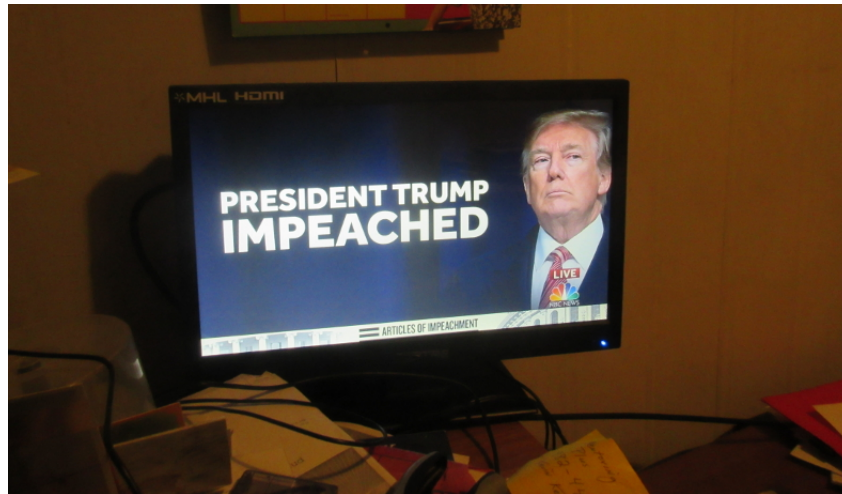


The Last Word™

Issue #543

January 2020



(Fair use, so tough toilets)

Broken windshields, ruined driveways, fast food litter, oh my!

I think I finally see what the problem is with developers and their apologists. They're allergic to clues. Clues make them sneeze right in your face.

They don't comprehend the message that nobody else wants the financial ruin, inconvenience, and horror of their unsustainable gentrification projects. Because this is a day ending in *y*, the Manhattan Harbour debacle—which grows dumber by the day—is under fire for destroying something somewhere in Dayton. It's always something that somebody has worked very hard for that once brang them so much joy. And now it's gone. Gone into thin air.

Just a couple weeks ago, yet more complaints were lodged on Facebook about this fiasco. People said construction trucks on 4th Street were kicking rocks onto their car windshields—heavily damaging them. Some folks say the trucks must use that street because it's a state route. That doesn't explain why the trucks also use Ervin, O'Fallon, and—according to the latest reports—both 3rd Street and Berry Street now too. Berry, O'Fallon, Ervin, 3rd, or 4th, the trucks have no business being on any of them.

Now the trucks have also started parking on residential streets, taking up spaces needed by locals. The trucks have been illegally carrying uncovered loads, dropping sharp rocks onto roads. They've been going the wrong way on one-way streets. They ruined a person's driveway—and yes, the magic word was used. One truck plowed into a car and totaled it. Even the mayor posted, "Today there was a considerable mess made." But that's *every* day.

The driver of one of the trucks was also seen throwing a McDonald's bag out the window of the truck. Later, I was told that the bag then rested upright on the street and didn't blow away, even though it was a windy day. This indicates that the driver threw away a whole meal—thereby wasting it.

There was later a series of planned electric blackouts related to the construction—during freezing weather.

Gee, I'm sorry I'm "persecuting" the 1% by opposing Manhattan Fubar trucks littering and breaking car windows, and blackouts that cause pipes to burst.



Idiot busted for domestic violence and refuses to get a job

What do you call a man who is well over 40 but refuses to get a job, preferring instead to live off his

knocked over—but *what* would be knocked over. The man knew that carrying an oversized bin in a shopping cart was a recipe for wastage bastrophe. But he slogged along.

A few minutes later, it happened. A crash was heard! The man had steered his cart too close to a display of very expensive wine in the meat department. Three costly glass bottles of fine wine tumbled to the floor—shattering them. A river of purple flowed freely past the frozen food cases. The man stood there sheepishly for a few seconds before skittering away.

The \$98.26 question is: Now that the wine was ruined, what other items became wasted by it? The floor itself was in immediate danger. It probably had a finish or lacquer that was alcohol soluble. Thus the wine probably ate away the finish.



Dungeons & Dragons Allowed Clouds

Dungeons & Dragons wasn't designed to be a completely unstructured universe where players could do whatever they want. D&D masters were invited to modify rules to fit circumstances, but there was always a method to the madness. It's just like how even WCLU had a format clock (of which there's photographic proof).

But sometimes the Allowed Clouds in D&D seemed to have a weak justification. I was part of a D&D campaign where I had a thief character. This meant my character wasn't allowed to have better armor. Why couldn't thieves have good armor? I was told that it was because it "ruins their thieving skills."

Magic-users' choice of armor was even more limited. One of the D&D books laughably said armor interferes with the gestures that magic-users make when they cast spells. Thus it was considered more realistic to forbid them from wearing armor. But if realism was the goal, why were characters able to cast spells at all? And why were there all these monsters that didn't exist in real life (like the tiger who smoked a pipe)?

