

# The Last Word™

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## Another day in paradise

Think twice. It was many days in paradise in St. Augustine, Florida. At least it was paradise compared to back home, where we don't have a beach like every other city has.

We went on an argument-filled family vacation to St. Augustine from May 13 to 18, and we had a mighty fine time, yep (as the cough drop commercial would say). Celebrity look-alikes were sighted. A woman who strongly resembled Anne Bloom of *Not Necessarily The News* was seen at Castillo de San Marcos National Monument, and she kept cropping up throughout town later. A man who looked just like ill-tempered celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay was detected at a seafood restaurant. A feller who resembled Steve Perry of Journey was sighted at an eatery in Georgetown, Kentucky, when we were on the way home.

Wait! There's more! At a motel in Tifton, Georgia, on the way down, the tea dispenser overflowed all over the floor of the breakfast room. We later discovered that some unthinking galoot dented our car door, probably by parking a hulking SUV next to it in a parking space that was too narrow for it and opening their door. A woman accidentally dropped her walker out of a moving trolley bus. And we left a driver's license in a hotel lobby. Keep on reading for the exciting conclusion of that incident.

Keep reading.

The license was retrieved hours later after the inn called us.

A pair of sunglasses with important vision correction was later lost. But it too was found after many hours. This was after much arguing over who lost it—an argument that I of course won.

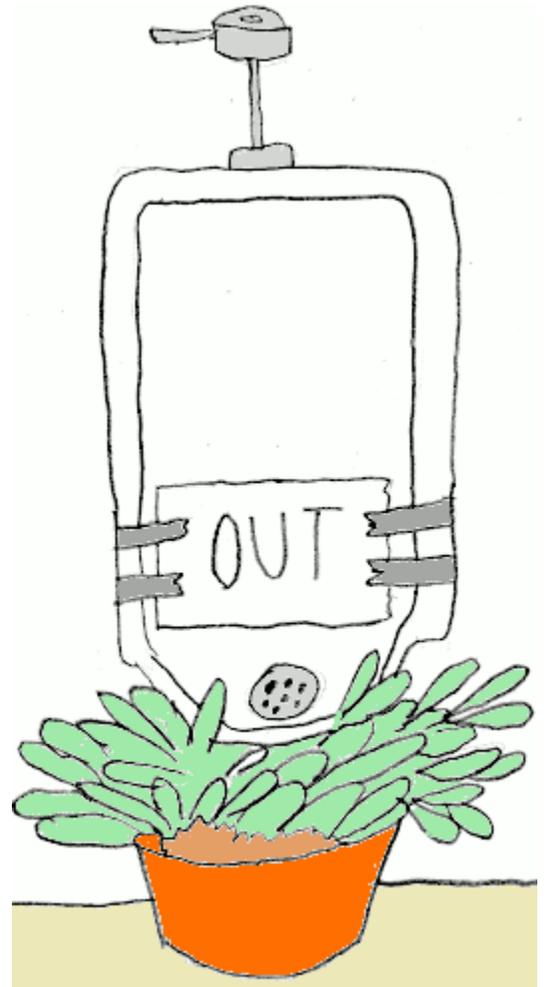
A men's restroom at a Sunoco station near Lake City, Florida, had a plant growing in front of a broken urinal to keep people from using it. This bathroom was also covered with graffiti dating from 2020, and best all, it had a wisp of poo on the toilet seat. It also looked like someone had punched a hole in the wall.

But nobody cracked any air biscuits.

## WellCare still won't shut its damn mouth

I'm mad, so wipe that smirk off your face.

Kentuckians are practically required to use an HMO called WellCare, ever since the reich that ruled the state abdicated healthcare management. WellCare has a website that's been broken for years and an



equally shitty approach to contacting customers – who are a captive audience.

I'm sure I'll be attacked as an ingrate for criticizing WellCare after it began sending me a benefit card when I turned 50, but I *guarantee* WellCare isn't who is paying for those benefits. I get so much junk mail from WellCare just in a month that I wouldn't have even needed the *Kentucky Post's* useless Saturday ad bundles to build a bonfire.

Then there's the phone calls. I've made it very clear to WellCare that I don't want them contacting me by phone. That's because they've never called me for anything important. It's always to offer me something I don't want or remind me of an appointment that has already taken place. I'm on the "do not call" list, and when I say I don't want to receive frivolous calls, I mean it.

