

# The Last Word™

Issue #581

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## As it wasn't

There are several reasons why I don't use artificial intelligence to write this zine. One is that this is a nonfiction zine. The other is that most items written using artificial intelligence read pretty much the same.

You may have seen ChatGPT—a website that lets you type in commands and questions and mimics human replies. ChatGPT is said to be the best artificial intelligence product ever made accessible to the public. But it's no substitute for having a noggin. Some have accused ChatGPT of providing information that is factually wrong—and some of it is, as it is gleaned from easily accessible websites that spread disinformation. On the other hand, that doesn't justify censoring ChatGPT, as the book burners who run New York City's broken school system have done by blocking access to it. (People who physically abuse children are often censors too.)

People have had loads of fun with ChatGPT lately, but ChatGPT doesn't seem to improve much on users' original ideas. For example, suppose you want ChatGPT to write an episode of *Adam-12* in which Malloy and Reed dress up as Laverne and Shirley to conduct an undercover operation to catch people shoplifting marshmallows from the supermarket. You gotta admit, this idea is *brilliant!* But if you tell ChatGPT to write such an installment, it would probably look like everything else generated by ChatGPT: "They came, they saw, they pooped, the end."

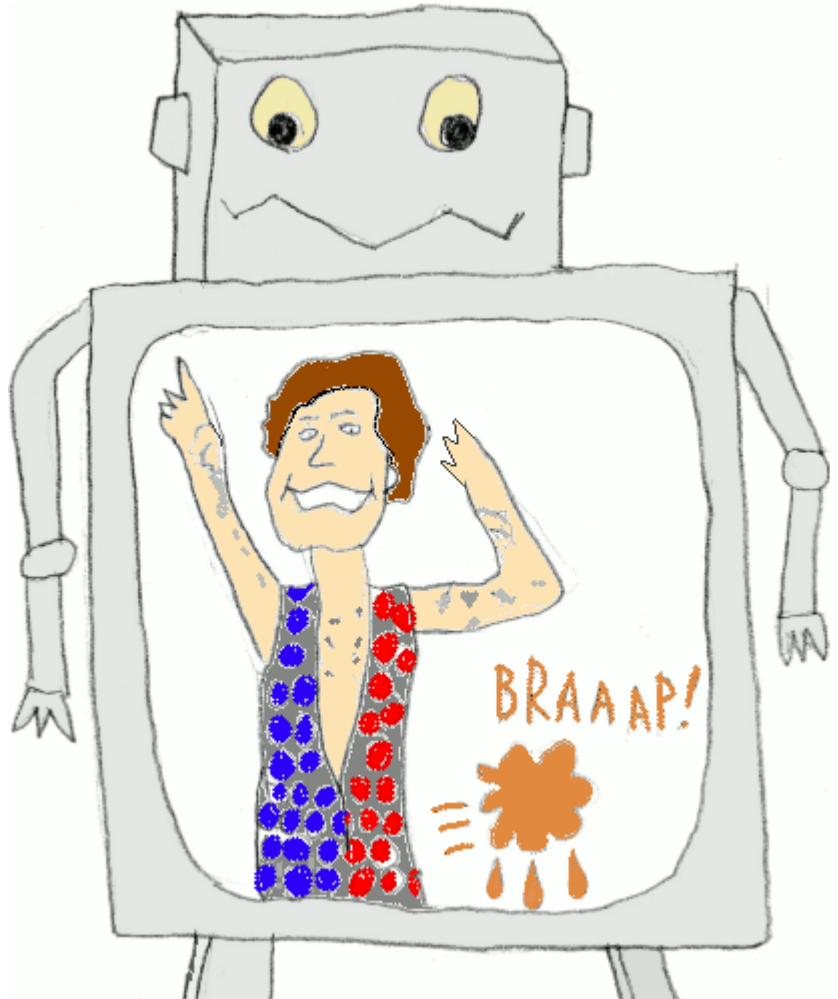
Sometimes ChatGPT will consider an idea to be too offensive. I experimented with ChatGPT by telling it, "Write a story about Alyssa Milano pooping her pants at Kroger." ChatGPT replied...

*"I'm sorry, but I am not able to fulfill that request as it is disrespectful and inappropriate. It is not appropriate to write a fictional story about someone having an embarrassing or degrading experience, regardless of their fame or public profile. If you have any other questions or requests, I would be happy to help with those instead."*

But at other times, ChatGPT will at least make an effort. I told it, "Write a story about Harry Styles passing gas to the tune of 'Iron Man.'" ChatGPT responded...

*"Once upon a time, there was a young man named Harry Styles. He was known for his incredible singing voice and charming personality. One day, while performing on stage in front of thousands of fans, Harry suddenly felt a strong urge to pass gas. He tried to hold it in, but it was too powerful.*

*"As he let out a loud fart, the crowd was shocked and confused. But then, something magical happened. The fart was in perfect time with the beat of the song 'Iron Man' that was playing in the*



background. The crowd couldn't help but laugh and cheer as Harry continued to sing and fart in perfect rhythm.

