book retailer's plan to destroy copies of a rare comic just to drive up its value.

Either you're in tears because of this meaningless wastage bastage, or you're releasing an Ernie-like laugh because the idea was so patently ridiculous. The shop announced it was celebrating Batman's 80th anniversary by intentionally demolishing a rare Batman comic book. The shop planned to purchase all copies and "permanently dispose of" all except 180 of them—so it could sell the remaining copies for over \$200 apiece. Shockingly, a company that grades comic books based on their condition actually went along with this.

The person who posted about this destructive practice said it "is unethical and needs to stop." He also said the comic's publisher and writer should be apprised of this price-gouging. One respondent suggested that this practice might even be an illegal effort to manipulate the market (much like gentrification).

But surprisingly, some folks smugly defended the shop. Some even implied that those who criticized this endeavor worked for the shop's competitors. One said that companies like the Franklin Mint that make limited edition collectibles purposely destroy their products to boost their value. I can just see the man in the coin commercial breaking the heads off Civil War Chess Set pieces or Little Maids of the Thirteen Colonies dolls. (Observation about the coin ad I can't fit anywhere else: The commersh said the coins were "legal tender in over 100 countries." Naturally, whenever that ad came on, I always said they were "illegal tough in over 100 countries." I thought that was the height of comic genius when I was about 11. It was like when someone on a BBS kept referring to real estate as "fake estate." Come on, you're supposed to laugh!)

It's unclear how the retailer in this story wasted the comic books in question. Some folks expected the destroyed comics to miraculously reappear years from now, which would mean the whole thing was a big scam.



Short-term rentals making the rich suffer like everyone else

I warn people about the foibles of short-term rentals like those of Airbnb, because they steal poor and working-class residents' homes and drive up housing costs. The media won't listen, because they'd rather dance

around and sing, “Guh-pwipe, guh-pwipe!”

But now that the short-term rental biz is ruining luxury housing too, the media is finally reporting on it. WKRC-TV—now owned by the far-right Sinclair Broadcast Group—ignores this scourge when the poor are victims, but it’s a major Channel 12 story when the wealthy have to suffer like everybody else.

A luxury apartment complex in downtown Cincinnati is being plagued by units being used as short-term rentals for out-of-town tourists. One resident growled, “Right now, it’s touted as luxury apartments. We don’t feel it’s luxury apartments right now.”

Suck...it...up. Most folks I know have to worry every day that some real estate tycoon will snatch up their place and convert it into a short-term rental or luxury residence—leaving them on the street and making years of housing payments go up in smoke. There are laws to protect housing, but enforcement is weak. If you live in a luxury apartment, you have enough money that you have a zillion choices where to live. Most people aren’t so privileged.

Of course there should be regulations on short-term rentals, but Channel 12 acts like the rich have it so rough. What makes the rich so special that they shouldn’t share in the misery that everyone else faces?

Nonetheless, Cincinnati has proposed new rules on short-term rentals—citing the depletion of housing stock—but the rules don’t seem to go far enough to fight the loss of housing. Bellevue seems to be ahead of most other local cities in that regard, as Bellevue outright prohibits apartments from being used as short-term rentals.

A person shredded perfectly good baseball cards

Would you gasp if a person intentionally wasted perfectly good baseball cards?

In 8th grade at St. Joe’s, I found a Razor Shines card on my desk in homeroom. I now remember that it was placed by a student who had pulled a razor on me in science class. He later placed the card on my desk as a threat. I kept the card, even though it’s probably worthless, as Shines once appeared on a list of all-time worst ballplayers. I hoarded the card for decades, but I don’t know what ultimately became of it.

But when you watch this video, be prepared to gasp away...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0elfoW0JYo>

In that clip, a man talks about all the supposedly valueless baseball cards he has. They must be worth *something*, but card collectors are sticklers for a card’s condition. If a single corner of a card wears down, it reduces its value mastodonly. Many of his cards have a minor flaw like that. Others have printing errors that make them slightly off-center—to a degree that hardly anyone else would even notice. The main issue with these cards is that they’re from 30 years ago when baseball cards were made less valuable from overproduction.