WellCare uses many different phone numbers to evade being blocked by customers. Yet they're still able to leave messages using blocked numbers, and they always start using new numbers so you have to block them again. That's how they ruined my lunch in St. Augustine. We stopped at a restaurant as we were breezing into town, and while I was trying to order my meal, I was disrupted by a call on my smartphone from 1-877-706-9478.

This was a new WellCare phone number that I hadn't blocked yet. The phone ringing reverberated throughout the diner. It was worse than an important speech by the President being interrupted by the horn from an early '90s White Castle commercial (or maybe it was Arby's).

1-877-706-9478 was new to me, but not to some other customers. WellCare has been allowed to abuse it for several years, as one website is full of older complaints about it. One customer wrote, "These people call incessantly day and night and leave messages – very aggressive." Another customer said WellCare didn't even leave a message. They just called and hung up – like a 6<sup>th</sup> grade bully getting excited because they got a new phone that has asterisk and number sign buttons.

Someone complained about the calls on WellCare's Facebook page too. WellCare shot back with an arrogant reply that said...

*"We appreciate your request, but we don't have a 'Do Not Contact' list for members. As your health plan, we are interested in helping you lead a better, healthier life, and in some instances, we are obligated to communicate with you so that we can keep you up to date on your plan benefits. We also provide information to you that might help to manage or improve your health. It's all part of our commitment to you as a member of our plan. Please keep in mind that when we do call you, you always have the option to decline the call."*

A few problems with that. WellCare might not have a "do not call" list, but the government does. "We, the people" – not WellCare – are supposed to be the boss. WellCare's claim that they're "obligated" to make telemarketing calls 24/7 is laughable. And we're denied "the option to decline the call." Once the phone rings or a message has been left, it's too late to decline. The call has been made.

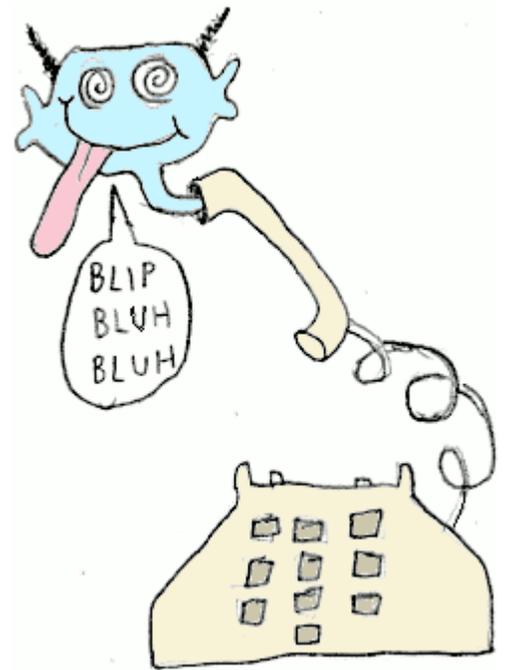
The post I left on WellCare's Facebook page was not the least profane.

Imagine if you can if WellCare pulled this shit in the Old West. Think of a big, tough cowboy like the Gum Fighter from the Hubba Bubba ads. How would he deal with someone like WellCare? He would promptly grab a muddy twig in each hand, insert them into the corners of the offender's mouth, stretch their lips to the maximum extent, and parade them about town on a stagecoach.

WellCare needs to be made to attend a pee tasting.

A few days after I got home, I got a spam text message from WellCare under a different phone number: 631-526-7816. They've begun sending me e-mail spam too – which is especially suspect, because I don't remember ever giving them my e-mail address.

Years ago, just before I got rid of my landline in favor of a cellphone, I was calling back telemarketers and crooked debt collectors (who kept harassing me about debts allegedly owed by people I didn't even know) and blasting them with the noise from a toy duck call from Ride the Ducks.



I can't find my duck call now, so that's why I've ordered a referee whistle. I don't know if this will do much good, because if you call WellCare at 1-877-706-9478, you just get put on hold. Once again, bully worship continues, as bullies are allowed to get their way.

At the very minimum—and we're being ridiculously generous—phone companies need to make it so that any phone number you've blocked can't leave a message. Right now, you can block numbers, but that only stops your phone from ringing when they call. It doesn't stop them from leaving messages. In the recent incident involving 1-877-706-9478, however, that number hadn't been blocked yet. The more important point here is that I had already made it clear that I didn't want WellCare calling, because they never had anything important to say. I had blocked their other numbers, and they evaded these blocks by using a new number. They wouldn't take the hint. When someone blocks your number, that means you're not supposed to call them. Understand?

