

# The Last Word™

Issue #551

September 2020

## '1984' comes to life in 2020

Many readers of this zine know that for years I've been on the edge of my chair waiting for society to truly reach its totalitarian nadir, and this may be the year the suspense has finally ended.

I had been an avid fan of liberal blogs for years, and many of their commenters had predicted that at some point during the Trump era, there would be a crisis big enough that President Sunkist would use it as an excuse to decimate civil liberties as never before. Sadly, however, the Donald has had more than his fair share of help from these very websites after they sold out.

As I have 14 exciting plans in store for when the pop-up media allows the pandemic to end, I've jumped the gun on clearing my backlog of books to read—by starting on George Orwell's *1984*. That's because *1984* is so relevant to the current situation. As I mentioned last month, I started reading *1984* in high school to fulfill an assignment, but I wasn't allowed to finish it. I borrowed a tattered copy from a shelf in the classroom, but the school made me return it because they didn't want anyone reading it. The copy was never seen again.

Bishop Brossart High School was an embodiment of groupthink and dystopia. The school probably seized back the book so they could use it as a how-to guide.

Right now, I'm up to the "book within a book." Alarm bells have gone off throughout the novel. The telescreen combines the propaganda of TV news, the interaction of Zoom, and the fascist Big Brotherism of the apps that schools are making students buy to track their movements. When *1984* talks about how the party lowers the chocolate ration and claims it was raised, it reminds me of how the media keeps pushing back the date that a coronavirus vaccine will be ready and claiming they're actually moving it ahead. The media tries to gaslight the public by making them think they should be grateful no matter how late it becomes available. Everything in *1984* has a parallel with what we're seeing now.

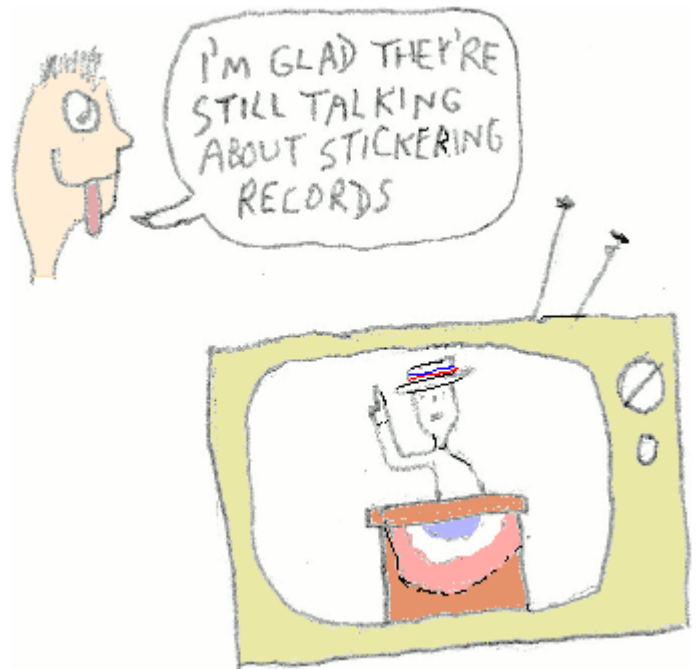
The novel makes me realize how much we've been played like a fiddle by the major parties. I thought the bait-and-switch by the Republican noise machine was bad, but the Democrats are a close second—and are almost as right-wing by any real definition. I can see now how much I've been abused by the party establishment, and it goes back longer than I thought. I follow the "LockdownSkepticism" forum on Reddit, where folks across the political spectrum assail coronavirus lockdowns. When some lockdown critics on the left lamented the Democrats' growing contempt for civil liberties, someone replied, "Why the hell do you all still vote for these people who are enacting this horseshit then?" Good question. I'm sure the answer was that the Democrats seem to be the lesser of two evils. But the lesser of two evils is still evil.

And some of it is literally *evil*. That's obvious now.

Most of the Democratic National Convention looked like it was put together by incels wearing propeller hats. I didn't catch a single mention of income inequality, single payer healthcare, breaking up media monopolies, or fair trade—and hardly any mention of the climate crisis either. Just nonstop coronavirus fear. That's all they have to offer.

Sorry, Democrats, but the real left just isn't all that into a party that's been taken over by elitist, anti-science demagogues and cozies up to overseas dictatorships—and weaponizes a pandemic.

Is 2020 rock bottom? Don't count on it, because the media is enjoying the hell out of this, and is itching to cheer it getting even worse in 2021. The line that separated civilization from barbarism has been breached this year, and our politicians aren't fit to even run for poop sorter. It's amazing how the "experts" have followed obviously flawed modeling while someone who barely has a high school education has gotten most things right. Those who blindly go along with our rulers would have been the Nazis if they lived in 1930s Germany.



## When Mardi Gras got ruined (a blast from the past)

The selfish sense of entitlement sported by a very vocal few is not something that just appeared with the current crisis.

Covington had a Mardi Gras. Apparently, it's still taken place in recent years, but people stopped going to it after it was spoiled by a burgeoning fun-free attitude. That happened after Mardi Gras in 2000—which was quite a spectacle.