So he runs them through a paper shredder or cuts them up with wire cutters. He shreds a Don Mattingly rookie card that was worth \$28 in 1991. He decimates a \$45 Ozzie Smith card that he says is worthless because the dealer he got it from cut a tiny strip off the edge to cover up a worn corner. How much is it worth with an almost unnoticeable strip cut off? “If it’s manipulated like this? Zero,” he says. He even shredded a Hank Aaron card and burned a Ken Griffey Jr. card!

He also laments how he purchased a limited edition card featuring multisport athlete Bo Jackson, hoping it would someday be worth a lot. But after he got that card, the card maker suddenly put out zillions more of this card—spoiling its value.

A lot of people posted negative comments on that video. They said the man was concerned only with the monetary value of the cards, and that by not enjoying the cards for what they were, he was dropping a big grogan on baseball itself. He now seems to be completely repentant for offending baseball fans. Others commented that the video made them realize that their own baseball card collections were worthless. They spent hundreds on cards only to see their investment sail down the crapper. Another commenter said they once had a Lenny Dykstra rookie card in mint condition, and they got to meet Dykstra so he could autograph it. The baseball legend crumpled the card as he was handing it back. It was ru. The commenter called this incident “one of the worst experiences of my life.”

However, I just can’t believe anyone cares if a card is a tiny bit off-center. It shouldn’t decrease its value—because that’s the way the card came.

At least we know what became of the cards in this video. They were shredded, and that’s it. I’ve had so many items stolen from me in hone invasions or when I was overpowered by a neighbor kid that it’s a miracle my Razor Shines card made it as long as it did. Burglars actually stole things that were useful only to me but had no monetary worth whatsoever. One thing that had only minor monetary value but which I haven’t seen since a series



of home invasions is a yellow box full of maps from *National Geographic* magazines. I don't know why a burglar in 2010 would have needed the maps unless they planned to go on a safari in Bangladesh in 1976, but nobody said whoever committed these crimes was smart. This apparent theft makes about as much sense as that theft ring in Missouri that stole school uniforms.

I know better than to start collecting baseball cards, because someone will just break in and steal them.

People made prank 911 calls from school

Teenage troublemakers in the 1970s liked to pull fire alarms. But when the 911 emergency phone number finally came to town over a decade later, they got a new interest.

The first place with 911 service was Haleyville, Alabama—hometown of bubble gum blowing champ Chad Fell—back in 1968. A majority of America had this service by 1987. We had to wait a couple more years because of political and corporate wrangling.

By that time, of course, it was the Brossart era! So you can see where this story is headed.

When I attended Bishop Brossart High School as 911 service was being introduced, students kept making prank 911 calls from the phone in the cafeteria. Usually, they'd just dial 911 and hang up. At least once, I was sitting in class when I saw police walking down the hall. I knew it was a fake 911 call by a student, because the school would never call the cops itself over the many crimes there.



Someone at Bro\$\$art put the *phony* in *telephony*!

Making bogus emergency calls or police reports is itself a crime. Responding to false calls forces police to ruin tax dollars and time. But at Brossart, some kids thought 911 was a toy. They were so fascinated that police could know where a call was coming from that they couldn't stop abusing it.

The novelty of 911 still hadn't worn off in college. One day, I was sitting in a hallway at NKU waiting for a class. A young woman walked by, approached the phone in the hall, dialed a number, and walked away in a huff. I didn't think anything of it until a few minutes later when two police officers strolled down the hall. One of them approached me with a stern look and asked me something like, "Did you see anyone use this phone?" Then it dawned on me that the young woman had made a prank 911 call.

The phone biz can be fascinating! Geography, transportation, and telecommunications all go hand in hand. In my day, I used paper grocery bags to design cockpits for pirate ships and airplanes. (It rains a lot here.) I proposed a mobile phone system to accompany it.