It was always recommended that characters with the highest intelligence scores become magic-users. But how come even the smartest kids in school couldn't cast spells or perform magic?

It seems like about half the time a character tried to learn a spell, the dice roll dictated that they were unable to understand it, so the new spell they got when they advanced a level was wasted.

I also remember Dungeons & Dragons having druids even though the game appeared to have very little idea of what a druid is. I remember that one of the books said that the game would eventually add more details about druids as research into druids continued. That's like if I made a game about eating caviar!

And why did each level of each character class have its own name like "prestidigitator"? Is it just because the names sounded cool?

One of the funniest things in D&D was monsters that were hybrids of two different kinds of animals that exist in real life—such as the duckbunny. These monsters always had superpowers that far exceeded the real-life animals.

Perfectly following Dungeons & Dragons rules makes the game much too complicated. Besides, it doesn't make sense that some character classes can't use certain types of armor or weapons, while a gas spore that has the intelligence of a plant can hoard valuable gems.

Burn toilet paper! It melts!

Setting the toilet paper in restrooms on fire seems to have achieved celebrity status in recent months—not unlike at Brossart.

In November—the toiletymost month of all—classes at Lincoln High School in Des Moines, Iowa, were canceled because a student set the toilet paper on fire in a boys' restroom. The blaze filled many classrooms with the scent of smoke. A similar situation occurred at Martin Middle School in Corpus Christi, Texas, back in May. The fire was put out when a janitor threw the burning toilet paper into the toilet. In another November incident, toilet paper was incinerated at Jennings Elementary in Jennings, Louisiana.

It appears as if each event pales in comparison to what happened in October at Paris Elementary in South

Paris, Maine. The school had to be closed for most of the week because an 11-year-old girl started fires in 2—count ‘em, 2—lavatories. Paper products—likely toilet paper—were used to start the fires.

At a high school in Ohio, a series of fires caused the plastic toilet paper dispenser to melt onto the floor. The culprit bragged to a schoolmate, “Look at this!” and made a video of himself starting one of the fires. A fire reportedly started by a 17-year-old student at a high school in Wyoming completely consumed the toilet paper dispenser. Media reports said he had “thrown a temper tantrum” earlier that day.

It’s not only schools. It’s workplaces too! A few months ago, someone made a post to a website titled “my coworker is setting toilet paper on fire in the bathroom” asking what to do about it. They said he repeatedly set fire to “clumps of toilet paper” and threw them in the toilet. He did it at least twice a week.

And it’s not only fires. It’s poo too! Someone on the public Internet said a coworker kept defecating on the restroom floor and toilet seat. Another said someone was smearing shit on the bathroom walls at their workplace.

Sadly, when I worked at the library, my coworkers never provided such entertainment. The closest we ever got was when I kept hearing loud flatulence emerging from the employee lounge. On the other hand, library patrons treated the restrooms as their personal sandbox to deface.

This is a stupid article.

As the bubble turns (a blast from the past)

I’m old enough to remember when the Windows search feature would search inside “.txt” files for important phrases like it’s supposed to. I’m also old enough to remember when you could still select text from such a file and paste the whole thing instead of just one line.

It took a bit of work to dig up this story. I knew I’d written about it a long time ago, but it was time to relive the memories! Not like we want to, because that era wasn’t a happy chapter in America’s history—except for this lone story.

Back in 1996, a hilarious episode unfurled on Usenet, and it had to do with bubble gum. I know Google’s Usenet archive is unreliable and full of forged posts, but I saw these messages before Google took over, so they’re real. In this sequence, a young man with a University of Pittsburgh account went on several different newsgroups and posted slightly different versions of a post in which he described his bubbling hobby. The post was not even remotely relevant to any newsgroup where he posted it. I didn’t go looking for this post back in 1996. I found it by accident on one of the groups I read.

Perhaps the funniest response was on rec.arts.tv.soaps.misc—a group about TV soap operas. This is the version of the message that he posted there, titled “BUBBLE GUM” (misspellings and capitalization are his)...

“I’M A COMPLETE BUBBLE GUM ADDICT. I’M CONSTINTLY CHEWING HUGE WADS OF BUBBLE GUM, AND I HAVE A GOAL OF BLOWING THE WORLD’S BIGGEST BUBBLE. TO DO SHOW I NEED TO BLOW A BUBBLE OF 24 INCHES IN DIAMETER. I HAVE BLOWN BUBBLES UP TO 20 INCHES IN DIAMETER

“I EVEN GOT MY GIRLFRIEND HOOK ON BUBBLE GUM. OUR FAVIRITE THING TO DO TOGETHER IS FOR EACH OTHER TO POP BUBBLES IN EACH OTHERS FACES. WE CCONSTINTLY GETTING GUM STUCK ON EACH OTHER FACES. I WAS TRYING TO SHOW HER ON OF MY 20 INCH BUBBLES WHEN THE BUBBLE POPPED AND STUCK ALL OVER MY FACE. I WAS SO IMBARRESSED. SHE HAD TO HELP WASH MY HAIR TO GET THE GUM OUT.

