

# *The Last Word*<sup>TM</sup>

Issue #609

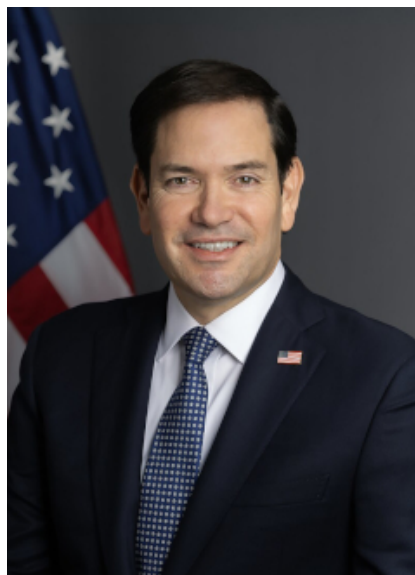
June 2025

## **This is fascism**

This is fascism...



See that? That's fascism.  
This is also fascism...



But we digress.

It was a beautiful day in the neighborhood last week when we discovered something strange. Some aspects of our projects lately have focused on Flock Safety cameras, culminating in the exposé in our May issue of a plan in Bellevue to install this unconstitutional dragnet that would ensnare innocents. But less than 3 weeks after that article, the city not only barreled ahead with this right-wing plan—with no public input—but posted a Flock cam right outside my window in retaliation for them being exposed.

The first photo above features a Flock camera. It's posted high on the lamppost.

Someone on Facebook suggested that I hold up signs in front of the camera about *real* illegal activity in the area, including license plates. That may seem like a good reason to bring "Carwatch!" out of the old beige file folder. But nothing was done about those crimes back then. One of the key goals of society's expanding surveillance and prosecutorial complex is to oppress the innocent and molycoddle the guilty.

A few days later, I made a sign saying "THIS IS FASCISM" and stuck it on the post for the spy cam...



The sign managed to survive a major rainstorm. It lasted a few more days after that before some Nazi ripped it down.

There is no mistaking this: Some of the most powerful people in society are evil. The societal carnage they've initiated over the years has been colossal. They are not merely foolish or misguided. They are evil to the very core. And, as they make excuses for injustices that take place locally and around the world, people don't learn a damn thing. Maybe that's because things got bad enough a long time ago that nobody has any more room left to take in any more information about how much worse it's gotten.

So—once again—there's no accountability.

But if you thought things weren't bad even before the right-wing Flock fascism, you have no excuse for not processing what's going on now. Or you just have a small brain.

## A carnival atmosphere

This is the time of year for existing.

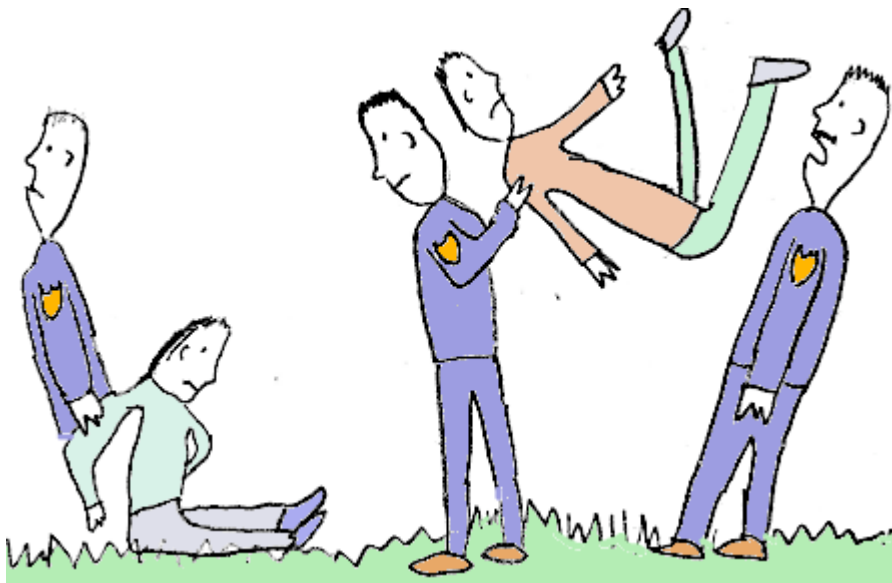
Every so often, there's some sort of carnival in the parking lot of Bellevue Plaza, but people always seem less and less impressed by it. During a recent appearance of this event, folks went on Facebook to demand the return of a different gathering: the Bellevue Vets Carnival, a much more interesting event that made its last appearance many years ago.