Prank emergency calls weren't the only crimes my schoolmates committed with phones. It's a shame Cincinnati Bell refused to do anything about their other crimes. Every new edition of the white pages featured more and more grandstanding against making harassing calls—but that never stopped the calls. (I don't remember it being in the yellow pages, but the yellow pages did have the drawing of the woman with orange hair who resembled Betsy DeVos.) I remember a section in the phone book that said that if you receive a harassing call, you should hang up, and it would get rid of them. It said something like, "You control your phone. The person on the other end doesn't." That turned out to be a load of shit, because I remember them being still there after we hung up. We'd hang up, and then an hour later when we tried to make a call, they'd still be on the line. We couldn't use our phone until they hung up—and nobody else could call us.

Obviously, we didn't control our phone. They did. We were unable to use our phone until the other party hung up after making a harassing call. Maybe I shouldn't worry about the shortage of affordable housing, because I was allowed to live rent-free in the minds of people who—without provocation—made harassing calls and stayed on the line as long as they dared.

I guess the people on the BBS's were right when they said phone books can be copyrighted. Fiction works usually can be. It obviously wasn't fact when the phone book said we control our own phone. It also wasn't fact when it said we could report harassment to the annoyance call bureau. We tried that, and it didn't work. The phone company said that if we wanted to stop harassing calls, we had to buy special call blocking equipment from them.

We found a post on the public Internet from just a few years ago from someone saying that they received an illegal robocall, and they couldn't use their phone until the robocaller hung up. When they tried to make a call later, they picked up the phone and heard that the robocall was still droning on. Time was that when you hung up, you could expect the call to be over. That probably ended around the time we got 911. But this problem seems to only afflict landlines.

Believe it or not, Cincinnati Bell's website *still* tells folks to use the annoyance call bureau—even though

it hasn't worked in at least 25 years. Their page on harassing calls is almost a word-for-word reprint of what was in the white pages decades ago—when they could have dropped the hammer but didn't.

I guess the phone company was too busy wiretapping Jerry Springer and the city hall pay phones.

Winamp doesn't win with latest Windows update

I'm sure it's too late, but whatever you do, don't install the mammoth Windows 10 update that came out in early August.

This update wosted 4 hours of my valuable time installing. It's not the first time a Windows update has taken a ridiculously long time, but Microsoft doesn't seem to want to do anything about expensive computers being out of commission for hours on end. What's shocking about this update though is that it disables Winamp.

Winamp, as you may know, is a free media player that efficiently plays files like MP3's. An occasional nerdbird article will declare the Winamp era over—but Winamp still releases new versions and remains the most widely used MP3 player. Self-anointed "experts" don't get to decide for me that I have to ditch Winamp in favor of an inferior player. Some articles from a year ago say Winamp was returning from the dead and was now compatible with Windows 10. Uh, Winamp never died, and it was *always* compatible with Windows 10.

But the recent Windows 10 update is not compatible with Winamp. That's a Windows problem, not a Winamp problem. After I installed this update, Winamp didn't work anymore. Every time I tried using it, it acted like it had to be reinstalled. It couldn't get past this stage. This was true of even the newest Winamp version, which was touted for its Windows 10 support.

So I did something I never had to do in the 21 years I've used Windows. I restored Windows to the previous update. Winamp now works as well as ever.

Why did Windows disable Winamp? If you don't know the answer, you must have missed my countless articles about piracy paranoia. I'm 100% certain Windows did it to appease the recording industry—which yells that everyone else is a pirate. On local BBS's 30 years ago, the worst thing you could call someone was a software pirate. They thought there was a pirate hiding under every bed. They'd accuse you of being a software pirate no matter how much evidence there was to the contrary. Now—in some circles—it's like that with music piracy. Some Internet forums accuse people of illegally copying or distributing music because they have certain software—but the forums provide no evidence of it.

In their funhouse mirror world, software or equipment that could conceivably be used to pirate music is suspect, even taboo—even if such equipment is very rarely used for piracy by anyone. There's no doubt whatsoever in my mind that Windows disabled Winamp because Winamp can play MP3's—which people may have possibly downloaded from a file sharing site 15 years ago.