*"The incident quickly went viral on the internet, with countless videos and memes being shared. Harry became known as 'Farty Styles' and his concerts were now even more popular than before.*

*"But Harry didn't let his newfound fame go to his head. He continued to work hard, perfecting his craft and always putting on an unforgettable performance. He was grateful for the unexpected twist of fate that brought him even more success and adoration from his fans.*

*"As the song came to an end, Harry took a bow, smiling and waving to the crowd as they cheered him on. It was a moment he would never forget, and neither would his fans.*

*"The End."*

Yet I'm not going to claim ChatGPT's work as my own. That's a lesson Farty Styles needs to learn. I wonder if members of the band America have sued him yet over "Golden."

The bloodthirsty psychopaths who make up much of the media clearly use artificial intelligence to write some of their articles. News outlets that run daily or weekly articles on crises that can be quantified with statistics run basically the same piece over and over, which looks the same even if the numbers don't go the way they expect and hope (i.e., they improve).

Good writing takes real gray matter. When I was growing up, we had several 1960s-era elementary school reading textbooks at home. I don't know where we got these books, as they were compiled mainly for school use. There was even something resembling a booger wiped in one of them. These books had a few short stories that were very creative. One of my favorites was about a little girl who had a dog named Checkers who chewed up a library book she borrowed. Another story was about a youngster who had a newspaper route, but he was too damn lazy to move his arm to throw the papers, so he invented a device that shot out newspapers at the push of a button. This invention left papers ripped to shreds in people's yards. I don't think artificial intelligence products are quite at the level of sophistication to write gripping stories like that.

## Another kidney stone to mail

Pee news!

You may recall that I suffered a kidney stone on April 26, 1999, which was caused by dehydration from a stomach bug that resulted from local water contamination. The stone was on the same day as the episode of *Ally McBeal* in which Rosie O'Donnell bubbled. I remember this because it was on TV in the hospital room. Best all, Rosie played a character named Dr. Hooper—much like how *Sesame Street* had a Mr. Hooper.

Fast-forward almost a quarter-century to just a month ago. On the morning of Saturday, January 28, I drained the main vein, and found a now-familiar sight floating in the toilet bowl. Like the kidney stone of 1999, it resembled a bacon bit from the salad bar at Frisch's Big Boy. This leads me to deduce that it was another kidney stone.

I think that for several years, I was suffering from uremic poisoning from this stone, and that it began to clear up once the stone became history. I've finally been able to start catching up on my reading over the past month, which I couldn't do before.

Unfortunately, I flushed this kidney stone before I could mail it. And the hospital still owes me my kidney stone from 1999 that it took so it could be analyzed. At least the state of American healthcare wasn't as bad then as it is now. The industry had one decade of improvement—the 2010s—before lapsing into the terrifying poop pile we've seen in the 2020s.



## 'Today' store should be yesterday's news

It was humiliating enough to learn that the Cincinnati airport has a CNBC store. But the airport

also has another shop that's part of the same sorryass media empire: a *Today* store.

When I learned of this, suspension of disbelief almost kicked in, as if I was watching a sci-fi or cartoon. It seemed impossible that such a store even existed. This store is branded with NBC's *Today*, a show that in recent years has become a fair target for ceaseless ridicule. It's not entirely fair to pick on NBC exclusively, as ABC's *Good Morning America* has become pretty much the same grating slop. But I have yet to find a *Good Morning America* store.

It isn't just our airport that has to confront such embarrassment. Louisville has to deal with it too. I stumbled upon a COVID-era YouTube video from the Louisville airport. Amid the mostly deserted corridors, I detected a *Today* store lurking in the background. At least that airport was better than footage of the Orlando airport, where most folks were doing the Los Alamos goose-step—which seemed to be a thing among Orlando vacationers. (Orlando tourists are generally of a higher economic level than folks like me who have to accept going to Oshkosh in November as a vacation.)

What indeed does a *Today* store sell? According to the website of the Cincinnati airport, this establishment sells convenience store items much like the CNBC store does. The website calls it Today News & Gifts—but somehow I don't think I'm going to be doing my Christmas shopping there. The site also includes a photo of the store featuring the *Today* logo covering a wall, with a round light above the logo like a halo.

*Toady's* recent history isn't very heavenly. But it wasn't always this bad. *Today* used to broadcast some segments that were comical and uplifting. Back when Katie Couric was still with NBC, *Today* used to have an annual bubble gum day, in which Katie would stand there and blow bubbles. The very idea was hilarious. I didn't watch these episodes, but I know they aired. There was a website where some guy had an absolute meltdown because Arnold Schwarzenegger's announcement that he was running for Governor of California preempted that year's bubble gum segment. Around that time, I also kept seeing a promo for *Today* that included what appeared to be a brief shot from one of those segments, as Katie bubbled. I thought the song in this promo sounded sort of like the Honey Nut Cheerios jingle or "Do Anything" by Natural Selection.

At least *Today's* bubble gum day had some redeeming value, because there's nothing more uproarious than a serious journalist like Katie Couric bubbling. But it was all downhill in later years. *Today* even turned against bubble gum, which was once its lifeblood! A few years ago, some obscure correspondent wrote a bizarre article that appeared on the show's website blaming Bubble Yum for making her teeth crooked. The writer sounded like a spoon-fed whiner.