I didn't attend this event in 2000. After I heard how amazing it got, I wish I had! I remember Channel 19 running a pearl-clutching story about all the decadence that took place there and offended them. A photo from the event had to be fuzzed out when it was broadcast. If Channel 19 said the event was bad, it must have been mighty good!

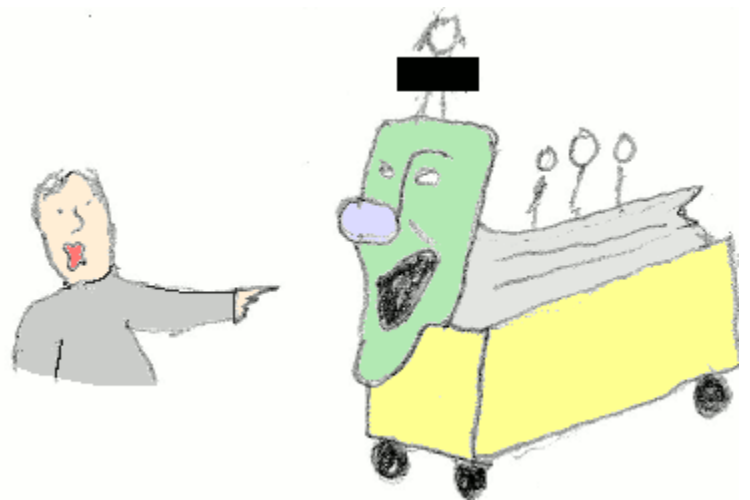
Outside the elitist media, only one person complained about Mardi Gras. This individual said she saw somebody urinating in public, and that this was sufficient reason to cancel Mardi Gras forever. I don't remember the exact timeline, but when Mardi Gras returned, it was a sick joke. I went to the event then, and people moped about the block with sad faces, and you had to buy a ticket just to get under the main tent.

A small cabal of crybabies had also complained about Maifest, of all things. Yes, Maifest.

It's hard to believe petulant whiners like that are even on the same planet as me. There are people who I disagree with on many things but are more of an easygoing, "golly shucks gee" type, and I can see living in the same world as them. But not the entitlement babies who whined about festivals in Covington that were actually tame by some standards. They're like that woman in Oregon about 10 years ago who kept making an ass of herself at county government meetings.

When we don't stand up against the excessive policing of personal behavior, we surrender society to shrill, elitist, mewling fussy budgets who have nothing to offer. Usually we think a festival is just a festival—not a life necessity—but there's a slippery slope that's been breached against other activities.

You know you've been paying attention to other people's negativity for too long when one of the top topics on Quora is "Should I let my 18-year-old play Minecraft?"



## A college project that would have been impossible with social distancing

Extreme social distancing has engulfed America for 6 months—and it's ruining many academic projects.

I majored in radio/TV in college, and during my first semester, I had to take a course titled introduction to mass media. One of the first things we learned was a quote: "The mass media controls what we think and do." It shows we need to be skeptical of anything the media says. Remember, this was 1992, so this era was like a last gasp for independent thinking.

This independence has been lost on people today who lay on the couch all day, watch cable "news" on the telescreen, and lap up all the propaganda like toilet water. The pandemic shows that people who watch less news are better informed. Folks with realistic ideas on this crisis often don't watch or even have cable. The media gins up fear. Those who fall for it can't even conceptualize the idea that pandemics don't last forever.

(A few of you—*very* few—seem to still believe some of the media's lies. You know who you are.)

During that class I took, there was a small group of students who always sat next to me in the back of the room. They were always cracking jokes and acting up in class. One day, the professor grew tired of it and interrupted his lesson to warn them, "I'm gonna have to split you two up in the back if it goes on any more."

While students in that class were goofing off and chewing bubble gum, the professor assigned a project we had to present in front of the class. Two of the group that sat next to me did a project together. One of the students was a polished young man who claimed to be a big Republican, though I think he was secretly glad that George H.W. Bush got defeated, as he had a hard time containing his laughter each time the topic came up. The other student was a young woman with a goth appearance. Their project was a critical look at censorship of song lyrics.

We had virtue sigmunds in the '90s. The '90s version of virtue signaling was trying to censor "dirty" or "violent" lyrics. In the decade after that, it moved on to banning Napster, or alarmism about "terrorism." Vulture

signaling is one of the reasons we can't have nice things.

When the duo gave their presentation in front of the class, they extensively quoted song lyrics that used some rather explicit language. All the while, they could barely hold back their laughter. The professor couldn't either.

How is it possible for students to collaborate on group projects under social distancing? Your first semester of college is supposed to be golden. Many incoming freshmen today say they're taking a semester off because they don't want it spoiled by guidelines their school might impose—assuming their school offers in-person classes at all. In 1992, we wouldn't have tolerated this shit. I *guarantee* it! Can you imagine a college student in the '90s gushing towards someone in a group hug, only to see a robot arm reach down from the sky holding a sign that says, "6 feet social distancing"? Many colleges now are trying to bar students from attending parties even off-campus. If my school enacted this rule, I'd cancel my enrollment right away—unless I had the courage to call their bluff on it, knowing they probably wouldn't enforce it.