This may surprise the corporate media's flying fuckfaces, but some of us have whole collections of MP3's that we downloaded legit or copied from records, cassettes, or CD's we already had. We never distributed any of them. They never left our own computer or flash drive. The only reason we copied some from other media is that Winamp can't play records and tapes. You're supposed to know that part, at least.

Microsoft tried making us give up Winamp all because of the possibility that someone might use it to play illegally copied MP3's. That's like banning record players because they can play bootleg Soviet records made from x-ray sheets. The comparison is fair, because the people lobbing false accusations of piracy are as oppressive as the Soviet Union was.

Winamp isn't perfect either—for it was once owned by AOL, which in 2004 disabled Winamp's playback of WMA files because recording industry racketeers told it to. If you bought music in WMA format during the 3 seconds or so when it was a thing, these files became useless. AOL had so little respect for Winamp that in 2013, it tried to shut down Winamp altogether and tell everyone to just suck it up.

In the meantime, Microsoft better not try to foist that faulty Windows update on me again. I told them no, and I meant no.

A bunch of D.R.I. tapes got ru

Dirty Rotten Imbeciles are a thrash metal and hardcore punk band, and people bought D.R.I. cassettes only to see them get ruined right before their very eyes.

Grazing on the public Internet, I found an old thread about this ghastly phenomenon. Someone posted in all capitals, "ALL MY CASSETTES GOT RUINED IN THE FLOOD."

Hear that, everyone? The magic word! Ruined! Hey ruined! Where are you, ruined?! The cassettes were ruined all up!



Someone else posted that they also had a D.R.I. cassette that got wasted: “i just found my copy of crossover on the floor in absolute ruin. died a little inside.” But it’s unclear how the ruinment of this tape was accomplished. They made it sound like it leaped off the cassette rack and unwound by itself.

I bet people cried.

School forces students to retake ACT after losing answers

I’m absolutely convinced that schools lose test scores on purpose just because they enjoy making students retake the test. This exact same thing has happened with alarming frequency.

Recently, Pinecrest High School in Moore County, North Carolina, lost the completed ACT answer sheets of over 400 students. So now the students are being forced to take the 3-hour test all over again.

The school told pupils of this after ACT officials confirmed that they never received the answer sheets, because the school lost ‘em all up. A school official admitted, “The actual answer sheets were never shipped back to ACT.” Why?

At least the ACT appears to be somewhat useful. This story would be even worse if students had to retake a test that was worthless like the ones we had to take each year because our schools never met a standardized test they didn’t like. (I just remembered that having to take the Iowa Test of Basic Skills is probably what encouraged us to pick Iowa as a vacation spot that year—although I took the test at Brossart, not in Iowa. So at least some good came out of spending a Saturday going out to Brossart to be harassed by schoolmates and listen to my future principal drone about people spilling soda on the tables.)

A person bubbled on a field trip

I gotta hand it to Guardian Angel School. This Fort Mitchell outlet left much to be desired, quite frankly—but it had by far the best field trips of any school I remember. However, the frequency and fun of these trips declined precipitously in my later years there.

We once went on a field trip to the Hudepohl brewery. We once went to the Kenner toy factory—and they gave us small *Star Wars* figures. We went to a Coca-Cola bottling plant. We went to a jeans factory. We went to a farm where the farmer made lye soap. We went to a museum that had old ventriloquist dummies. We went to the main Cincinnati post office. We went to the Kenton County waterworks.

One day, we went on a field trip, and on the way over in the school’s car, a student bubbled using yellow bubble gum. I was shocked at his defiance of the school’s rule against gumming. He was obnoxious about his beegie busting—as all cool people are. It’s a requirement for being a coolster. The teachers kept warning him to “get rid of the gum” before we arrived, but he seemed to ignore this admonition.

Apparently, some people can’t be bothered with not bubbling.