When I say I don't want to get calls from someone, I'm not joking, and I want WellCare **PUNISHED!!!!**

## When restaurant cleanliness falls flat as a pancake

I'm a real hawk for cleanliness in restaurants. In my America, we don't stick our fingers in our beverages—or even touch a part of an object that goes in our beverages. And we don't put our forks and spoons on the bare table. We have plates and napkins for a reason. I also have very real concerns about restaurant ass.

It is with a heavy heart that I must call out a diner in St. Augustine. One morning during our recent vacay, our group bipped into this restaurant for a nice breakfast. I ordered pancakes and a sodie-pop, and I was looking fiveward to devouring them with unparalleled dispatch.

But I was gravely disappointed when the waiter brang my pannycakers. A significant portion of the edge of the flapjacks was touching his shirt—which was probably coated with grease and germs. The pancakes didn't just graze his shirt. They were pressed into it a great deal.

This left the edge of my pancakes in ruins. I was forced to leave much of the circumference of the pancakes uneaten.

It's possible that the server had blown his nose on his shirt. Blowing your nose on your shirt is sometimes a necessity. But if you do so, please keep the soiled garment away from my pancakes.

The chattering classes melt down if someone doesn't wear a mask even when alone on a beach—which nobody did before 2020—but basic sanitation in restaurants goes unheeded.



## Sign, sign, everywhere a sign

You may know that Kent Lofts is one of the biggest boondoggles ever in the city of Bellevue. Officials liked to boast that it was “transformative.” Damn right it's “transformative.” The tax handout that this luxury apartment development gets transforms your wallet into an empty husk. But this article is about another privilege that Kent Lofts gets that others do not.

If you trudge 2 blocks from Kent Lofts up to the parking lot at 333 Retreat, you might peep something weird. A sign on a telephone pole blares, “Private Parking for Kent Lofts ONLY.” Below the Kent Lofts logo, the sign threatens, “UNAUTHORIZED VEHICLES WILL BE TOWED AWAY.”

The company that owns Kent Lofts acts like the world gave it a piece of poop for Christmas.

Big problem with this: That's a city-owned parking lot. It's public in every sense of the word.

It's not even practical for Kent Lofts to use this lot, as it's 2 whole blocks away. It's not like a Reds game where you have to park far away. Besides, Kent Lofts has a parking lot and a garage on site, so it doesn't even *need* off-premises parking.

The media makes a lot of noise about “squatting”, a term that they throw around without knowing what it means. The “squatting crisis” is a hoax. Homelessness is a crisis. Squatting isn't. But the firm that owns Kent Lofts is essentially squatting on public land. It's not homesteading. It's squatting. I don't think Abraham Lincoln had Kent Lofts in mind when he signed the Homestead Act.

Several Facebook commenters have claimed that this lot actually is owned by Kent Lofts. This is simply incorrect. A search on the Campbell County PVA's web site reveals that it is in fact owned by the city of Bellevue—and has been since 2018, the same year ground broke on Kent Lofts. Folks armed with this fact tried to correct the misunderstandings to the contrary.

A property is owned by whoever the PVA says owns it—which in this case is the city. Yet—even when presented with this information—some have continued to insist the lot is owned by Kent Lofts. A few folks have actually argued that the PVA has to list the lot as being owned by the city because of the lavish tax break Kent Lofts gets. For one thing, several of those who have claimed this have previously denied that projects like Kent Lofts have gotten any tax breaks—even though news sites reported it in plain sight. For another, even if their argument is true, it means the lot is still in effect owned by the taxpayers.

Nobody else in Bellevue gets private parking even in front of their own home. The city does not set aside a space on the street in front of their home for them. We have to shovel snow on the sidewalk in front of our home, but we don't get a reserved spot to park like Kent Lofts does. Kent Lofts placing its sign on that lot is like if you placed a "no parking" sign on the street in front of your home. If you do that, see how long it lasts.

The city has signs saying nobody at all can park on a street near Kent Lofts at certain times of the day, yet Kent Lofts residents ignore these signs and are not ticketed. Yet the city tags your tires if you park in front of your own home for too long where no such sign exists.

All of this is despite the fact that most people in Bellevue pay taxes, while Kent Lofts has a special exemption from property taxes lasting 30 years. A luxury apartment complex pays no taxes and gets exclusive use of a city-owned parking lot, as everyone else pays big and gets nothing. Similarly, Newport parking meters have absurdly high rates, while the city gives tax breaks to luxury riverfront condos. (Luckily, a rumor that Covington requires an app to use its meters appears to be mistaken.)