Let's open the oldies-but-goodies vault for a fond memory of the Bellevue Vets Carnival. It was 2006. During the 3 days of that event, I saw several celebrity look-alikes, including Florence Henderson, Shadoe Stevens, and Donny Most. The Donny and Florence dopplegangers had also been seen at previous Bellevue Vets Carnivals. But the carnival hit paydirt on Saturday, August 12, when I saw a good old-fashioned fight!

Unfortunately, I only got to see the tail end of this brawl among unruly teens. I don't know what prompted it. I remember some sort of festival where kids kept arguing and knocking popsicles out of each other's hands, but this wasn't it. Similarly, a fan of this zine submitted a story for a 1998 issue about a company picnic where some kid deliberately knocked another's popsicle into a trash can. The victim of this attack fished the popsicle out of the garbage and ate it. Someone also threw poop at a car that belonged to the contributor's dad: "dad spend next day washing car. dad mad! he a mad dad! dad funny when mad though." But that picnic was a different event from the popsicle incident I remember.

Anyway, back to Bellevue Vets in 2006. This carnival always had security on hand. I remember one security guy in particular who was always there. He was a thickset, middle-aged man with short red hair, glasses with round frames, and no chin. I don't know if police were always there too, but on that Saturday in 2006, the carnival opted to deploy the long arm of the law.

I saw several—maybe 2 or 3—patrolmen dragging away the disorderly youths. The teens then fought the cops with all their might.



I wish I had easier access to more geographically distant events, but I've had a decades-long struggle with the far right that has slammed the lid on this. You built that, media. It didn't have to be this way, but right-wing elites had goofy ideas that were their bread and butter.

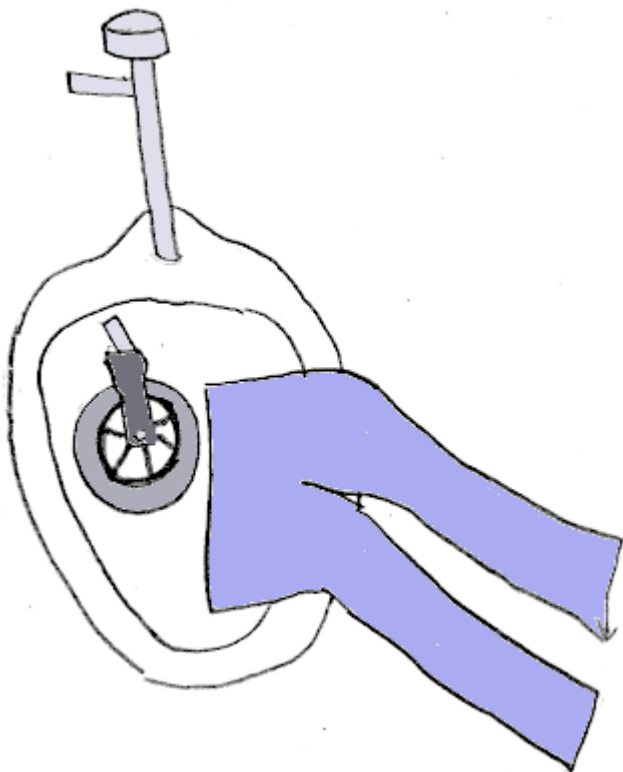
Everybody wants to rule the world.