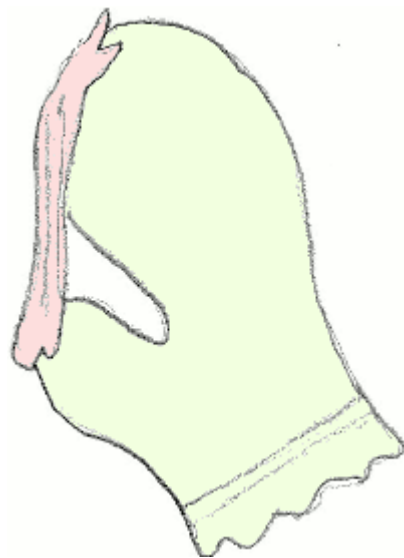
I don’t remember anyone else bubbling on a school field trip until Spit Eye School—where it would be news if people *didn’t* bubble. I’m not counting the Brossart “retoolings” as field trips, because these events were so creepy, draining, and useless. During one of those outings, someone planned to throw bubble gum in the pond to see if the ducks would bubble.

We can all agree that the mere existence of bubble gum is hilarious, but field trips at Guardian Angel weren’t just about the beegie. When I was in 3rd grade, the school had an “honor roll” that allowed qualifying pupils to go on small outings. On one occasion, my “honor roll” points were mistakenly awarded to a classmate who was the real-life Ralph Wiggum. One other time, a teacher was showing this student how to do a very simple math problem and—as if it was some complicated formula—gushed, “You solved an equation!” The student then clapped like a toddler who just used the potty for the first time.

A person did a Wright brothers and it ruined their mittens

I just remembered something I had completely forgotten about for 30 years. Here’s the most shocking part: It has to do with bubble gum. Can you imagine that? It also has to do with Brossart.. Can you imagine that? You can??? How?????

Anybip, the expression “doing a Wright brothers” means to reach out and pop somebody else’s bubble. This is also known as “Bazookacidal tendencies.” This technique was once employed on an outing conducted by Bishop Brossart High School, a far-right Catholic school in Alexandria. I’m guessing I was maybe a



sophomore.

Odds are that it wasn't a real field trip. As I've said, it doesn't count as a field trip if it was one of the school's nonsensical "retoolings." (Yes, they did call them "retoolings.") Field trips should be both educational and fun. The "retoolings" were neither. These events had very limited appeal and did absolutely nothing for me. I don't even know what they were supposed to do. One of the most frustrating things is that these outings took away class time that I could have used to develop my talents. Then again, very little at Brossart developed my talents, so that wasn't a big loss.

As for the outing in this story, we were on the bus going to our destination, when a student bubbled (although the school strictly prohibited gumming of any sort). A girl in my class reached over and did a Wright brothers. Best all, she was wearing fuzzy mittens. I seem to recall the mittens were tan or beige with a slight green tint. When she pulled her hand away, a huge strand of gum was draped across the mitten. It appeared as if she had a webbed hand.

Her mittens were ru.

Another student who saw this declared, "Eeewww!"

I will swear up and down that this occurred. I'm an eyewitness to this act. It happened, and there's no point in arguing. I don't know why I forgot about it for 30 years or what reminded me of it now. Then again, I can't be expected to remember every last detail of something that happened 30 years ago—no matter how uproarious.

What's the appeal of doing a Wright brothers? Most people I know don't go around randomly bursting other people's bubbles in their faces. Maybe Brossart was different, as it was in a lot of ways. Around here, if you meet someone new like a family friend at a cookout, one of the first things they ask you is where you went to high school. It's as if it's supposed to define you. Even when I attended Brossart, I felt so alienated from the school's "community" that I avoided being defined as a Brossart student. I never wanted to go to Brossart in the first place, but I was forced to, because reasons. These days, kids are always being encouraged to "show their school spirit" by buying notebooks and folders in their school colors. Kids in these ads look like a bunch of geeks. But when I went to Brossart, I tried to avoid buying anything whose color was green.

'Sesame Street'...snack crackers!

One day in 1st grade, someone mentioned *Sesame Street*, and somebody sang, "*Sesame Street*...snack crackers!" to the tune of the Sesame Wheats commercial.

If someone had mentioned Sesame Wheats, I bet somebody would have sung, "Can you tell me how to get, how to get to Sesame Wheats."