Here's another guarantee: In the upcoming semester, students at every level—from kindergarten through college—are going to violate most of the coronavirus rules. These students aren't self-centered or malicious, nor do they think they're invincible. They're just realistic. In short, they're human, and humans are social animals. Every last one of these rules is almost certain to be ripped to shreds by students by the time anyone even reads this. In the America of my youth, I'd have even more confidence of this. An article about one major university says that—despite the school's stated rules—students predict a semester just like any other.

Are we supposed to think college students are monks?

You get one chance to be a college freshman. *One*. It's just like how these incoming freshmen had just one chance to attend their high school graduation, and that was ruined.

There's nothing unethical about people trying to fulfill social needs after months of isolation. In April, I cringed at the thought of big gatherings—but not now. There's *always* been a risk from viruses—and from accidents and crimes. It's not new with this virus. There's no such thing as a zero-risk activity. We all know how inept the Trump regime was at limiting the early spread of this virus in the United States. Now that this has been established, we try to weigh the medical risks and the healthful benefits of each activity. I think it's fair to say—because of the government's botched response—there are enough places the virus can spread that it can't be controlled by behavior changes.

I'm a strong advocate of education. When I turned 18, I couldn't wait to vote, because I wanted to support candidates who gave me the best chance of getting into a good college. (That usually meant *not* voting Republican.) If schools at every level don't return almost to normal lickety-split, it's because our government is against education—and it should resign. My grandparents' generation fought too hard against such nonsense for their sacrifices to go to waste.

(After I wrote all the above, my predictions started coming true before the school year even started. At one university—a private school, no less—hundreds of students had a get-together on campus where social distancing failed to get practiced. The university president responded with a Strongly Worded Letter about how everyone needs to follow the "new normal." Later I found accounts of similar maskless gatherings at numerous other campuses. CNN shed tears over a party that didn't even take place on campus.)

## Let's sit down for this chair ruining story!

Every so often, the topic of your earliest memories comes up. Some people insist that no adult can remember anything that happened in childhood, but that's a load of roo gas. When a person turns 18, do they suddenly forget everything that happened the day before? I certainly remember things that happened when I was 2—maybe younger.

One of my first memories is wading in the lake at A.J. Jolly County Park with my shoes on. Another is seeing a tree growing in the middle of a road. Another is noticing a big pile of shit on a sidewalk in my neighborhood. I also remember when we got new wallpaper in the kitchen, and I recall that we had a stained glass light fixture on the wall before then. Gee, I wonder what happened to it. Ponder, ponder. And I remember a parking garage in Frankfort where the lighting made our blue Satellite appear purple.

One of the most uproarious of my early memories involved something getting ru. One morning, the prize in a cereal box was a felt-tip pen. Upon finding this pen, my brother and I promptly took the pen into the living



room and played catch with it—with the cap off of it. Our living room had an armchair and couch that each had a striped pattern reminiscent of that of the sweater worn by Bert of *Sesame Street*. As I threw the pen, the tip of it hit the armchair and left a big streak of ink on it.

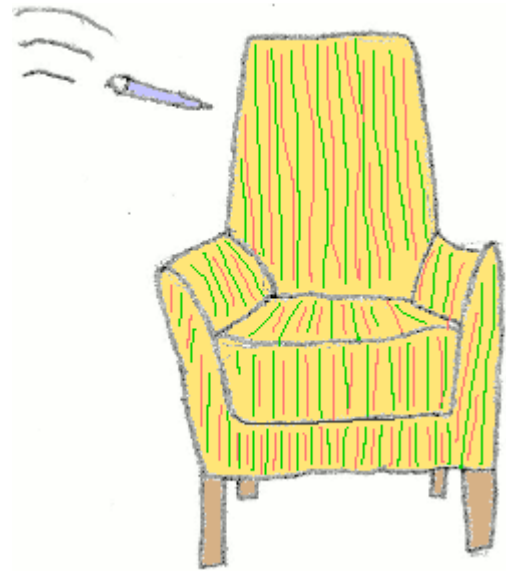
My mom was standing right there and confiscated the pen.

We were never able to remove the ink streak from the chair. This wisp of ink served as a monument to childhood fun and frivolity for many years thereafter.

Armchairs seem to be a source of much humor. I knew somebody who wiped their ass with an arm cover from a recliner, for the rough inside of the cover soothed the itching better than toilet paper did. But I was an adult when that happened.

In addition to all the memories above, another of my first childhood memories involved playing on the floor where the living room intersected the hallway. I had a small notebook that was dotted with dabs of something that looked like poop, but I'm pretty sure it was only mud. In another episode, I climbed onto the rim of a yellow diaper pail, fell over, and hit my head. I also remember an unusual incident at a family gathering or a company picnic: I walked through the woods with my brother and another youngster, and we found a can of Pepsi and some white bread. We poured the soft drink on the bread, and it turned blue.