Tax handouts for luxury developments have plagued several local cities, and it leaves everyone else holding the bag. These gentrification projects also manipulate the market, forcing existing homeowners—and indirectly renters—to pay higher property taxes. The higher tax bills are not entirely caused by (whoosh...whoosh) inflation that you would normally expect, but rather by the scarcity created by market manipulation. It's a one-two punch. Not only are people paying higher taxes because of this manipulation, but also because entities that caused this manipulation get special dispensations from having to pay these taxes.

In fact, it's a three-four punch. This same philosophy afflicts every level of government. We're sick of hearing about how we need to raise the retirement age and slash Social Security because it's going broke. There's never enough money for Social Security, but there's always enough to give to corporations for luxury housing. The so-called "third rail" of politics—cutting Social Security—is always the first thing they do, or at least they do it before cutting corporate handouts. They've done it already.

I'm just as angry about public schools refusing to do their jobs during COVID as anyone else is, but—as a matter of principle—I don't support the effort to give Kentucky taxpayers' money to private schools. Many private schools have been just as bad as public schools—sometimes worse—on COVID and other matters. How can there not be enough for Social Security when there's plenty of free Toy Money for failed private schools? After Brossart built a \$5.2 million sports complex, I don't ever want to hear another word about how strapped for dough private schools are—especially since this complex is tax-exempt too, as it's owned by a religious body.

Kent Lofts is like the Brossart of gentrification. It's exempt from taxes but also receives other privileges taxpayers don't have. People also defend it on Facebook using weak arguments. Plus, much as how our overlords abdicated education by closing schools for 2 years, they've abdicated housing as well. Our cities are not the tolerant, welcoming places they were 10 years ago. It's obvious we're not welcome in many of our cities these days because of our economic level.



## Board to death

Fretful voices amid the background noise ask why this zine includes so many stories that even an idiot can find online with ease. Well, it sounds like they volunteered—except they're too damn lazy to even put in the work to find these stories.

Let's talk ruined board games. I don't mean a single playing of a game being spoiled—although this does happen, usually at the hands of losing players throwing a tantrum and upending the board. I'm talking about a copy of a game being physically pulverized for good.

I found a rundown on the public Internet of games being demolished. In that thread, the word *ruin* and its various forms were used no fewer than 11 times. Most of these are newer games I've never even heard of. It's not like the days of Scrabble, Bermuda Triangle, and Walk Along Sesame Street. But, whatever the weather, games got ru.

The originator of this thread says they accidentally spilled water on a game—violating “a cardinal rule of board gaming.” Someone replied saying they put a game on the roof of their car and forgot about it as they drove away. They saw hundreds of cards and pieces flying into the street. Other folks saw their games ruined by Pepsi, beer, coffee, and vomit. Someone wasted a brand new game by knocking a drink off the table and into the box.

Another game was dashed to bits when someone left it in their car overnight and another car plowed into it. One person lost almost their entire game collection when the roof of their home—not just the ceiling, but the roof—caved in. Along with the games went “a beautiful roll top desk” and about 3,000 books, including a complete leatherbound collection of Robert Louis Stevenson's works.

A game was ruined when someone got the board out of the box the wrong way and tore it in half. A dog chewed up an important tile for another game. A brand new game was destroyed by a bowl of hot soup being spilled on it. Another sparkling new game was ruined when it was set up overnight and a cat vomited all over the board. Numerous games were destructified when they were stored in a tent during a rainstorm that was strong enough to pry off the wind fly. Someone also dropped a piece of cake on a game.