“I JUST HAVE AN ADDITION FOR GUM, IS THIS TWO CHILDISH FOR TWO COLLAGE STUDENTS.”

If he was so “imbarressed” about it, why did he post this story on so many groups? *Millions* of people probably saw it. And what does it have to do with soap operas?

His post elicited several uproarious responses. One said, “buncha inane garbage deleted.” One woman gave a more detailed reply...

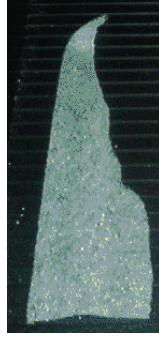
“Far out, man. But this newsgroup is for the purpose of discussing soaps. That is, as in soap opera, also known as daytime dramas. It’s not about soap bubbles or Double Bubble bubbles. You did make me laugh, so a bit of advice: stop blowing bubbles into your girlfriends face and work on learning how to spell. ...”



This respondent went on to rave about *Another World* stars who chomped beegies.

Oddly enough, Google Groups still permits folks to reply to the original post—24 years later.

That's almost as funny as the time a piece tore off from the felt from the box for my cassette deck that was shaped remarkably like the state of Delaware...



Bad odds, big accomplishments

Usually, if you succeed, everyone forgets. If you fail, everyone remembers. It's like that for most people. It's even like that for Nikki Haley, but only because she's failed at everything.

As this zine enters another new decade, it's time to reflect on our past accomplishments—and how the odds were against us.

By the time I started this zine, I was in a world of panic and hurt. I was heartbroken because of these and other acts...

- **A pattern of harassment and violence by the school system and students who the schools favored.**
- **These assaults spilling over into public places.**
- **The assailants using their money and clout to avoid punishment.**
- **The subsequent confinement that was imposed upon me—thus punishing the victim.**
- **Being called a liar right to my face when I described the harassment—despite numerous witnesses. (Some witnesses came forward at my 25-year reunion.)**

Why is it so fucking hard to understand why these things were such a problem? Writing that list is like writing articles of impeachment. As with Donald Trump's crimes, the reaction is the same in that there was a cult that defended these acts when they weren't denying them.

Once the Evil Empire decided that turning their wrath against me wasn't enough, they began visiting it upon the rest of the public too. Right-wing politicians painted the public as lazy moochers who would rather receive a handout than work—even though by that time, I worked at the library *and* attended school. I worked very hard. But they repeated their lie over and over again, and the media was always happy to help.

The feeling of panic ate away at me. I started this zine with the intent to be a force for good and a dissenting voice against right-wing extremism. And that it is. But I learned that panic can make anyone lose their way quickly. It's easy to be blinded when you're forced to spend all your energy fighting threats that nobody else did shit about. It didn't help that local institutions influenced the range of ideas that seemed acceptable. Even as we were considered an ultraliberal zine, this zine should have been even *more* ahead of the times than it was. But because of factors like NKU officials' apologia for discredited ideas, some ideas that should have been considered sensible were considered unthinkable.

The buck stops here. I knew our civic authority was inept and corrupt, and I tried my best to carry out my duty of making sure it was fought effectively. I continue to do so. If anyone thought they could do a better job of fighting it, they should have done so. There were just so few people with this sort of focus back then that we just had to accept this zine regardless of flaws. Plus, my work actually created energy and excitement. You can't accomplish anything without it.

Even in our early years, our positive accomplishments stacked up like Lincoln Logs...

- **We exposed right-wing policies. Not that anyone in power paid any heed.**
- **We exposed right-wing politicians of both major parties.**
- **We contributed to the eventual closure of an abusive teen “rehab.”**
- **We made positive contributions to humor, graphic writing, and language.**
- **We humiliated the incompetent hierarchy of several schools.**

• We almost certainly stemmed right-wing policies in a local school district. Again, however, I'm sure nobody in power paid attention for very long, so it's unknown how long this lasted before yapping whiners in the "mainstream" press reversed our progress.

• We likely contributed to the defeat of a far-right political candidate who threatened to tie up that office for years.

That list doesn't include my book *The Fight That Never Ends*, a separate project that probably led to the "retirement" of 2 incompetent school administrators. One of them was only in his fifties at the time, so he couldn't have retired because of age.

My successes took *work*. When I talk about the incessant yapping of the media, it's no exaggeration. They have a much bigger bullhorn to undo my work.

What will the 2020s have in store for this zine? I didn't start this zine just to tell people to log on to BBS's and say "Limbaugh bad" a billion times (even though the statement is true). I wanted *action*. We should be way past the *talking* stage by now and well into the *doing* stage.

Think. Do. Be.

Library test was one for the books

Last February, I regaled you with my uproariously poor performance on the P-ACT Plus, which Brossart forced us to take during sophomore year.