I've read that when you're about 11, you forget the circumstances that surrounded early childhood memories. I do remember that I once remembered these circumstances, but that I forgot them around 11. Maybe that was because it was my eraser swallowing stage.



## Job interviews! Elitist media! Game day bucket go boom!

With the American economy in growing distress since 1981 and now reaching an unrecoverable state of destruction, do you honestly expect to be hired for every job you apply for?

The life of almost everyone in America between the ages of 18 and 45 is now pretty much over. Oh, people can put on a game face, but let's not kid ourselves. It's over, Grover! I know several people who are fixing to take a dump all over this trend by scheduling job interviews with some big right-wing corporations and then not showing up. I also know one who has a job lined up for after the pandemic that they declined a few years ago because company brass insulted their physical appearance. The only reason anybody would take a job like that is if it's their only choice.

I earn my living largely from my writing projects, and a lot of times, I have to grovel for funds. I have a bad heart and can't do this forever. But I'm still waiting to hear back from a job interview I attended in 2011. The interview was with an organization that promoted progressive causes. The interviewer talked about how she had just moved to the area from a larger city and couldn't wait to have us circulate our liberal petitions in Clermont County.

Um. I'm not so sure that would have been the safest thing.

I don't even remember what this organization was called, but I assume it was legit. That's more than I can say for some other groups. I read that there's an organization in another state that claims to be a consumer advocacy group but their only cause seems to be to try to reinstate the stay-at-home order and close the state's borders—along with expanding other authoritarian policies to fight the novel coronavirus. They say the original "flatten the curve" goal has been met, and now their stated aim is to eliminate the virus completely. Uh, that's impossible. As much as we want the virus gone, it's not something we can realistically expect, even if we get a great vaccine. Even polio still has a few cases. But this group wants lockdowns to continue until the novel coronavirus is eradicated—which is unlikely to happen for the remainder of human existence. Plus, what does this have to do with consumer protection?

I suspect they know the virus won't be wiped out. They just want to whine and pretend to be "reasonable" heroes. It turns out though that they're actually a for-profit group. Money talks. (But it don't sing and dance and it don't walk.) I think of their fan base as someone you'd see walking down the street in a rich neighborhood in that weird robotic stance, staring straight ahead with an emotionless look. Of course, if the person did so, they'd be violating the lockdown just by being outside their house. Lockdowns are only for the little people, you see.

This organization's support for a new lockdown received fawning coverage from a major media outlet in that state. The media has been truly shameless about whipping up fear and promoting authoritarian ideas. I started feeling better in July when I stopped reading regular news media. They're not welcome back until this crisis ends and they can clear their minds, but they've been trying to force their way back in. They've been likened to a guest at your home shitting on your living room floor and being offended when you don't invite them back.



Who really wants more lockdowns? After the pandemic, most people will overcome the fear, and almost everybody will see what a mistake stay-at-home orders were, but there will always be a handful of people who will still act like it's March 2020. These are folks who will wear masks at Zoom meetings for the rest of their lives. They'll never drink from a disposable paper cup because the paper came from a tree somebody else may have touched once. If it isn't germaphobia, it's a weird fetish for anonymity, so they'll wear masks in all public places forever. They'll be sad that they haven't been wearing them their entire lives.

But mark my words: When the pandemic is over, most of those who have supported stay-at-home orders will deny they ever supported them. This is a *guarantee*! It's just like the Iraq War.

## Raiders of the lost art

Every time I find a secret stash on the undeniably public Internet of expensive or irreplaceable items being carelessly destroyed or lost, it appeals to readers' sense of shock—not necessarily humor. Shock is a sense that reminds us we're alive. As this endeavor continues, I'm again asking readers to let each of these stories sink in and contemplate how many memories went with each ruined item.

The Winged Victory of Samothrace is a beautiful sculpture made around the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. It is prominently featured at Paris's famous Louvre. It has been described as "the greatest masterpiece of Hellenistic sculpture." Welp, somebody posted on the Internet that they damn near ruined it all up! They say they somehow chipped a piece off of the sculpture's base—but that "nobody ever noticed." Trust me, somebody has noticed by now.

See what I mean about appealing to shock? I don't always appeal to humor, because damaging fine pieces of art isn't funny.

It's not just priceless works of art. One person said they broke an \$8 million freight elevator in a historic hotel at an unspecified national park. Another ruined a valuable pool table by sticking their arm up the slot that catches the balls—forcing the fire department to come along and chop up the pool table to free their arm. Another spilled wine down inside a brand new laptop. Another vomited on their \$1,200 laptop after drinking too much moonshine.

A person dropped and shattered a dragon sculpture that was a family heirloom belonging to a friend. Another accidentally shoved their hand through a cake at a wedding where they worked as a caterer. Another broke a \$25,000 crystal chandelier at a hotel while working with a ladder. Another said they witnessed someone destroy a \$250,000 telescope mirror when a pen fell out of his pocket protector onto it. Another worked for a moving company and destroyed a panel from a Boeing flight simulator that cost \$1.4 million. The company later discovered it was broken but never figured out who did it. The same company lost a priceless 3,000-year-old ring from a Tutankhamun display.