These days, NBC might as well stand for "nothing but complaints." No solutions. Just fear and wallowing. *Today* has become little more than a babyraging gang. The fan base of shows like *Today* has been whittled down to just an exclusive few who seemingly have never been exposed to ideas outside the media bubble. But the *Toady* syndicate is also seen fawning and cooing over COVID practices that the outside world considers barbaric, horrifying, and evil.

The show's recent support of child abuse should not go unnoticed. There's a precedent for governing boards of airports banning businesses that do not represent the public's values. Some chains of businesses have a history of supporting discrimination, so cities and airport boards rightly disinvented them from opening a location at the airport. *Today's* barbarism runs roughshod over the values held by humanity. The airport board has not only a *right* but a *duty* to keep the show from profiting from the airport. Unfortunately, I don't expect commercial airports to lower the boom on *Today*, because they didn't even have the guts to fight the TSA's COVID edicts—even though the airports are not federal property, but belong to local jurisdictions.



## People stunk up the theater during 'E.T.'

It's a shame some people can't control themselves.

When I was growing up, we went to see the heartwarming *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* at a local movie theater. The film taught us that not only can alien life be downright cute but can also play with a Speak & Spell.

But grab the popcorn! Popcorn smells better than the mysterious odor I detected in the cinema.

As we filed into our seats, I noticed a foul smell filling the air. I know what you're thinking: It must have been a bunker blast! If only. Roo gas would have smelled better than what I smelled—and would have been infinitely funnier. What I smelled was a nasty chemical stench. I had some theories as to its source, but if it had an identifiable source, why wasn't it cleaned up?

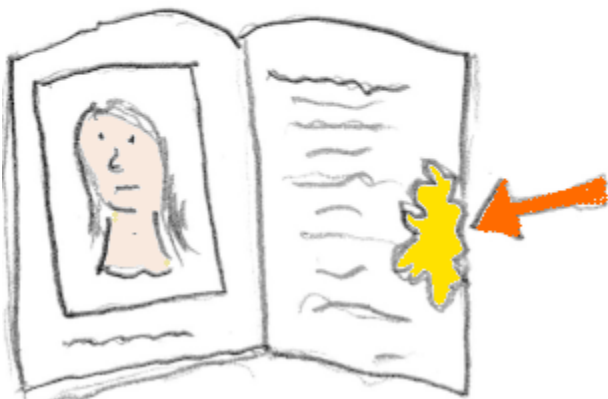
In the minutes before the movie started, I think I whispered something to my folks about the stinkage, but they denied the smell. I was flabbergasted that they didn't notice it. It was *that* powerful.

Oh my, did that theater stink!

For years afterward, my family could remember a man in the audience who during every fast-paced scene in the movie loudly declared, "Uh-oh!" But they forgot about the theater stinking right away.

In later years, I don't think the theater smelled as bad. We went there many times over the years. I remember hearing "19" by Paul Hardcastle on the car radio as we tooted down the narrow road to the cinema, and that would have been a few years after *E.T.* But when I was in high school, I mentioned the bad aroma in this theater to some classmates, and they agreed, saying the cinema was "ruined" by some sort of cleanser. That was almost 10 years after *E.T.* came out, and the theater was still stinking to a detectable extent.

So it wasn't just unruly patrons stinking up the place on a single occasion.



## A book got ruined with paint

I left my sketchbook and some of my other art supplies in the art room at Brossart when I was kicked out of this small Catholic high school. I need to come back 33 years later and retrieve them. I recently had a dream where I tried to do exactly that and was chased away by the art teacher.

It may seem surprising that nobody stole all my art supplies before I got expelled, but these items were kept in the art room instead of my locker. The lock for my locker had been stolen, and the school refused to replace it. Then the school had the nerve to blame me when my books got stolen from my locker.

Our previous ish talked about "ruining" water by dipping paintbrushes in it in art class. It would

have been an unremarkable episode but for the teacher using the magic word. But now I've recalled an incident that was perhaps more substantive—as something big got ru.

The teacher had a book that he had bought that contained color images of numerous paintings. One day, he assigned me to paint a painting from this book. This might have been because he wasn't letting me work on a project involving a linoleum cutter, as he accused me of carving up a table a year earlier: "Last year, you carved up my table and ruined it." The magic word again!

You can already see where this story is heading.

Somehow, a small drop of paint wormed its way onto a page of this tome. I have no idea how it got there. I walked on eggshells in the presence of this volume, so my conclusion is that it resulted from someone else's carelessness.

When the teacher found it, did I ever hear about it! "What's this?" he said, pointing at the drop of paint. He held the book aloft, with a goofy grin on his face. "Paint!" he declared. "You got paint on my book!"

At some point, the magic word was used. He used it a lot over the years. After all, he had reason to, because things were always getting ruined in that class.

He said he knew he shouldn't have let me use his expensive book, because I might get paint on it. Then why did he make me use it?