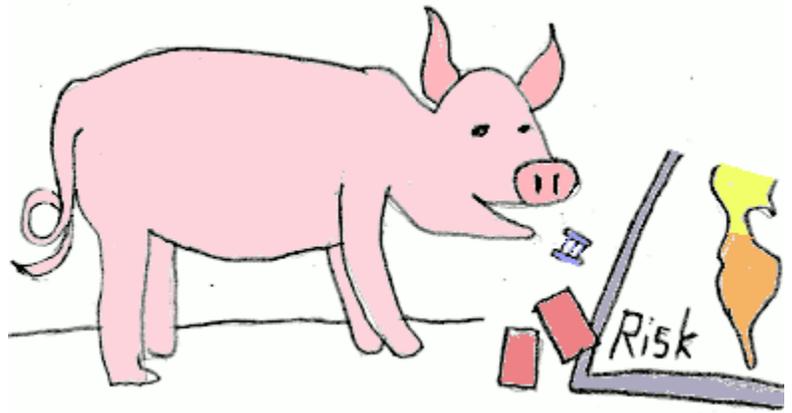
A person went to a café and dropped a whole coffee onto a game being played by complete strangers. Another commenter said that when they were 12 or 13, they ruined a brand new Pokémon Monopoly game by putting it in the bed of a truck as it was tooling down the street. The lid flew off and the pieces scattered. Another person lost a game because a pipe burst in their basement and coated the game in raw sewage.

It's not just games with an actual board, but also games like Magic: The Gathering. Someone said they were playing Magic: The Gathering on a balcony and a big gust of wind blew all their cards away. Another game involving collectible cards was blown into a river. Another person said a flood destroyed 3 Dungeons & Dragons books, and another said their nephew “used my Monster Manual as a coloring book.”

A commenter said their pigs escaped from their pen, wandered into their living room, and ate most of the pieces of their Risk game. A glass of bourbon got spilled on a Trivial Pursuit game, causing the board to disintegrate. A person loaned a game to a friend to take on a trip. Suspiciously, he returned from the trip with a brand new copy of the game, still in its plastic wrap. That had to have been a good story. A Monopoly game was ruined when a pet rabbit chewed through a washing machine hose and caused a flood. A dice cup from a game got decimated when someone filled it with Coke.

There are also other threads on this topic, including one in which someone said a piece of a game got flung into a bowl of salsa. Our repeated spoilage of an already-ruined Monopoly game in high school is legendary. And pieces of games we had at home often mysteriously disappeared.

I also remember overhearing this classic quote at an organization I had unfortunate dealings



with in my late teens: “Did they get the chess piece out of the toilet yet?” That query speaks for itself.

’Tis also fun to look at reviews of games I had growing up. Take the Big Foot board game, for example. Someone posted a review titled “Quite Possibly the Stupidest Game Ever.” He noted that the game consists of pressing down on a model of Big Foot “and he poops a little chip out.” He said the game “only lasts 20 minutes, but by that time I was wishing that Bigfoot existed, if only so he could rampage through the house and flip over the board.”

Maybe he can just spill Pepsi on it.

## A thorny situation in middle school

I’m trying to pinpoint when it was that it became taboo to fight back against bullies. I’ve pegged it at late 1984. Bullying itself used to be taboo, but now it’s taboo to even remember that it was taboo. In a 1970 episode of *The Brady Bunch*, Peter knocked a bully clean to the ground. You’d never see anything like that on TV now.

Fighting is dumb—usually. But there are some “people” you just can’t reason with.

Let’s go back many years to sometime around 6<sup>th</sup> grade. There were a few last gasps of the people’s way. That was when a group of 7 neighborhood kids fought back against an instigator up the street who some of us went to school with.

People also still had creative methods of fighting assailants. There was a kid at school who kept getting picked on, so he came up with an ingenious surprise counterattack. He went in the restroom, removed his cowboy boots, and filled them with water. Then he hid behind a corner and threw water on adversaries when they walked past.

That was around the time I collected thorns to stab attackers. I broke dozens of thorns off a bush. Somehow, I didn’t get hurt. I must have worn tough wire gloves. I hid the thorns in a safe in my bedroom so my parents wouldn’t find them. Then I would smuggle some of them into school to defend myself.

This was also around the time some spoiled brats at school forced me to sign some paper admitting to a bunch of embarrassing things I didn’t do, and agreeing to do other embarrassing things. One afternoon when I got off the school bus, some kids tried to grab the paper from me, and I buried it in a snowdrift. Later, I made a special effort to run 2 blocks from home all the way up the street and retrieve the paper so I could destroy it. I was in such a hurry to get up there that I didn’t even bother to put on a coat. Luckily, the paper was still pretty much where I left it. The snow had melted, but the paper was floating in the resulting puddle.

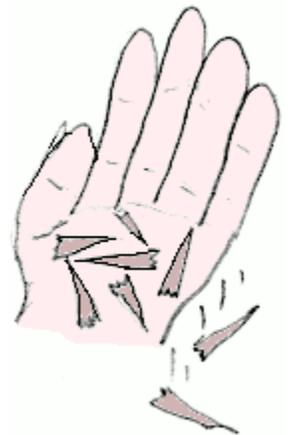
Society became increasingly tolerant of bullies, so I had less time and energy to hone new methods of fighting them. I had to resort to tried and true defenses. When a kid harassed me between classes in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I famously punched him in the face.