Another person said they used to clean houses, and they cleaned a home belonging to a man who collected irreplaceable souvenirs from all over the world. They knocked over one of a set of 7 porcelain statues of ancient Japanese gods. The statue shattered completely. Another said they went on a school trip to Buckingham Palace, and a friend leaned up against an ornate bedpost belonging to the British royal family, breaking it. This set off a panic that resulted in a statue also being knocked over. You guessed it! The statue was shattered!

Still another person put Jell-O down inside a \$40,000 electron microscope. Another broke a \$20,000 watch at a store by dropping it on a display case. Another was eating a calzone at Sbarro's when they accidentally slopped sauce all over another customer's white mink coat. They left before the ruined coat could be discovered. Another destroyed a brand new printing press by letting an Allen wrench fall down inside the paper feeder. Another said that when they were 7, they were playing with their great-great-grandfather's antique gold watch worth thousands, because they thought it would enable them to travel back in time. In doing so, they broke off the minute hand.

One person said their parents had an exquisite hand-carved wooden table from China's Tang dynasty, which ended in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. It was their most prized possession. One day, the commenter was playing a game about aliens with their brother and a friend, when they opted to jump up onto this antique table. They crashed right through it! Another unfortunate soul stupidly shoved a tissue into their heater, causing it to catch on fire. Then



they dropped the burning heater on their parents' bed—destroying it. Another person said that on a family vacation, their dad saw a \$200 fountain pen in a store and broke it—and had to pay for it.

Another commenter said they had a very large friend who slid down the railing of a set of steps at another friend's house, tore the railing off the wall, and crushed 2 shelves full of fragile Civil War memorabilia. Another said their dad owned a contracting company and shattered a jade sculpture at a home where he was working. When he asked how much he owed to the homeowner for breaking it, the homeowner replied, "Doesn't matter, we'll never find another one." Another said that on the first day of a family trip, their mom dropped a \$20,000 antique Fabergé egg on a hard floor at a resort—and cried the rest of the trip. Why did she bring a Fabergé egg on vacation anyway? Another person said their brother visited an art gallery in Venice and broke a glass sculpture of a bow and arrow. Another said their cat completely destroyed all the seats, side paneling, and vinyl roof of their dad's brand new Cadillac.

Still another person said they had a coworker who was taking a huge printer to a customer's house to install it. He dropped the printer on a \$500,000 oil painting, which bore a gigantic hole through it. Another fried an Atari Lynx game console by plugging the AC adapter into the headphone jack. Another demolished a 400-year-old grandfather clock by climbing on it. Another dropped their iPod in the toilet. Another tore up a lottery ticket worth \$10,000. Another said they lost their dad's baseball that was autographed by the Philadelphia Phillies. Another said their little brother tore up Elvis Presley's car with a rock at a car show.

One person was admiring a fine vase at a London museum. A man saw the vase, rushed over to admire it as well, and pushed the commenter forward—knocking over the vase and smashing it. Then the man began yelling at the commenter as if it was their fault. Another person clogged the toilet at a family friend's house, making it overflow and leak down to the kitchen, where it caused an expensive light fixture to crash to the floor. Another visited an elderly woman's home and put their hand through a cheetah that her deceased husband had shot and stuffed in the 1930s.

*Ripples it is not.*

## A person lowered their mask for better bubbling



Operation KroMask hops along, but not with the same gusto as Operation KroGum!

August 5. A Wednesday. I Krogered. Where? Kroger. That's where. The thing about this supermarket chain is that it—like the statewide order—tries to mandate that employees and customers wear something resembling a mask in the hopes that it will halt the spread of coronavirus. It can of course be just a shredded t-shirt. Else, nobody would comply—instead of the 60% or so who do comply.

You can still bubble under these masks. In recent months, stories of people blowing bubbles with bubble gum while sporting a mask have piled up like Tinkertoys. I mentioned this in a chatroom, and someone asked, "how the fuck are people supposed to bubble with a mask on?" They went on to observe, "that would be worse than it busting all over glasses." By "worse", they mean "funnier."

However, the tighter fit of some masks may limit the size of the bub. This causes avid bubblers to lower their mask each time they need to puff out a biggie. When I went to Kroger, a young woman who works there did exactly that. She was bounding about the store with her mask down low on her neck—and she bubbled. But it was all socially distanced, of course.

Bubble gum busting continues its comeback! Although a Nebraska town opted to move its bubble gum blowing contest online, the festivities plowed ahead unimpeded in a Wisconsin community.

## What do you say we don't pay today...

I just thought of a little slice of Cincinnati nostalgia!

There used to be a restaurant called David's Buffet that advertised heavily on local radio. My family talked about this restaurant all the time, but I don't remember ever eating there, because I think it was a more upscale place.

Anybip, their commercial—which ran during *American Top 40*—used a catchy jingle: "What do you say we buffet today...At David's Buffet." This jingle was crying out for parody. So every time it came on the radio, I would sing, "What do you say we don't pay today...At David's Buffet."