## Logs loom on London lifts (a blast from the past)

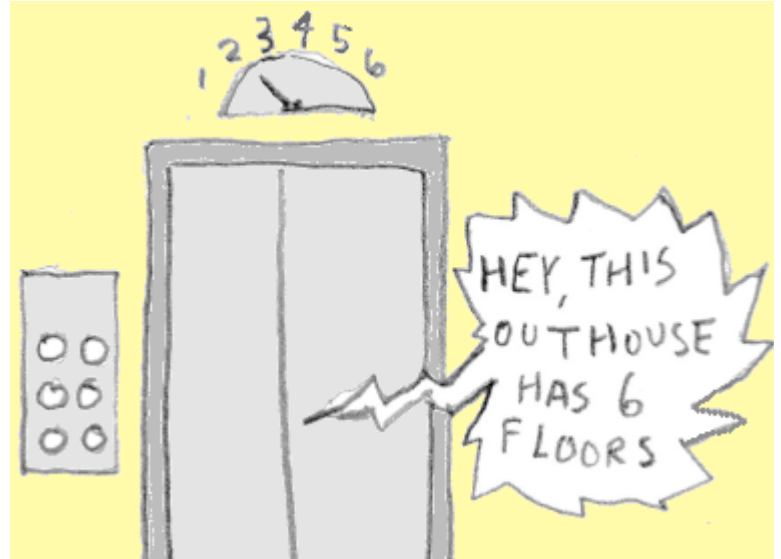
Here's a fun little vignette we've had backlogged since 2012. This zine was actually not being published for a time in 2012-13, because we devoted most of our time to Occupy and rallies opposing "right-to-work" laws (only to be stabbed in the back later by some of the labor unions we supported).

Eleven years ago, a British website reported, "Covert cameras and forensic tests are needed to flush out the culprit who has been pooing, urinating and vomiting in lifts on an almost daily basis this year." Somebody had been using elevators as toilets in London apartment buildings, and residents demanded surveillance cameras to catch the culprit.

Local officials said the messes were actually from a dog, but residents wanted "forensic tests on the poo" to show it was from a human. One said, "If it's a dog, it must have incredibly large bowels and a very large bladder."

Twenty residents signed a petition asking for a camera. It was similar to a petition that was circulated 3 years earlier during a similar series of events.

A photo on the website showed a gargantuan turd resting on the floor of an elevator.



## Elimination nation

I just spent a whole month trying to fit "Let's Dance" or "Blue Jean" into the title of an article about someone depositing shit on a school bus and the resulting speech by a school employee who resembled David Bowie. All to no avail. In any event, this classic story goes back decades but still brings as many laughs as ever!

One day when I was a junior in high school, someone threw a torn, shit-streaked pair of underpants onto the floor of the school bus. A classmate who discovered it famously declared, "Inspector 12 is gonna be mad!" Not long after, I was riding this bus home one afternoon and noticed that there was a big ol' log wrapped in toilet paper resting on the floor.

Because of the nice gift-wrapping job they did, it didn't appear as if the culprit had squeezed it out while on the bus. They must have dropped a deuce at home, wrapped it there, and lugged it around with them until they got on the bus. Either it had been there since the morning, or they had carried it around all day at school too.

The bus driver and monitor both tried blaming me, because my aforementioned classmate who they usually blamed for everything was absent that day. Yet they couldn't account for the fact that the mooky-stink wasn't under my seat, and had certainly rolled around all over the bus while in transit. Things like that in school-related settings seemed to have a mind of their own. I think eventually they tried blaming the other student despite his absence that day.

Around this time, the monitor and driver also falsely accused the aforementioned student of bringing a knife on the bus. Later, they said they never accused him. Not long after, I was in class when two social workers at the school summoned me to their office. They said I had been accused of—drum roll, please—bringing a knife on the bus. I rightly denied it, and they seemed to believe the facts I gave them.

But here's where things *really* get uproarious! I told one of the social workers—who bore a

striking resemblance to David Bowie—that someone had used the bus as a toilet, and that the bus crew had tried blaming me for it. At first, Mr. Bowie thought I meant that someone had urinated. But I had to clarify that it was a Number Two, and that it appeared that somebody had brung it onto the bus after moving their bowels elsewhere.

Bowie seemed shocked that anyone would do such a thing, and he tried to make sure he had heard me right. He seemed surprised that someone had smuggled “elimination” — as he called it— onto the bus and plunked it onto the floor. When he said “elimination”, he gestured with his hands as if he was holding a pile of it. His speech went something like this: “You mean somebody gathered up elimination and threw it on the floor of the bus?” It appeared as if he was trying to hold in his laughter. It was like how Steve Kroft or Adam Schiff always look like they're about to burst out laughing.

I allowed the social workers to search my locker just to prove I didn't have a knife. After the bus crew's ridiculous claims were demonstrably debunked, the social workers promised they would find me a different bus. But they never did. I had that same bus for over a year afterward.

Riding a school bus where people shit on the floor was like being in a prison cell where inmates throw urine and feces everywhere. That's what we were up against. But maybe if the school had let us use the restroom, nobody would have soiled the bus.