Because this was Kentucky and all, Brossart wasn't the only party complicit in foisting insufferable standardized tests upon us. Standardized tests are the state religion in Kentucky. It didn't matter what school you had the misfortune of attending. Disrespecting a standardized test was like cracking a loud, smelly fart in church.

In my day, the Bluegrass State used the Kentucky Essential Skills Test. It didn't become a yearly ritual until the mid-'80s. Crammed inside my P-ACT Plus packet, I found my test scores from a couple times I took the KEST. How do you think I did on this test?

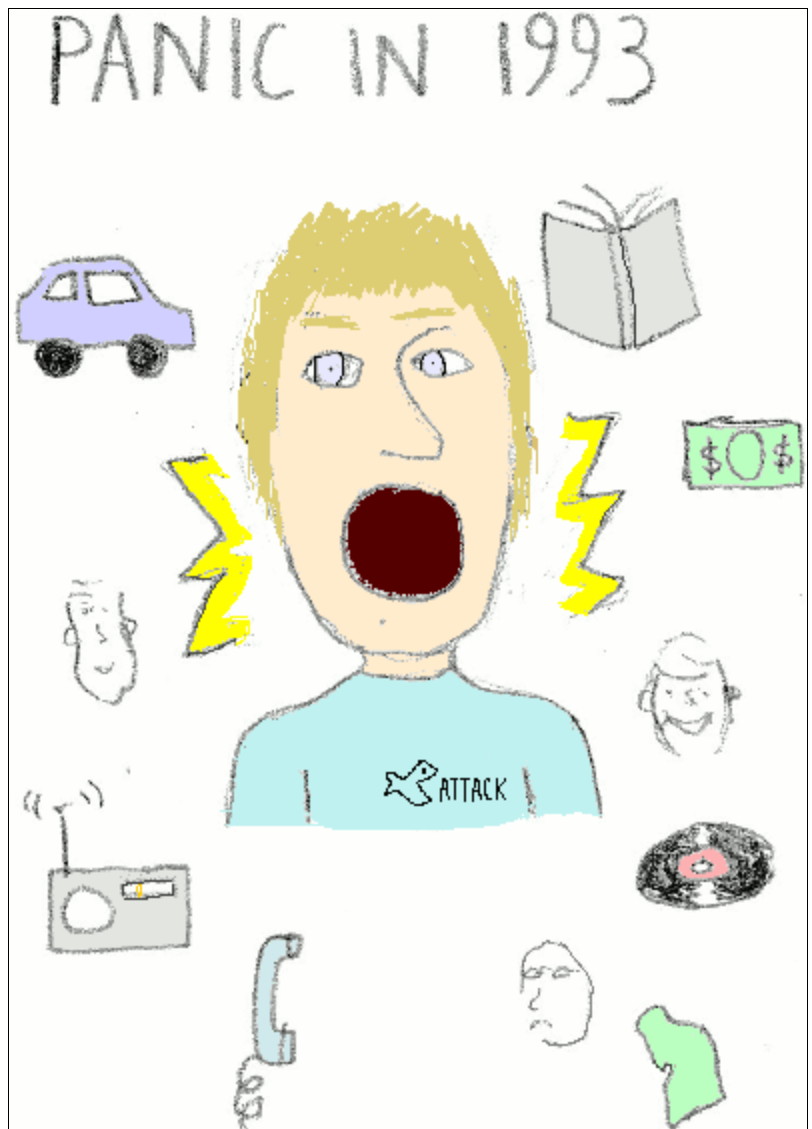
One of them is from freshman year at Brossart. This was the same series where someone released a loud-and-proud during the test and my homeroom teacher commented on it. I managed to get a 99 percentile as my composite math score—but I got only an 11 percentile in writing expression. The big mystery though was my score in library research and reference: I got a 4 percentile. *Four*.

Well, I showed up for the test. Must be a 4.

I've been trying to remember why I did so singularly bad in a category that shouldn't have been that hard for someone who went on to work at the public library for years. Now I remember. It's because they took us to the school library for that part, and one or two classmates kept following me around the library and starting shit with me. Instead of removing them from the test, I was removed.

You see, standardized testing is only a state religion when it's imposed on normal people like you and me. Spoiled preps may disrespect it as much as they dare.

My score sheet lists several subcategories under library skills, and one of them is "define plagiarism." I'm sure I would have done pretty well at defining plagiarism, although this was in the era of people on BBS's who constantly yelled that everyone except themselves was violating copyrights. (Notice also that those who accused everybody else of violating copyrights had zero respect for trademarks I hold or for the public's right to stop Google from making money off their old Internet posts—not to mention posts from people impersonating them, which Google won't do shit about. They're like the people who bluster about being "tough on crime" but defend



real criminals.)