I'm sure other people thought of the same thing. They probably thought that's what the jingle actually said, and this probably caused this fine establishment to go out of business from folks doing a dine-and-dash.

## Giving Reddit the ol' college try!

I've been late to the Reddit game, after I avoided it because I thought it was like 4chan. Now it's turned

out to be a whole new world just crying out for ridicule! In that regard, it really *is* like 4chan!

But seriously, I only post on a few Reddit forums. Once in a while, I'll look at some of their other forums just for some giggles.

I cannot tell a lie. I occasionally view forums for cities and topics I have no connection to. For example, I perused the forum for Austin, Texas, so I could read about a man in a ninja outfit who soiled his pants at a shopping center. I've browsed quite a few forums in the hope of finding more stories about people breaking stuff—usually collectibles and eyeglasses.

I've looked at Reddit's "College" forum. Much of it lately has become panic-stricken hogwash or posts like "ruined gpa" (the magic word!), but there's still a few good expulsion stories hanging around. One student says they were arrested at their former college for pulling all the fire alarms—but went on to proudly graduate from a different school. Another says his dorm roommate was probably going to be expelled for 2 ounces of weed, and someone replied that expulsion is the least of the roommate's worries, thanks to looming criminal charges: "His life is over." A student says they were suspended from high school years ago because their friends smoked marijuana in their car, and that this suspension threatened their grad school enrollment.

On the "High School" board, someone posted a thread titled "What would you do if you were at school and a girl that's taller than you pulled her pants down in front of you put her bare butt on your face then ran off?"

If you want to see some whiny babies, mosey on over to any dentistry-related Reddit board. Much of the content sounds like it's stupidly cobbled together from recent *Today* segments. One commenter demanded their daughters be given a private room at the dentist—even though no other patients there get one. I haven't had a dentist with private rooms in 15 years, but this commenter switched dentists over not getting a private room.

Reddit also has a forum called "Weird Pictures of Toilets."

Then there's the hilarity on the so-called "centrist" board titled "It bothers me how left wing Reddit is."

## Library closes book on hidden beer and gum

Someone in Walla Walla, Washington, was living dangerously over 30 years ago!

They were gonna drink some beer and chew some bubble gum—maybe even puff out a beamy bubble or two! But where were they going to secretly stash this contraband?

At the library, of course!

Recently, the Walla Walla Public Library closed for renovations. While crews were working in the mystery section, they found a *real* mystery. Hidden behind the shelves were 5 unopened cans of Hamm's beer and a pouch of Godzilla Heads bubble gum. Library staffers believe the items date from no later than 1988. A Facebook post describes the gum as "monstrously stale." So somebody at the library tried to chew it to find out? The library director called the discovery "extremely funny." That's because it included bubble gum, which is some uproarious stuff.

How did somebody manage to smuggle beer into the library? Why did they need to hide bubble gum? How did they find a panel behind the shelf to hide their stash? Did they really expect to retrieve it easily? Whodunit? Whytheydunit?

I was around in 1988, but I don't even remember Godzilla Heads bubble gum.

The beer and beegee were discarded and ended up in the city's landfill.



## Political Compass points in your direction!

*Compass* is a strange word. School officials would make a point of pronouncing it to rhyme with *rumpus*, even though that was different from the way everyone else pronounced it.

For years, there's been a website called the Political Compass...

<https://www.politicalcompass.org>

Here's a description of that site in case you're afraid a box of Fun Snaps will fly out of your computer screen and explode all at once. That site includes a political quiz that gives you a score based on how liberal or conservative you are. The score consists of 2 numbers, each ranging from -10 to 10. One score is for economic views, and the other is for social views.

I took this test years ago and did quite well. But some of the questions have probably changed in the years since, so now I've taken it again. On the economic scale, I scored a perfect -10—a solid leftist score. On the social

scale, I garnered a -7.13—cool also. Taken together, these scores represent pure alt-left populism.

There should be a third scale just to accommodate all the entitled, self-centered crybabies lately who have carved out an ideology of their own that defies the principles that the others claim to offer. They can't very well claim to be noble middle ground when their ideas would have been considered extreme just a few months ago. Some observers have said the ideologies of some leaders in other parts of the world—such as communist countries—can't be categorized as left-wing or right-wing by Western definitions. I think that holds true here.

A few questions on this quiz aren't even about policy, but I've seen other political quizzes where it was even more so. They would ask things like whether you're more interested in going to a baseball game than an art museum. For starters, most people aren't interested in just one thing. That's why *Ballet News* used to advertise during *Headbangers Ball*. For another, people who designed these quizzes can't seem to fathom that not everybody who goes to a ballgame cares about the stock market.

Maybe users of Democratic Blunderground will call us “hillbillies” and “dirtbag left” or encourage violence again.

## Nobody wore masks at a convenience store (imagine that!)

Mask report, mask report! Party time! Excellent!

How disliked is mask mania? I went to a local convenience store, and I was the only person there who even brang anything that could be used as a mask. No other customers had one, and the clerk didn't either.