## **Santa Monica ploppings flush away thousands**

Toilets. They're funny.

Let's talk about something toilety that happened recently in Santa Monica, California. Santa Monica is one of these cities that pretends to be really liberal, even though rural Iowa is actually more forward-thinking than Santa Monica is. Santa Monica's wokewashing has given rise to ploppings, so let's sit down and relax for a while.

The city has had to spend thousands of simoleons to repeatedly unclog a toilet in a beachfront restroom that keeps experiencing ploppings. The ploppings were discovered by young people who were



members of local surf teams and swim clubs.

Each incident costs \$1,500 to \$2,500 to fix. The toll for April alone was over \$10,000. The city said there were “severe main line clogs.”

Locals reportedly saw someone putting stroller wheels and old clothing in the toilet. One nearby resident says it’s just one person responsible for all of it. But there’s been a lot of finger-pointing. After all, it’s Santa Monica, and it’s the media, so that’s 2 strikes against the official narrative right there.

Meanwhile, over in New York, someone keeps pouring cement in toilets at Columbia University. That’s the end of those toilets! The school released a statement saying this “will not be tolerated at Columbia.” But it didn’t include the phrases “at the end of the day” or “like it or not.”

## Spinning some more ruined record stories

What are some things that can get ruined all up?

Let’s talk about electronics. TV sets? Radios? Stereos?

We’re getting warmer!

Let’s talk about the many ways that people have stupidly destructed records and record players. These stories were found on the public Internet, and they were just itching to be told here. You may recall the story of a young’un who threw a brand new Close ‘n Play record player down the steps the day he got it because he couldn’t find batteries. It’s probably good that he destroyed this player. A YouTube commenter said they had a Close ‘n Play too: “Don’t know how many records were scratched with it.” These comments are typical of the Close ‘n Play. It’s like the Domino Rally in that it gets mostly poor reviews. But some Close ‘n Play models reportedly had the advantage that if you put in the batteries backwards, the platter would spin in reverse—so you could play your records backwards.

Not long ago, new online discussions appeared about wrecking your records. One was titled “What’s the dumbest way you’ve ruined a record or record player.” The magic word! The writer of that post said he tried spinning a record on his finger—like a basketball—as he was walking down stairs. That didn’t end well. Somebody replied saying their young cousin broke their record player by trying to scratch on it the way club DJ’s do. Somebody else said they once got in an argument with their brother, who then threw a hammer at their Elvis Presley record (which somehow they still had decades later).

One person said they ruined an Ultravox record back in 1981 by leaving it in a hot car. After that, they were dancing with tears in their eyes! (Forgot about that one, didn’t you?) A few years later, a precocious tiny tot similarly ruined a Billy Joel album. Another commenter left a batch of records in the trunk of their car for 8 years. Another said they got drunk at a party and placed a lit candle on a spinning turntable. Another said their roommate destroyed the belt in their turntable by getting stoned and constantly switching between 33 and 45 RPM. Another said a record was scratched beyond hope when their dog sat on it. Another said their cat jumped onto a Genesis album as it was playing.

Another commenter accidentally bent the tonearm of a brand new \$200 turntable. Another demolished their stepdad’s record player by trying to play a CD with it. Still another threw up on a record. Another tried to wash records in a dishwasher. Another made a warped record much worse by putting it in an oven to try to fix it. One commenter got glue all over a record while trying to repair the sleeve. Another dropped a brand new record onto a plant and got potting soil all over it.

One commenter said they found a rare record at a market. But it was reduced to detritus when they put it on the roof of their car and drove away. Another said his wife dropped a phone on a turntable when it was playing and broke a record in half. Another said a college roommate used a lit candle to try to read the label of a record in a darkened room, and hot candle wax dripped all over the record as it was spinning (like Lemuel Cabarrus dribbling snot onto the pancakes).