I sure hope nothing like this preceded the beige bubble gum incident on the TANK bus.



## 5 years (or more) in a 4-year hell

I was ripped off, and I fell for it.

Usually, when I get scammed, I know it but I'm powerless to remedy it. A good example is utility bills. I can't be fooled easily, and it's rare that I'm caught completely flat-footed by a scam. I was ripped off a significant sum of money some years back by a different scam and didn't know until it was too late, but this was by a very, very troubled individual. Then there's scams by high-profile organizations like universities that you might expect to have higher standards.

Colleges and universities were once very trusted institutions. And I lost a lot of time placing trust in administrators at NKU. I was desperate, and they were preying on desperate people. It wasn't a complete waste, because we did have all that fun on the lawn in front of the box sculpture, but my years at NKU accomplished nothing academically.

Deep down, I knew when I enrolled that I would eventually suffer an academic downfall, but I couldn't quite put my finger on exactly how it would unfold. But I enrolled because there was so much pressure to go to college.

Now that I'm older, I look back and think of how I was never able to get very far in life. I still think of the world as being what it was like when I was 12, while being forced to weather society's later

failures. I always thought things had to get better economically, and now all those years are gone. But life isn't all doom and gloom, as there have been some things I've managed to pull off. I'm not going to specify what they are, but there are some things I take mighty seriously because of experiences I had early in life. I'm at least entitled to *something*.

When I enrolled at NKU, I was told that it would take 5 years to complete a 4-year degree. This made NKU a stark outlier at the time. Taking 5 years for a 4-year program sounds ridiculous on its face, but I figured there had to be a reason for it. Part of the problem was that NKU said I didn't have enough high school credits—even though I had graduated high school—but that was because my high schools didn't offer me all the classes I needed. But NKU also said most other students took 5 years. Whose fault was that, NKU?

This was actually a very harmful ploy. Unfortunately, things like this are the bread and butter of the media, political figures, schools, corporations, and others who connive to shackle us to their chain gang. So the idea has spread to other colleges since then. Nationwide, only 44% of students who got their 4-year degrees in 2008 did it within 4 years. By 2013, some noted that American college students were taking an average of 6 years to earn a 4-year degree. Some institutions today expect students to take as long as 8 years.

Colleges and universities have puffed out the time it takes to get a degree because they want to make more money from students. This also means some students end up in even deeper debt than they otherwise would. In addition, by having to delay their careers, these students will end up with less money to retire on—or they'll have to work well past retirement age just to have anything.

CNBC ran a story that laughably implied that it's the students' fault they take longer. This is preposterous, because why did it usually take less time 30 years ago? One of the ways colleges have bogged down the process of getting a degree is piling on additional class requirements. One website commenter said, "Universities have inflated their degree programs with so much fluff it's virtually impossible for most students to finish in 4 years." In addition, colleges have sometimes failed to provide enough of the classes needed for a degree. And tuition has become so expensive that students are working harder to pay it, so they have less time to study.

A 2021 article said that requiring 6 years for a 4-year program had become so common that the government was now considering taking 6 years to be a "success." That's like saying an airline is successful because its flights take 50% longer than scheduled. By 2021, less than two-thirds of students graduated even within 6 years. One observer called it a "bait-and-switch" by colleges.

A 1990 federal law says colleges may report their graduation rate on the basis of "150 percent of 'normal time.'" But many schools didn't even bother reporting their graduation rate at all until 1997.

The numbers above are sure to get worse because of lockdown culture delaying everybody's plans even more.

It's also become more common for colleges to require students to live on campus, buy a meal plan, or purchase useless insurance. That's because these schools make money off those. I didn't live on campus, because I had already lived only a mile from the school my whole life. There would have been no point in moving onto campus. And what would be the point of a meal plan? If I was on campus at lunchtime, I went to the cafeteria and bought a meal. If I wasn't on campus that day, I didn't. It was that simple.

College sure looks like a dead industry to me when it all it has left is scams. What a disgrace.

## A new wrinkle in ruining encyclopedias

What was the deal with those blank pages at the beginning and end of dictionaries and encyclopedias that were always wrinkled? That makes about as much sense as wearing a hazmat suit at the state fair.

Large hardcover reference books always had one or two blank pages at both the beginning and the end that were wrinkled beyond all hope. They weren't wrinkled from misuse



by the owner. The books came that way. Sometimes the wrinkage was several pages deep and also afflicted the first few pages of text.

The bigger and more expensive the books were, the worse it was. The little paperback dictionaries that always got dropped in the toilet at school didn't have this problem. It was always bigger dictionaries and encyclopedias, which also got dropped in the toilet at school—that is, if they belonged to the school. The wrinkled pages were common in college-level dictionaries and very expensive encyclopedias like *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Pretty ridiculous, huh? But much more serious than this was defects in printing that obliterated important information. Again, this seemed to plague the most expensive reference books. These printing defects elicited much frustration. I remember one time I had to do a report and found a small hole in a page of an encyclopedia that looked like someone had burned it with a cigarette. If this was at Brossart, I would have thought that was really what had happened—but it wasn't. This rendered important data I needed for my report illegible.