Well, I tried obeying the law by using my bandana. As usual, this didn't last a minute before breathing became quite a chore, and I got that feeling of distress in my heart that I just can't describe. But no bother! Although a sign on the door mandates masks, and it's both a statewide order and the store chain's stated policy, the clerk said, “We don't enforce.” He said it was because a customer of a Walmart in Indiana shot an employee who reminded him to wear a mask. For that reason, our local convenience store was “not allowed” to enforce masks. (Ooh, an Allowed Cloud!)

Certainly, I'm not reporting the store, because I'd be a hypocrite if I did—as I'm physically unable to follow a mask order perfectly myself. I don't know anyone who can. I'm no fan of major chain retailers, but I have enough integrity to not hold someone else to rules that I can't obey perfectly. That said, I am gravely disappointed at the rise of mask orders—because nobody has proven the science behind why we should place such a limit on civil liberties. America has seen other pandemics in modern times—but no mask laws in over a century until now.

The public disfavors mask orders for many reasons. One of the biggest is that it restricts breathing. Another is that it creates a faceless dystopia that limits social interaction. Even with my dark personality, social interaction is a must. People also consider constant maskage to be dehumanizing.

But we all have to get along. There's no justification for shooting a store employee over a mask. Similarly, I'm strongly and unequivocally against stay-at-home orders, but that was no excuse for extreme right-wing groups to exploit this sentiment by filling a rally with goofy conspiracy theories and bigoted sayings. In fact, it hurt the cause of opposing these orders. Likewise, we shouldn't let extremism grow to the point that it causes someone to be shot because of a mask.

What does it say about our society when gunfire has become the default reply to everything?

## Everyone ignores social distancing tape at school

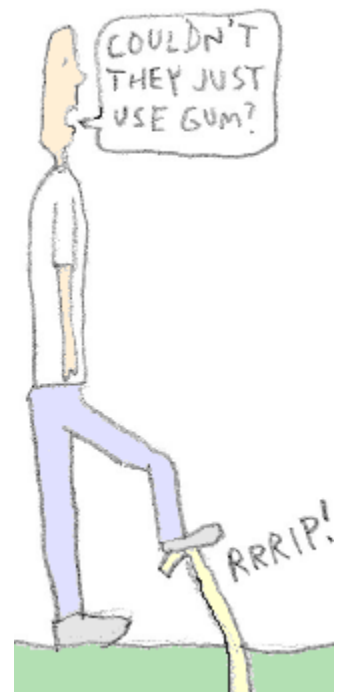
Our schools have got to reopen sooner or later, and some schools are already back!

The situation gets mixed reviews. One of the down sides is the security theater measures that won't do any good. One of the up sides is that everyone is ignoring these measures—*because* they don't do any good. I talk to folks who work in Texas schools, and one teacher told me the school stuck tape all over the floor at 6-foot intervals to establish social distancing. Everybody is completely ignoring the tape—along with other new guidelines.

Ignoring social distancing tape? Is it a Kroger or something?

A New Jersey teacher said the same thing happens there. Another Texas educator said teachers crowd together at meetings instead of distancing.

A bold prediction: All the tape on the floor is going to be gone by the time you read this because of kids intentionally walking on it just to tear it up. It's kind of like what everyone did when I was in school with magazines on the floor. It's a dance that looks sort of like the moonwalk.





I feel somewhat guilty for appearing to take a giddy attitude towards measures inspired by a pandemic. But how else am I supposed to react when these safeguards are so ineffective? I've been told behind closed doors that schools know they're ineffective but are afraid of getting sued if they don't implement them. I'm not sure about this, because some schools just won't enforce them. In my day, they'd be more likely to be sued if they *did* enforce them.

Some schools though are doubling down. (Big surprise.) Someone said that at a school in Ohio, if a student even *touches* a library book, either they have to borrow it, or the book has to be quarantined for 3 days. If paper spreads viruses so easily, that sounds like a damn good reason for WellCare to stop sending me junk mail constantly.

Meanwhile, some schools in Canada have already lifted social distancing guidelines.

## You stood and you watched as...My Wendy's left town...

Wendy's used to have some commercials that sounded like "Winchester Cathedral" and everyone thought I was making them up until YouTube came along and now that YouTube is here and people post things other than slime making and strabismus videos I can prove I was right and everyone else was wrong...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ao8XDFNQ3Qk>

That's another Snuffleupagus moment! Those commercials date from the late 1970s and early 1980s, and I was floored when I saw them suddenly airing again a decade later. But that came a few years before I saw a man drop a hamburger on the floor at Wendy's and pick it back up and eat it.

"Winchester Cathedral" actually won a Grammy before the band was even formed—so a band had to be quickly assembled to perform the song on tour.

## Channel 12 schooled over college story

I was going to save this piece until next month just to rub it in the faces of those who get off on weaponizing a crisis, but I think I'll strike while the iron is hot!

Students at some colleges seem to be having an absolute blast right now! I don't mean the schools where news websites fawn over photos of 5 miserable students sitting in a lecture hall built for 200. I mean places where at least some folks have gumption.