Someone ordered a rare record through the mail, but somebody at the post office apparently drove a thumbtack through the record.

In another recent exchange, someone said they came home from work to find that their





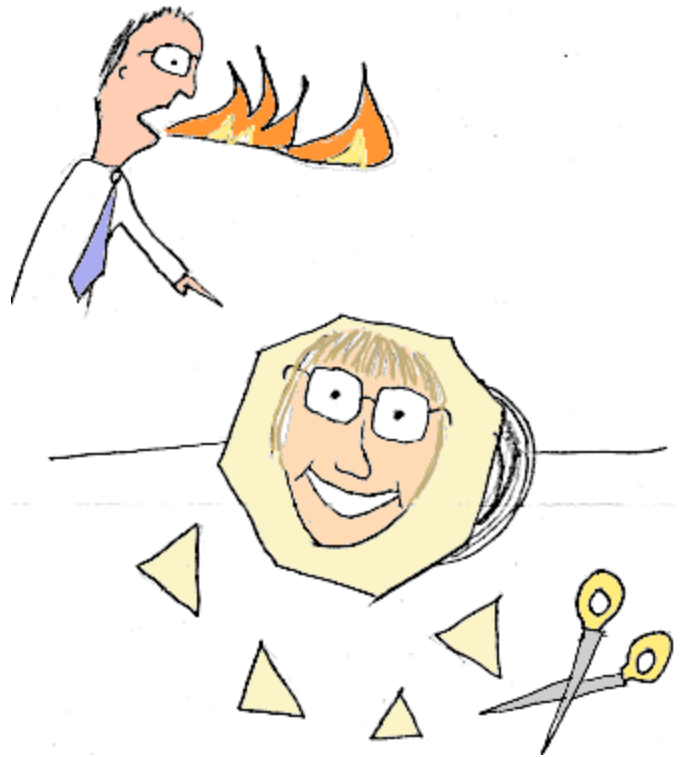
roommate's 2-year-old had put the needle on the bare platter of their record player and let it spin for hours (like what happened in 7<sup>th</sup> grade music class, except the record player there spun for a whole weekend).

Another Genesis record also got ruined by a cat. There must have been lots of cats running around at WCLU in the mid-'80s. Another person ran over an Elvis Costello 45 with an office chair. A person went on vacation in Spain and purchased a rare record there, but then it was stolen from their checked luggage. Another commenter said a rare Marcy Playground album was melted clean through by a light bulb in a defective lamp. Another wore out their 45 of "Convoy" by C.W. McCall by falling asleep and letting their automatic turntable run for hours as it played the record over and over. Another said they ordered a rare mint-condition record through the mail and accidentally demolished it while opening the package with a box cutter.

One guy said he ruined his parents' Johnny Rivers album by sliding around on it when he was a toddler. Odds are he won't live to see tomorrow! One person said they took some covers of albums that belonged to their dad and cut them down to a stop sign shape—for no apparent reason. Dad was mad! Another commenter melted a record onto the burner of a stove. The melted record was stuck there for months. One person said their dad got drunk and tried to clean all his records with furniture polish. One said that when she was about 7, she tried carving her initials into her brother's Kiss album with a pocketknife. Another ruined a bunch of 45's by replacing a broken stylus with a sewing needle. One said their teenage cousins used a Monkees album as an ashtray. Somebody said they loaned a Todd Rundgren album to a friend, who somehow got honey all over it.