In high school, I built a weapon out of a clickable pen. It worked by shoving the refill into the shaft and suddenly letting go. The spring fired the refill at the assailant. I boasted about this on a local computer bulletin board system, and the sysop—who was a lawyer—said I should be expelled. He called it a “military” weapon. Yep, I’m sure the Army has plenty of clickable pens out on the battlefield.

I had heard of someone making such a weapon in middle school, but theirs also included a rubber band and used a sewing needle in place of the refill.

Schools are essentially prisons. You have to make a shiv or other weapon to defend yourself.

Now we’re living the results of bullying being normalized. It’s been a rough 40 years for the people’s way. The biggest bullies of all are the collaborationists who have decided it is their right to impose warped norms that favor aggressors and set us back many lifetimes. We are at war.



## People got expelled

Take a break from FarmVille and peep some of our famous rapid-fire stories about people getting expelled from school that we found online!

Someone posted that they were expelled because they wrapped fish in newspaper and left it on a radiator in a classroom over summer break – thereby stinking. A student was expelled because he burned his math test in front of the teacher because he got an *F*. Another put peanut butter in a classmate's pants. Two guys were expelled from their school for smoking, but it turned out that they were smoking their own pubic hair on a dare.

A middle school student got suspended for trying to help a schoolmate skip class by stuffing him in a locker. It wasn't so funny when he was unable to get out of the locker and started yelling for help and gasping for air. A crowbar was required to rescue him. Another student was suspended for a week because he passed gas and everyone thought it was a stink bomb. A 5<sup>th</sup> grader was suspended for bringing a magazine to school that had Goliath from *Gargoyles* on the cover. A student was suspended for wearing a padlock on a chain. The school accused him of "chaining himself to Satan."

A group of about 30 students tried to play a prank on a rival high school by pelting cars parked there with eggs and dog food. But most of the cars they hit didn't even belong to students. Pretty much the entire class got expelled.

A student got in trouble for stealing a sink from a restroom. A kindergartner was expelled because he twice walked into class with his pants down. A 4<sup>th</sup> grader was expelled for bringing a toy water pistol to school. His folks had to move to a different town to find a new school. A group of high school seniors was expelled for putting rotting meat in their school's air conditioner. The stench forced classes to be moved. Their expulsion meant they missed prom and graduation. Another student was expelled for playing football in a classroom and breaking the ceiling lights. Another was suspended for shitting in a sink.

A girl was expelled because she used feces to write "shit stinks" on a wall. She also left a Coke can under it with shit on top of that. A student was suspended because he posted a fake memo around the school about a "mandatory penis inspection." Another got busted for leaving a drinking fountain running over a long weekend and flooding some rooms. At the same school, a star basketball player was expelled for throwing a condom on the floor in English class. Someone was expelled from their school for defecating in a urinal.

The few. The proud. The expelled.

## Shoe thrower off on wrong foot with teacher

It can be a real scream when kids act up in school!

Last year, someone posted a video on YouTube that took place at what appears to be a high school. In the clip, a student throws a shoe across the classroom while the teacher has her back turned...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NTN11gPy9Q>

Here's a rundown of that clip in case you're afraid a record player will explode in your face. As the teacher is writing on the whiteboard, a shoe suddenly sails through the air and hits the board. The teacher opens the door and yells to someone in the hallway to summon police – as if there's someone constantly hanging out in the hall to notify cops. A student wearing only one shoe is quickly identified as the culprit. Yet she denies throwing the shoe, and says she wore only one shoe to school.

The student argues with the teacher for minutes on end. Then she throws what appears to be a small box of markers and a notebook. She also grabs things off another student's desk and throws those.