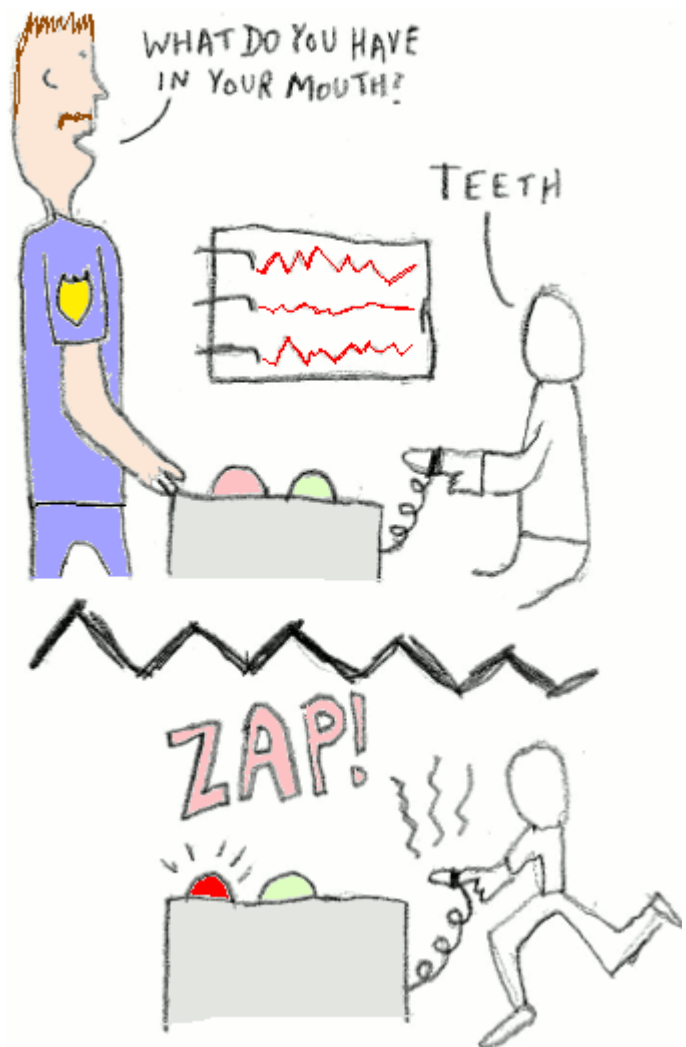
A gum story you can sink your teeth into!

Because this is a day ending in y, people demanded—I demanded, I tell you!—that I run yet another story about bubble gum. Gum stories are as popular as broken eyeglasses stories—which you also love!

Something funny involving gum happened once in 8th grade at St. Joe's. People at St. Joe's rarely masticated the zesty goo on school grounds. I know there was a rule against gumming, but that didn't stop this time-honored act from taking place at other schools with a similar rule.

But one morning, beegie was gnashed. I think this was the same day we went on a field trip to the airport. It may have been some other outing though. As with Brossart, most St. Joe's outings—of which there were very few to begin with—don't even count as field trips. Unlike the airport trip, most St. Joe's events were just the typical useless bullplop I'd sadly come to expect by then.

My homeroom teacher was a portly, balding, middle-aged man. That morning, a boy in homeroom who sat near the back of the room kept misbehaving. Just before we left for the



field trip, the teacher began lecturing the student about his unruly conduct. I think the student was leaning back in his chair so the front legs were in the air—a big no-no.

As the teacher was talking, I looked back towards the student. I noticed his mouth was moving. “Could it be?” everyone thought. Yep, it was. It was gee of the bee variety.

When it appeared as if he was about to bubble, the following conversation ensued (though I’m going from memory of 33 years ago, so this might not be perfectly verbatim)...

Teacher: “What do you have in your mouth?”

Student: “Teeth.”

Teacher (frustrated): “Why are you always lying to me?”

You mean the student *didn't* have teeth in his mouth? I’m sure he did, so he wasn’t really lying. People talked about this incident for years afterward.