I also have my KEST scores from 7th grade at St. Joe's. Sorry to say my library score that time was a 98 percentile. The decline from 98 to 4 can only be explained by extenuating circumstances. It's pretty bad that the extenuating circumstances were even worse at Brossart than at St. Joe's.

People carved up tables in 6th grade

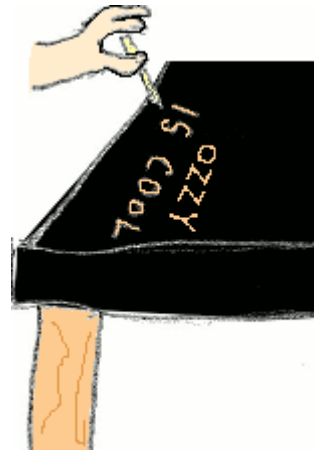
This story—which I forgot about completely for 35 years—is like the time in sophomore geometry class at Brossart when someone wiped a huge booger on the back of one of the chairs.

This narrative comes to us from science class in 6th grade at Cline Middle School. In that classroom, the tables were made of very soft wood and had a black surface. In fact, the wood was so soft that you could carve up the tables with just a plain old pen, pencil, fingernail, or hemorrhoidal suppository.

Predictably, people carved up the tables like there was no tomorrow. It was as easy as writing on a sheet of paper. Even one of those weird pencils that had just a thin stick of graphite and a knob on the bottom would do it.

Each of the tables seemed to be etched with a “For a good time, call...” message. Someone also carved the words “I AM GAY” into one of the tables.

If you're 20 now, you're probably shocked that people did things like that in my day, because I'm a full generation older. Chronologically, my 6th grade year was as close to 1950 as it was to 2020. But there seemed to be no limit to what might be carved into desks at school. Every generation thinks it invented misbehaving at school, but the evidence suggests it has a long history.



Dare to be Stupid

Remember GeoCities? Remember when GeoCities kept removing the UHF site because the Usenet Cabal (who claimed to be such champions of free speech) whined about it? Remember when Yahoo (which reported journalists to the Chinese government) was allowed to take over GeoCities and shut it down? Pepperidge Farm remembers.

The big, bright GeoCities zeppelin was bobbing along the Internet's skyline in the late '90s. GeoCities and other free platforms came in handy for people who wished to start their own websites about—are you ready for it?—bubble gum. These sites touched off a bubble gum mania that has filled the Internet ever since. The Internet can't get enough of the stuff.

One of the most interesting—and I don't mean that in a good way—websites about beegee peopled GeoCities only briefly. I *burst out laughing* as I was remembering this site, so I'm sure you'll think it's funny too! For the life of me, I couldn't remember the name of the site. It might have been called Sandstone Limbo, but I think that was the name of the guy's band. Not long ago, I remembered that he used the handle Mr. Stupid for himself. Trust me, he lived up to his nickname.

The website was so horribly designed that you had to read through every page as a series to get to the next page. Each page had only a few sentences. What about the website's content? It consisted primarily of poorly written lists of...

- **All the times Mr. Stupid witnessed a person—especially his girlfriend, who he said resembled Ginger of *Gilligan's Island*—blowing a bubble.**
- **All the times he bubbled himself.**
- **TV shows and commercials in which a character bubbled. He commented that he wished he was the director of one such show so he could date an actress who bubbled.**

Best all, Mr. Stupid didn't grasp the concept of GeoCities using city names to designate the topic of websites. He put his site under Nashville because that's where he lived—not because the site had anything to do with music.

As Mr. Stupid stupefied GeoCities, he titled his guestbook “Bubble Gum Poppin' People.” This shows I didn't come up with that phrase. Mr. Stupid came up with it, and I propagated it because it was so catchy. But many folks who posted in the guestbook were probably not avid gummers. Most of them just talked about what an idiotic site it was. Others hounded Mr. Stupid that he needed to post photos. At least one person accused Mr. Stupid of making up all his stories. But if you're going to make up stories, why make up stories about *bubble gum*, of all things? The negative commenters must not have been big winners in life if they actually thought

someone other than themselves would spend the effort making up stories about *bubble gum*.

I'll give Mr. Stupid credit for one thing though. I think his site was the first place I heard of the idea of bubbling through a kazoo.

That site didn't last long before Mr. Stupid replaced it with one about guitar chords. He seemed to have finally realized that GeoCities used city names for topics, not for the cities where webmasters lived.

Each record authentic to the tiniest touch!

You may recall that in our previous ish, I profiled the *Taking Care Of Things You Share* scare film in which a record album was ruined in a sidesplitting spectacle. I knew I'd heard the voice-over woman in that film before, but I just couldn't figure out where.

Now I think I've figured it out. Look up the commercial for the Franklin Mint's Little Maids of the Thirteen Colonies from the mid-'80s. I'm pretty sure it's the same voice-over woman.



Brossart thought Wonder Woman was porn

Bishop Brossart High School is a whole new world just itching to be laughed at!