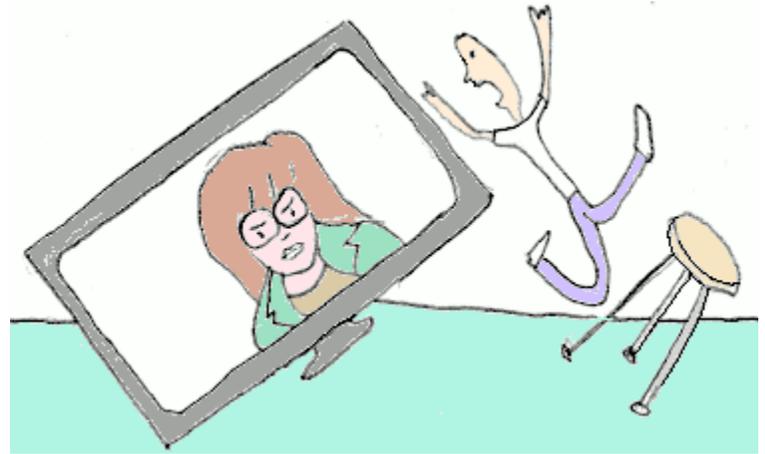
Finally, the fuzz shows up to cart the disruptive student away!

Kids acted up like this all the time when I was in school. But nobody had a smartphone back then, so unfortunately, there's no footage. Of course, the misbehavior worsened because of COVID totalitarianism. This fact lays hulk to the doublethink of those who boast that misconduct like this never occurred in their day yet didn't get any worse under COVID fascism. If it wasn't going on before, how could it be any less now? These finger-pointing scolds use contradictory arguments to suit the topic at hand.

## People broke stuff

Take a rest from Roblox Bubble Gum Simulator to inspect these stories we found online of people breaking or losing irreplaceable, valuable items!

Someone posted that when he was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, he borrowed a priceless, sentimental pen from his dad for a test at school. The pen was so valuable that it "was like owning a BMW." So valuable that when the test was over, he showed it around to his school pals, who were in awe. But one of his friends clumsily broke the tip off of it. The pen was beyond repair.



One person said they got a camera for their birthday when they were about 11 or 12 and accidentally left it on a bus. It was still in its box.

Someone said they lost their grandfather's antique penknife that was decorated with rings from the 1936 Summer Olympics in a house move. A commenter said that when she was about 12 or 13, she lost an antique enameled bracelet "in a public loo." It was a family heirloom. A person accidentally threw away a brand new, very expensive leather shoe by packing it up with the box to be taken out with the trash. The other shoe in that pair sat useless.

Gobs of priceless jewelry has been lost, including a pair of monogrammed gold earrings that was also a family heirloom.

A person said he and his wife went on a trip all over Australia to sell antiques at fairs. During this outing, he backed his car over a table that contained about \$5,000 worth of collectible uranium glass.

A woman said her fiancé took her to his uncle's house. The uncle's home was full of irreplaceable historic artifacts. The woman picked up an old wood and hide drum. The beautiful drum had been passed down through the family for 200 years and used at family gatherings. Then the uncle's dogs charged through the room, crashed into the woman, and caused her to drop and break the drum.

Another commenter said they tripped on a stool and fell into their parents' 44-inch TV. Another said he hired a young woman to clean his home, and she broke a bunch of ancient Chinese and Inca pottery and statues. Then she declared bankruptcy so she wouldn't have to pay for them. Another commenter said that when he was about 3, he smashed his dad's antique 78 RPM records. Someone said that when they were in 7<sup>th</sup> grade science class, they carelessly knocked their teacher's valuable nautilus shell onto the floor, shattering it. Another person said that when they were about 9, they inflicted \$40,000 in damage to their dad's fishing boat by playing with the steering wheel unsupervised.

Stuff got ru! Stuff got ru! (Sung to the tune of what should have been the *Studio See* theme if I hadn't just now made it up.)

## Cauliflower bubbles!

To bring you funny stories, we're sometimes forced to sacrifice basic constitutional liberties, including due process. Insufferable adversity strangely led us to witness humorous incidents. It's like how great songwriters would still be unknown if critically vilified bands hadn't recorded songs they wrote.

You may know that shortly before I turned 17, I was retaliated against by local school officials

because I started to fight back against their fascism. This was one of many examples of victims being punished while perpetrators were not. School officials were in cahoots with the Boprotters and right-wing local public officials.

The organization that I was subjected to in the ensuing months thought they could co-parent. They banned everything—and I mean *everything*. Dungeons & Dragons, *The Simpsons*, you name it! They made my parents look like anarchists in comparison.

There was a TV in the lounge at this venue that had cable, but we weren't allowed changing the channel. Punishment for doing so was severe. One of few things we were allowed to watch was movies for very small children. There were usually staffers standing nearby—arms akimbo—to make sure the TV was not touched.