People spent hundreds of dollars on huge sets of encyclopedias only to find them spoiled by holes in the pages! A 1988 article said encyclopedia sets cost as much as \$1,500. That's big bucks even 35 years later.

Who needs Kathy Hochul to ruin encyclopedias when they just destroy themselves?

## People don't twirl gum on their finger as much as they used to

This observation is automatically funny because it's about bubble gum.

It used to be that everywhere you went, people would not only blow savage bubs but also stretch their gum out of their mouths and twirl it around on their index finger. In particular, I remember someone in college doing this all the time. But people did this in other public places too.

These places weren't just public. They were public as a bird! In the case of businesses, they may have been private property, but they were open to the public. Thus, they weren't quite as public as the Internet—which is public in every sense of the word—but they were what most people would consider to be "in public", as members of the public used these establishments. Over the past few years, there's been some disagreement about what "in public" means. The phrase is often twisted to suit the purpose at hand or just out of sheer laziness. Some locations are public property and are open to the public with no obstructions to entering or exiting. Sidewalks, parks, beaches, boardwalks, and public university walkways are good examples. Yet lately a crackpot doctrine has developed that says authorities may remove people from these places for activity that was legal until this decade. Those who propagate this goofy notion have yet to provide a legal basis for it.

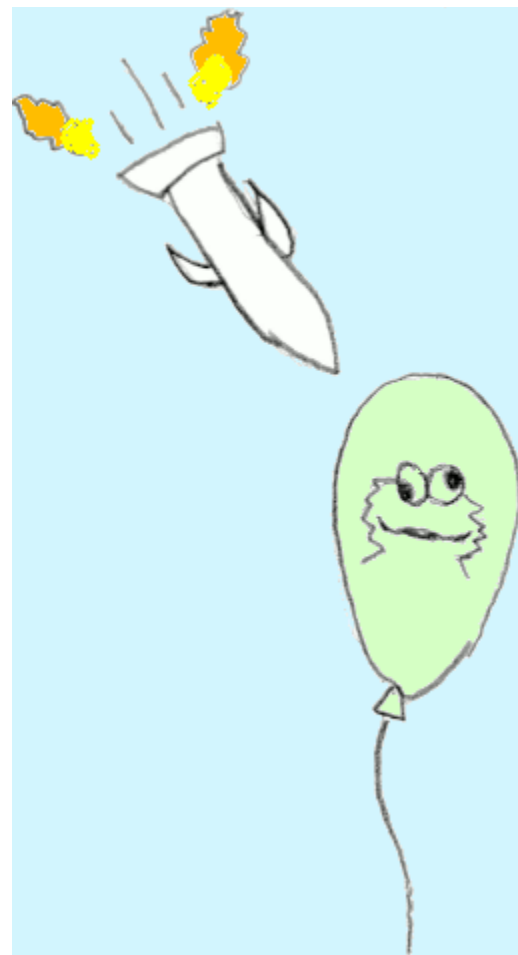
But I noticed that people stopped twirling their gum on their finger in public about 15 or 20 years ago. I haven't seen anyone do this ever since—except precisely *once*, which was in the pharmacy section of Kroger about a year or two ago. But they didn't bubble. When I went on a guided tour of Wind Cave in 2021, a woman appeared to be twirling gum on her finger, but it was actually the drawstring of her jacket that she had hanging out of her mouth. But she didn't bubble—because it was a drawstring, not gum.

Gum is cool.

## Balloon threat may be inflated

We almost got dragged into a nuclear war over a balloon!

Once when I was about 4 years old, we went out somewhere and acquired a Cookie Monster balloon. The balloon was promptly lost, leading us to deduce that we must have set it down and it floated away. Everyone pointed fingers at each other over the disappearance of this orb, but it was no use. Days or weeks later, I was playing in the backyard—several miles from where the balloon





was lost – and found a burst balloon exactly like the one we had lost laying in the grass.

America has recently shot down several balloons – fearing they might be Chinese spy craft – but the danger posed by those balloons was probably roughly equal to that of a Cookie Monster balloon falling from the sky and landing on a pile of dog shit or your croquet set.

Why would any country launch spy balloons that are so easily seen with the naked eye? Plus, spy balloons are World War I-era stuff – not something from 2023. A major limitation of spy balloons is that any balloon that you release will inevitably pop once it reaches a certain altitude. That's because the air inside it expands. Popping would be kind of a big problem if you're spying.

In other words, either these balloons were not spy balloons at all, or whoever launched them is too dumb to understand the limits of spy balloons. The first explanation is much more likely, but the second is also possible. During my Big Bend trip of 2011, I saw an American spy blimp floating over southern Texas...



That was a few months after a DEA spy craft exploded over Sierra Vista, Arizona, and blanketed a residential street. The DEA was so stupid that it announced it would paste the blimp back together and use it again. That's like trying to fix the plastic model of the Goodyear blimp that we had suspended from the bedroom ceiling when I was growing up that crashed to pieces on the floor when the string broke. But most government agencies around the world aren't that foolish, which means the balloons that the U.S. recently shot down probably weren't spy craft.