When I went to school there, I studied art, but the school didn't have much appreciation for what art is supposed to be about. Art should be creative. But I got bad grades because of the creative touches I used. Sometimes I didn't even know what the teacher wanted. I remember an assignment where he said to draw a humorous pencil drawing that highlighted textures like fur or feathers. So I made a drawing that included several strange creatures, including one who looked like a gas station sign with Big Bird's head. This critter dominated the scene and sported a sly smile. The feathers were highlighted the way I thought they were supposed to be. I received an *F* even though I did exactly what the teacher said.

For another project, we had to copy a panel from a comic book. Instead of making a new drawing, we were supposed to replicate the frame exactly. No creative additions were allowed. (Ooh, an Allowed Cloud!) I got an *F* because one of the usual suspects grabbed my project out of my hand and wadded it up. But other students got to put their finished works on display in the school library.

Brossart was so outrageously prudish that this presented another problem. One student submitted a drawing of Wonder Woman. The art teacher told us that the librarian—an elderly nun—refused to display this drawing because she considered it “too revealing.”

Wonder Woman is “too revealing”? The drawing wasn't any more revealing than what you'd see at the beach or even the mall—in plain view of adults and children. Wonder Woman comic books had been read by children all over the world, and Brossart didn't combust because of it.

It's like when the principal at St. Joe's thought the number 5 was pornographic, or Don Wildmon's letter about *Toy Story*.

Brossart got worked up about weird things. It's like they invented “broken windows” policing.

Aaugh! There's a lost Peanuts comic!

Everyone remembers the comic strip *Peanuts*. Created by the late Charles Schulz, it ran for a half-century.

Websites about lost media say the entire run of the strip is accounted for—except the title panel of one 1955 installment. Wrongo! I remember one *Peanuts* comic that has disappeared completely.

In this vanished comic, Charlie Brown tried writing to his pen pal, and his pen leaked. He suddenly tilted his head back and yelled, “*RATS!!!*” I saw it when it first ran, and it was so hilarious that I recently wanted to relive it.

But it's gone. Completely.

I found a website that purports to have all the old *Peanuts* comics, and I skimmed all of them from 1988 to 1998. That one isn't there. I don't know what appears in its place, because I don't know the exact date when it ran. I'd guess the mid-'90s, because I thought I read it when I lived at my old apartment—and perhaps even saved it for a while and put it on the refrigerator—so I was being generous by searching under so many years. I think I

even mentioned the comic in the early days of my website.

Peanuts was often pretty funny—especially when something got ru. I remember seeing an old installment reprinted in a book in which Linus talked about how his dad bought a new car. The stereo speakers in this brand new car were ruined when Linus accidentally spilled an entire milkshake down inside them. I wish I had time to sit down and enjoy the *Peanuts* comics on the website and relive the laughs!

Why was the pen pal comic suppressed? I don't remember it being controversial. Some media is suppressed or simply never seen again. *Sesame Street* reportedly had a Number Painter sketch in which the number 12 was painted on a taxi. I had thought these skits included only 2 to 11, but I vaguely remember the 12 sketch now that someone online mentioned it. But it hasn't aired in a very long time, and nobody knows why. An episode of *Hawaii Five-O* was suppressed because it featured a suicide technique. There's a rumor that a *Fat Albert* cartoon was produced in which Rudy went on a rampage, and that CBS cut away from it just as the opening theme began. According to this rumor, it was never aired again and never appeared on any DVD.

Peanuts had a long history. In 4th grade, one of my assignments was to redraw a *Peanuts* comic, and the teacher got mad because it was too “violent.” *Peanuts* is “violent”? Good grief!



Private school monopoly schooled on “persecution” claim

If you gain satisfaction from religion, so be it. That's your right, and I'll defend this right to my very death. Sadly, however, students who are denied access to public schools are subjected to a private school monopoly that wrongly assumes everyone is completely invested in religion.

It's bad enough that many school officials don't believe in separation of church and state. Under the hard freeze of rightism, the church *is* the state. It's bad enough that—even though they claim to be morally superior—their actions and policies are often immoral or unethical. What I haven't really touched on is their assumptions about others' religious interest—and their claims that those who are uninterested are “persecuting” them.

It crosses the line into being creepy, but I was looking for a better word. I think *pushy* describes it. This is a much bigger problem when it's a monopoly. There's no alternative. You can't always choose a school that better fits your life goals.

I attended a Catholic school for 4 years in elementary school, but despite some conflicts with the school, it was much more relaxed than what I experienced later. The real problems began near the end of 7th grade when I was forced to start attending St. Joe's. It continued until I was a high school sophomore at Brossart.

It wasn't just that violent bullying was out of control at these schools (which the schools encouraged), or that these schools were strangely preoccupied with idiotic dress codes, or that I kept getting sick while I attended school there. It was also other actions by these schools, which actually had a very limited appeal. You either get it or you don't. Some students seemed to do quite well with it, but others (such as I) were left scratching their heads every day. The school couldn't realistically have the same expectations for every student. That's human nature.