As school comes back for the fall semester, I saw a link to a Channel 12 piece that was supposed to be about University of Cincinnati students misbehaving. I clicked on the story and thought I'd see something really horrible. But nope. It was mostly just a photo of a group of students studying together at a table in the crowded cafeteria.

Yep, it's really terrible that a group of college friends do what college friends normally do.

There wasn't much in the photo that would have been considered unusual in a normal year. College gonna college.

Colleges all over America wrote their reopening plans way back in April or May, didn't listen to students, didn't update the plans except to make them worse, and are now expecting students to abide by the ridiculous social distancing rules. When I first read about UC's plan, I thought there would hardly be any students on campus this semester, and almost all the people on campus would be professors confined to their office and maintenance workers. I thought it would be months of no real activities. But there's lots of students there who have already pounded the plan to pulp, and it looks like their actions are tolerated to a large extent.

Nothing lately has given me more satisfaction than schools and colleges continuing almost as if no pandemic had ever occurred. Our young people have a right to expect a positive school experience.

Someone on an Internet forum said I'm "an unapologetic and uncritical no-questions-asked supporter of acting like nothing is happening in the middle of the pandemic." Not true! I'm the man who blogged about germ-coated junk mail, after all.

News outlets used to run incisive investigative reports on things like government corruption, companies that pollute, and consumer scams. Over at Channel 12—owned by the right-wing Sinclair Broadcast Group—their idea of an investigative report seems to be "exposing" college students for doing what college students do. Channel 12's big complaint? They weren't wearing masks.

Great detective work, Columbo!

A *moral panic* is the feeling of fear that many have over some threat—real or perceived. Some fears are justified, but others are not. When I was in college, the big moral panics were over students drinking and "going goth." I guess now the big moral panic is over studying without a mask. The elitist media is up in arms about

normal college activity but has forgotten about the bunker mentality created by a scoundrel who I knew as Helmethead. When I attended NKU, the cafeteria was a dungeon of fright because of Helmethead. Yet everything he did was considered art. He never suffered negative consequences for anything he did. Bad behavior pays.

Meanwhile, Ohio State University has issued an “interim” suspension to hundreds of students for allegedly (gasp!) attending parties off campus. If that seems bad, the silver lining is that a school has so many students who weren’t afraid of the bullies who run our education system. Even better, many of the suspensions were immediately reversed, because the school had no leg to stand on. I didn’t go to college to party—but if a party broke out, it was a nice bonus. Few students back then skipped parties over the meningitis epidemics that plagued campuses. If the current pandemic is severe enough that we punish what would otherwise be tolerated, why don’t we do the same to spammers who spam us after Microsoft sold users’ Outlook addresses to them?

Some colleges are actually scamming students. They’re imposing rules that *nobody* is going to follow, waiting for everyone to violate them, and using that as an excuse to offer only online classes—after students have already paid tuition. If they actually enforce the rules, it’s also a bait-and-switch, because that’s not what students signed up for. Campuses are *designed* for social interaction, and that’s one of the big attractions for students.

It’s sad how much society has fallen. If there was a virus like this in my day, there’s not a chance in a million we would have been expected to respond the way we have to this one. There would have been even less of a chance in my grandparents’ day. They were the World War II generation, and I can’t imagine people back then jumping all the way out in the street to avoid other pedestrians. I also can’t imagine them spending every day uselessly arguing on Reddit with people who disagreed with them.

Will institutions like UC step up enforcement? If poo.

## People who say “I know, I know, I know, I know, I know!” are cool

These folks are kings among men, queens among women, monarchs among people!

We’ve all met people who—when someone tells them something that’s obvious or already known—reply, “I know, I know, I know, I know, I know!” They always blurt it out rapid-fire.

Person 1: “*Me And Maxx* is a TV show, not a radio show.”

Person 2: “I know, I know, I know, I know, I know!”

When I was in elementary school, a teacher told the class that this was rude. Well, sometimes rude is necessary. Some people state obvious things as if you’re a moron or something, and they need to be knocked down a few pegs every now and then.

## More people bubbled under a mask

Gee, I think I know what the #1 story of the year is going to be: the Dow Jones, I bet!

Because this is a month ending in *y*, I’ve found more stories of people bubbling under a coronavirus mask. A man posted on his Twitter feed...

**“Accidentally blew a bubble with the gum I was chewing while wearing a mask. What a mess.”**

How can you *accidentally* blow a bubble? I always thought of bubbling as being a very deliberate and planned activity. It’s a bit like scheduling the music on a radio station. I was in radio, and there was a method to the madness. You might follow a new record with an oldie and repeat this pattern throughout the hour. It’s the same with bubbling. A bubbunk might be followed by a Dallas/Fort Worth, which in turn might be followed by some good ol’ ruined glasses.

A woman had this to say on her Twitter feed...

**“I was chewing gum, my dumbass forgot I was wearing a mask and blew a bubble...”**

I was chewing a mask, my dumbass forgot I was wearing gum and blew a mask.