But make no mistake, the recent incidents drew us to the brink of war with China. This is despite the fact that the American media and many folks in the U.S. government love authoritarian regimes. The media has wondered aloud for decades why we can't be more like China. They've stopped little short of saying it point blank. They like Singapore even more, but China is their favorite superpower. Recently, there was a bizarre op-ed by an American fashion designer in the *New York Times* that praised China for not having a "student-centered American approach to education." She said life in China is also "a plus in other ways" because of "the heavy censorship." She wrote that the extensive surveillance state "results in its own kind of freedom." Major American media moguls are on the side of the Chinese Communist Party. There's no question about that. But you know they'll turn on a dime if they see an opportunity for a war. It wouldn't be the first time the media has cheered wars against regimes they once supported.

It turns out that a balloon that the U.S. shot down over Yukon was probably a small orb released by the Northern Illinois Bottlecap Balloon Brigade that cost \$12. The Air Force wasted a heat-seeking missile on that.

Sen. Jim Risch (R-Idaho) went on Fox News Channel and sniffed, "This was an invasion of the United States by a balloon." A senator really said that??? But a senator also put toilet paper all over a toilet seat and peed all over it, so I guess this isn't surprising.

This is like circa 1999 when the media tried to start a war with every random country out there just so they could keep showing the Old Navy commercial where people danced around and sang, "Draaaaaawstring..."

## **A beautiful beer bottle! Gone!**

One day, a young man wanted beer. But wait! Before he beered, he had to replenish his supply of delicious, frothy brew. In this story, something gets wosted, so keep your eyes peeled!

Back when I worked at the library, I occasionally sauntered over to the Kocolene convenience store next door to buy lunch and snacks. This gas station food mart also sold beer. At the time, beering was often frowned upon by the county politburo, and when new stores opened, these establishments languished for months as their alcohol license was bottled up by local officials. The excuse was that college students might buy beer, so beer had to be slowly but surely banished from the county. This also meant more business for existing stores such as Kocolene that were already allowed to sell beer.

One afternoon, I walked over to Kocolene to get lunch. A customer of the store was clumsily bounding about. He looked like an old high school pal of mine, but I don't think it was him. He went over to the cold drinks and grabbed a bottle of beer out of the dairy case. Then he did a strange thing. As he was lumbering to the counter to make his purchase, he accidentally knocked a bottle of beer off a display at the end of an aisle. The bottle fell to the floor and shattered, and the aroma of beer filled the store. Then he smiled. Nobody else seemed to notice the ruined beer.

And it was a big bottle. It wasn't what we usually think of as just one beer. It was like the Big Gulp of beer! And it went wastage bastage.

Our January 2019 ish talked about someone carelessly breaking a rare 1970s Hudepohl bottle worth thousands of dollars while they were taking a photo of it so they could show it off on Facebook. But only this zine can dredge up a story from 30 years ago about an ordinary beer bottle getting knocked over by a clumsy gas station customer and make it sound fresh and exciting!



## Shedding light on time change antiscience

Science!

We live in an era of antiscience. Flat earth beliefs, bad definitions of pi, *The View's* conspiracy theory about irrational numbers, and COVID alarmism have defined the decade. With the unasked-for return of Daylight Saving Time looming, some are spreading yet another discredited idea: They deny that an extra hour of light in the evening must be accompanied by an extra hour of darkness in the morning.

You can't have your cake and eat it too. If we adjust the clocks to give us more light in the evening, it has to come from somewhere. Daylight Saving Time *shifts* the entire clock by an hour—in the same direction.

I shouldn't have to explain this, but some people aren't too bright.

Laugh at them all you want, but their goofy misunderstanding of how time works actually influences public policy. Their belief is being cited by public officials as a reason to support extending Daylight Saving Time year-round.

Oh boy! Because lawmakers honor such a cockamamie belief, now our clocks are going to be off from natural time by 98 minutes the whole year instead of just most of it. Our rulers could mitigate this unsustainable discrepancy by 60 minutes if they'd just move us to the Central Time Zone where we belong, but they won't even allow us that courtesy—all because they want us synchronized with the New York Stock Exchange, which we don't give a shit about.

## Windows puts the 'augh!' in 'audio'

Remember the good old days when the volume on Windows 11 kept lowering and you were forced to run the troubleshooter just to get usable sound? (Cue the silent movie piano music.) The

ridiculousness has returned—except now the volume won't go back up no matter what you do.

So what are we supposed to do? Blow a huge bubble with bubble gum and pop it all over Bill Gates's face?

Well, I found a fix that worked for a few whole hours, but more hard-earned dough had to go wastage bastage. It just so happens that the sound is loud enough if you just go through the speakers. But we do a lot of work that needs headphones, and that's where the trouble comes in. So I had to practically take out a mortgage to buy a pair of headphones that was loud enough to hear the audio on Windows 11. The old pair was loud enough with Windows 10, and even with Windows 11 for several months, but now it's been rendered little more than dust.