The activities at these schools were as if New Math had found religion!

These events didn't do anything for me. For some of them, I just thought, “Alright, whatever.” But other activities caused real alarm to me and others.

St. Joe's and Brossart invested a lot of our precious time in these events. Among them was the Brossart “retoolings.” That was the term a priest there used for a series of religious retreats. The school took us to a church in Kenton County for an entire school day. We mostly just listened to sermons and attended mass. I guess we were supposed to feel spiritually renewed after the “retoolings”, but I felt like I always felt. I know I'm not alone. But the school acted like there was something wrong with you if you didn't gain what was expected from the “retoolings.”

Through much of my middle and high school years, I wanted to pursue a career in either civil engineering or broadcasting. I wasn't militantly opposed to religion, but I had zero interest in the religious aspect of school. I would have done better at a school where I could have focused more on subjects that interested me. I complained bitterly to my parents. I didn't dare complain to the school though, because I knew the school wouldn't do anything sensible like recommend a different school. At Brossart, the guidance counselor's main activity seemed to be to incessantly call my parents about assignments I failed.

Complaining about all of this is considered “persecution” by private school monopolies. I'm “persecuting” them by being uninterested in religion, even though I'm not forcing others to adopt my beliefs. I'm “persecuting” them by disagreeing with them. Gee, it must be rough being a monopolistic private school, considering how much I've “persecuted” them. I just can't believe my schools lasted so long under my evil, immoral plot against their True Free Speech Now (tm).

Grow up!

I want my MTV, but I didn't want these mail order commercials

In its mid-'80s heyday, MTV was my favorite thing to watch on television. It rains a lot here, and I'd outgrown pastimes like spreading a blanket on the floor, pretending it was a boat, sailing to a completely landlocked town in South Dakota—which only took a half-hour—and letting my dog run in and out of this pretend boat.

Even in the mid-'80s, MTV was being chiseled away at by commercials. Lots of 'em! Its ad load was huge—and growing. One type of ad that was big then was the longer commercials that sold items that could only be obtained by mail order. “Not sold in any stores!” they usually blared.

In addition to Franklin Mint goodies, subscriptions to magazines like *Ballet News*, and oldies compilation albums, these ads sold other items that have been completely forgotten about. Many were absurd, and I don't remember anyone ever ordering them. One of them was a pair of headphones with a built-in radio. The commersh was so ridiculous that “Weird Al” Yankovic made several parodies of it. I think I had a similar radio later, which was a prize for sending in proofs-of-purchase from some product, but it was defective in that the tuning dial was completely backwards. Come to think of it, I had a lot of defective radios. I bought a small transistor radio at a yard sale that wouldn't turn off. I remember how I thought it was off, but I could faintly hear “Lovin' Every Minute Of It” by Loverboy gracing WCLU's signal. I *did* turn that dial all the way—and it didn't turn off my radio!

Another commersh was for a record rack. The ad started out with a hilarious scene of a baby crawling around in a room of a house. The floor was littered with records and other debris—as if a wild party had just taken place there. The baby finds a full mug of beer on the floor, picks it up, and pours it all over a record album. The record was feared ru.

Another ad was for a wristwatch. The watch's face was an electronic rendering of the hands of a clock. The voice-over man made a big deal about how the hands could just...disappear! Well, no shit, Sherlock Hemlock! It's just an electronic image! It's no more fascinating than how you could turn off the TV and that idiotic commercial would go away.

Still another commersh was for a camera that included a zoom lens. The ad showed a posed portrait taken with this lens. The lens was so underwhelming that it blurred people's faces beyond recognition.

I want my MTV—but not that!



Changing the subject to changing the subject

Over 500 years ago, people used technology to build the first printing press, launching a revolution in literacy. Over 100 years ago, they used it to make the first telephones, radios, light bulbs, and toilets. Fifty years ago, they used it to send astronauts to the moon for the first time. Twenty-five years ago, they used it to build the World Wide Web. Today, we can probably use technology to find a cure for dread diseases and revolutionize the economy.

Instead, we use it for this shit.

There's a new Alexa feature designed to let people change the subject during heated arguments at important family gatherings. It works just by saying, “Alexa, change the subject.”

You need Alexa to do that? How about just doing it your damn self? It's no wonder our country's economic development lags so far behind our technology, when technology is used for things like this instead of something useful.

If your third cousin Filbert who you haven't seen since you were 3 shows up at your Arbor Day barbecue and starts arguing about whether there was a *Rocky VI* or delivers a 2-hour-long rant against the supposed left-wing bias of an episode of *The Torkelsons* from 1992, you shouldn't need Alexa to shut him up. Or are you a baby?

I thought it was bad when records were being replaced by CD's, but at least CD's still made good gyroscopes when the coating started flaking off.

Naturally, news outlets are smirking and grinning over Alexa's new feature. It's another blockbuster decade!