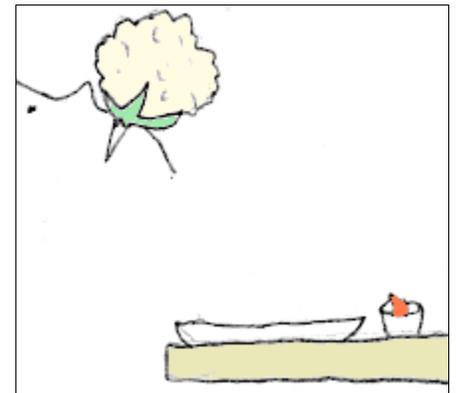
One day, another teenage captive of this racket asked a staffer—a grim-looking woman who was probably in her thirties—to change the channel to MTV. This was back when MTV still aired music videos. The woman noted that we weren't allowed watching music videos and said, "I'll show you the memo that says no, no, no."

Most of the staffers there were losers in life, and delivering tirades like this made them feel special. Their meanness and violence was different from the condescension and anger displayed by a high-ranking official at NKU who I had to repeatedly deal with later.

If music videos were so filthy, I wouldn't have been allowed to watch them at home. I saw MTV before I even turned 10, yet a staffer who was practically a stranger decreed I couldn't watch it at 17? My parents didn't let me watch MTV for hours on end, but at least they let me watch it some. The reason they didn't let me watch it more wasn't because they thought it was evil and communist, but because there were more important things I had to do instead. By contrast, the staffers at the organization I had to deal with weren't my mommy and daddy, so they had no business deciding what I was allowed to do.

I remember one time it was movie night, and staffers rented a movie for us. It was an outrageously silly children's movie, but I really got interested in it. Right in the middle of the film, staffers suddenly shut it off, saying it was too "violent"—even though the movie was probably G-rated, and any "violence" in it was about as tame as a pie in the face. Groans filled the room when the movie was shut off. Then the staffers blamed us for the film being "violent", even though we didn't even suggest this movie.

There's nothing funny about that. But it *was* funny when someone tried to blow a bubble with cauliflower—thus mimicking bubble gum, a food group that staffers despised just as much as Dungeons & Dragons and music videos. One evening, we were sitting in the cafeteria for dinner—which was almost always thoroughly disgusting there. Another captive of this corrupt organization announced he was going to blow a bubble with a piece of cooked cauliflower he had been served. The cauliflower was roughly spherical and about the size of a golf ball. He grabbed the cauliflower and put the stem of it in his mouth, leaving the rest of it hanging out. He tilted his head back and acted as if he was inflating the cauliflower.



He also grabbed one of those tiny paper cups—like the kind used for ketchup in fast food restaurants—and attempted to inflate it as if it was a bub.

Staffers promptly had a meltdown to end all meltdowns.

One of the staffers—a different grim-looking woman from before—harangued the teenager and sat there scowling at him for the rest of the meal. Other staffers also carried on like the bombastic whiners they were. Some people have no sense of humor.

## No pride in pity

I think it's hilarious that people expected me to be proud of my school.

I learned very early in life that if I wanted something done, I had to do it myself. I don't always rely on collective action, and I think a reason for this is that it seemed like every kid in the neighborhood at the time went to a different school, so I wasn't exposed to the same community of

peers in every setting. Ever since then, I didn't want to be defined by the school I attended. This was especially true when I was forced to deal with St. Joe's and Brossart – the twin towers of misery.

But this piece is about Guardian Angel – and the 20 to 25 students it had. It usually wasn't as bad as the later schools, and anyone could have gone there, but once again, the school didn't make the man.

Let me tell you about my 1<sup>st</sup> grade gym teacher. He was a stern guy. He was also the main teacher for some of the older kids. One morning, I walked into school, and I could hear him upstairs bawling out his class. I couldn't hear what he was saying, but it was as uproarious as you might imagine.

The real comedy took place near the end of the school year. The entire student body was called into a classroom for an angry lecture by one of the nuns about the restrooms getting trashed. I don't think this was the time someone pooped on the toilet seat. It was mostly about the usual incidents, like people peeing all over the toilet paper.

The gym teacher chimed in with his own insight about all the peeing. "That's not what I call pride," he admonished.

Pride? You think I gave a shit about being proud of my school?

There were good arguments not to pee on the toilet paper. It was wasteful and unsanitary. But nobody cared that it hurt the school's pride. Students cared about practicality, not feelings.

The teacher's appeal to pride failed, and toilet paper got peed on for years to come.

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