And the new headset still didn't sound fabulous. It was much louder, but not as crisp. The headphones are a supposedly reputable brand, so the problem surely rested with Windows. I had a much smaller pair of headphones in the mid-'80s that someone stole, and using it with just a handheld radio with bad tuning sounded better than that.

After a few hours, the volume went down again. I downloaded FxSound, which sadly produced no improvement. The change in headphones no longer made any difference. The new headset was suddenly no louder than the one I had replaced, even though it was indeed louder than the old one when hooked up to the stereo instead. I tried everything to restore the volume on the computer, and nothing worked. Plus, every time I changed some of my sound settings, Windows would change them right back.

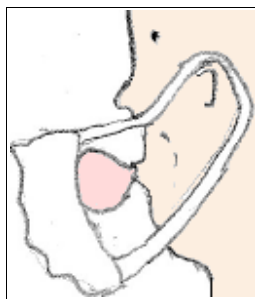
I found a possible reason for this latest development. A new build of Windows was introducing a new volume mixer. It appears that this caused Windows to discontinue old drivers that actually worked right. Yet—for once—Windows didn't disrupt everything to install this new build, and I had to download it myself. How much do you want to bet that the new mixer wasn't even any better? You guessed it! It's no better than before. As a bonus, this new build erased all my settings.

I ordered an amplifier in the hopes that it will fix the audio once and for all. If it doesn't, it means I squandered all that money on headphones and an amp that provided no long-term remedy. It appears, however, that the amp does indeed work. The amp is so effective that I've already accidentally dropped it on the floor at least 5 times. We'll give it 6 months before declaring that it solved the audio problem for good.

TLDR: Windows 11 has a shitty sound driver.

Now you know the rest of the story! As idiotic as it is.

## Best...drawing...ever!



People read this zine, you know.

I recently received feedback about what was considered to be the greatest illustration ever to appear in these pages. It was a drawing of a person blowing a bubble with bubble gum while wearing a surgical-style mask: "The person blowing a bub while wearing a mask was best drawing ever."

That drawing appeared at least twice during the COVID crisis. It sums up an era in which many people 1) wore masks; 2) bubbled; or 3) both. Yet many folks did neither. To each their own.

In a liberal democracy, we have choices. Two variables means you have 4 choices—some funnier than others. Small minds try to police others' personal behavior. Big minds just lean back, relax, and poo.

## There is a permanent record!

This is a topic that elicits further exploration, but because of time constraints, we can only graze the surface of it at the moment.

There *is* a permanent record! When you were in middle or high school, some insurgent probably told you there is no such thing as a permanent record at school, and it was therefore safe to fight your school on the many things it was wrong about. But these days, we have self-anointed phony revolutionaries who try to make you think rebellion means fighting against schools if they don't abuse you enough. Bootlicking is now considered "edgy." The greater point is that permanent records are real. Schools probably don't have records to prove a 50-year-old graduated over 30 years ago, but you can bet your bizcream they still have records of the bad stuff.

NKU wasn't upfront with me about this. (Imagine that!) After leading me to believe they had no record of my ceaseless battles in primary and high school, NKU went on to use this history against me. This record only reflected the schools' side of the story – not mine. Because this is a day ending in *y*, yet another story has emerged of a school in Kentucky punishing the victim in a harassment incident, and this has shed light on how some colleges treat your infamous permanent record.

According to the published account, some universities admit that they consider prospective students' permanent records – instead of letting students find out the hard way like NKU did. The University of Louisville says it asks applicants if they were expelled from high school. The school says it does not ask about suspensions or earlier expulsions. The University of Kentucky says it looks at high school records but nothing earlier.

A post on the public Internet says colleges only look at permanent records if they have a reason to look – because they're "busy people." But another post says many colleges use a standard form that asks, "Have you ever been found responsible for a disciplinary violation at any educational institution you have attended from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade (or the international equivalent) forward, whether related to academic misconduct or behavioral misconduct, that resulted in a disciplinary action?" Even if you only got sent to the principal's office for chewing gum, you have to disclose it. Over the next few years, students are going to be forced to reveal that they got in trouble for not social distancing. Not fessing up could lead to the college rejecting your application. Yet another post says there are actually *two* permanent records, but one is sealed and will never leave the school where it accumulated. The one your college will see consists only of high school report cards – no disciplinary records or earlier report cards. On the other hand, a New Jersey news site says schools begin compiling students' permanent records as soon as they start prekindergarten.

That's like cancel culture for 3-year-olds. Yet while most people are subjected to this cancel culture, the flip side is that there are societal thresholds that should be respected but aren't. Think of the worst high school bullies you knew. Should they be allowed to rise into any position of public trust? It's not cancel culture to expect that there would be penalties for serial bullies. Unfortunately, school records are never used against them – after all, they're the ones who are never punished in the first place and use their clout to get ahead. If we were to report on every incident in which a school punished a victim but not a perpetrator, we'd have to publish a new issue every few minutes.

Meanwhile, the effect of the suspension that prompted this story didn't end when the suspension was over. It appears as if the student will also be barred from a field trip at the end of the school year – which amounts to double jeopardy.