Nashville is fivish

Nashville is one of the most important cities in the music industry. Just ask Sandstone Limbo.

All the talk about Music City brings back a memory of another of my legendary academic foibles. Once again, it was when I was a sophomore at Brossart. (Imagine that!) I'm sure my parents think it's shameful that I was such a lousy student, but it is what it is. You had to be there.

One time for literature class we were assigned to borrow a book from the school library and write a report on it. One book caught my eye. The title was emblazoned on the spine: *Nashville*. I took interest because I had gone on a family trip to Nashville the previous spring. The book was about the legendary Nashville music scene.

After I borrowed this volume, I tried reading it in biology class. But I discovered that about half the pages were missing. Brossart can spend millions on a stadium it doesn't need, but it wouldn't buy books that were in usable condition.

At some point during this assignment, it dawned on me that I was going to fail it no matter what. It would have been a very hard assignment even if the book was in good shape—let alone if it's ripped to shreds. I gave up on taking it seriously. One day in literature class, I had to read a passage from the book out loud in front of the class. I noticed that the book described the edges of the sleeves of a Mickey Mouse t-shirt as a "blue basting." Oh boy! Naturally, I made an issue of this when I read that phrase aloud, saying it in a funny voice and gesturing with my arm in the air.

Because I had to do a report on a half-eaten book, I turned in a half-eaten book report. Ladies and gentlemen, adults of all ages, I now present to you the entire contents of my report...

"Nashville is fivish."

That's it. That's the entire text of my book report. I can't remember if it was handwritten or if I actually used a word processor just for that.

When my literature teacher (who was also my freshman homeroom teacher) saw it, she just said in her trademark slow voice, "What does 'Nashville is fivish' mean?" Then she got distracted by something else, so I never answered. I never heard anything else about it.

Nashville is quite fivish indeed, eh?

For some reason, every time I think of this story, I think of the hit records "Don't Be Cruel" by Bobby Brown and "Early In The Morning" by Robert Palmer—even though these songs have absolutely nothing to do with the story.

Similar to the "basting" reference in *Nashville*, we found a passage in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* that read, "There was no wastage whatever." When someone had to read that part aloud in class, a "wastage bastage" chorus erupted.

A Wilt Chamberlain card got ru

As this zine proudly ushers in its fourth calendar decade, I can either just let the permacloud choke my thoughts away or regale you with another story of wasted sports cards posted on the public Internet. Which will it be? Ponder, ponder.

Back in 2011, a person posted that he got a very rare, irreplaceable "gem mint" condition Wilt Chamberlain basketball card from an eBay auction. It cost \$1,800. He had a third party send it to a company to have it graded. Some have said that companies' grading of sports cards and comic books has destroyed these hobbies. They feel it downgrades collectibles that are still whole and can still be appreciated by sports or comic book fans. This collector says the grader decimated his Chamberlain card.

The third party sent him a "horrible email" saying that when he got the card back from the grader, it had been folded in half—leaving a big crease down the middle. The collector came to the conclusion that it was the grader who damaged it while unpacking it.

Someone replied saying they thought the grader required all submissions to be insured. Uh, how about if the grader not ruin things? Someone else responded that they wouldn't be surprised if the grader actually stole the card and replaced it with one just like it that was in bad condition.



Another respondent said they sent a Clay Matthews football card to this grader, and the grader bent the corner of it. The grader then blamed the Postal Service. (This poster didn't specify which Clay Matthews, as there were 3 generations of players with that name.)

The grader responded themselves. They confessed, "We have damaged several cards over the many years in business, some of which were several thousand dollars in value," but they "admitted that to the customer."

Another person said another grader ruined an entire collection of over 20 Barry Bonds rookie baseball cards.

In a separate thread on a related forum, someone said their puppy chewed up a whole stack of valuable Baltimore Orioles baseball cards and "many cards were ruined." The magic word!

Ru is forever.

A story about electric goods that's really shocking!

This story is another example that we must be more and more careful about the things we buy. It isn't just spoiled food but also dangerous electric appliances.

I had a pest control device that I had purchased from Amazon not long ago. I got it because endless construction projects were sending vermin into homes. One advantage of this item was that it was supposed to be humane—but it wasn't so humane to me. Just *hours* ago, when I was moving the device, I was shocked by it—twice—even though I wasn't mishandling it. If I had handled it with wet hands, I would have been killed instantly.

I went on Amazon to try to give it a bad review, but the product is no longer there. Maybe Amazon wouldn't let it be sold anymore because it's dangerous. But I was still able to e-mail the outside seller about it. This is the comment I sent them...

"I received a severe electric shock from this product, even though I used it properly. I really hope you're happy for selling a dangerous product that could have been deadly."

That comment was automatically copied to Amazon.

The real shock is that consumer product safety standards have declined so much. I can't imagine something like this being sold 40 years ago without gobs of product liability suits rolling in.

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