### Stores aren't safe either

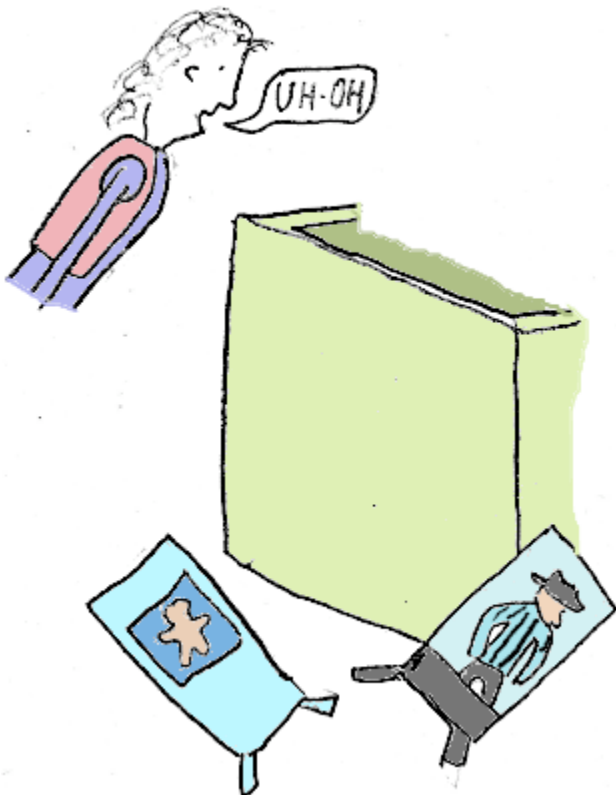
I once heard that teenagers in my neighborhood who wanted to buy an album at Kmart would often opt for the cassette instead of the vinyl LP. They did this so that when they were walking home from the store, they



could hide the cassette from hooligans who might take offense at their choice of music and lay waste to their purchase. But concealing tapes became impossible when Kmart began stocking them in the environmentally wasteful, oversized white plastic casings that we all know and hate. The casings supposedly made it easier to fit into racks that were built for old 78 RPM records. It's absurd that this store was using the casings, because it wasn't even built until 30 years after 78's become obsolete.

I also heard of several acquaintances shoplifting cassettes from that Kmart. An online commenter who worked at a Sam Goody music store said the casings made it too easy to steal tapes. They said they kept finding empty, mutilated casings in the store. Sam Goody didn't learn its lesson and began using similar cases for CD's. Other folks say they brang wire cutters to Walmart just to open the casings and steal tapes. Someone said they worked at a Target, and people would burn the casings so they could take the tapes.

When stores started selling CD's in cardboard longboxes—which were also wasteful—shoplifters would cut a slit in these boxes and take the CD out. Employees found their stores littered with empty



longboxes.

Time can take its toll on records. But spinning records on your finger or dripping candle wax on them takes a bigger toll.

## We're staring pie-eyed at this ridiculous story

It seems we live in an era in which people need detailed instructions on how to smash pies in each other's faces.

This story comes to us from Eastern Washington University. I burst out laughing because the school has an entire page in the "Risk, Compliance & Procurement" section of its website titled "Pie in the Face Risk Guidelines." It lists detailed *rules* governing pieings on campus.

It reads, "EWU Risk Management is aware that many organizations host fundraisers and other events that include pieing individuals in the face. We understand the comedy and fun these events bring our students; however, proper precautions must be in place in order to ensure the safety of participants. Below are a set of guidelines that must be met in order for Risk Management to approve events that include pieing in the face." There are 8 "guidelines" listed.

These rules detail the pie's ingredients, plates, cleanup, and more. The funniest rule: "You may not throw the pie in someone's face. Instead, you must gently place the pie in their face." Another funny clause warns, "If pie substance is found on floors, walls, furniture, concrete, benches, signs, or other areas on the site, you will be charged by Facilities Services for additional clean-up."

I'm sure Soupy Sales and the cast of *The Electric Company* didn't worry about stuff like this.

Society has become a bunch of babies. Universities especially.



## Doing what they do worst!

This isn't the first article we've had with this title. We used it in 2019 for a piece about how American Airlines stranded a plane full of passengers in Miami and threatened to call the police if they filmed the resulting chaos. The woman who threatened to call the cops displayed the rising tone and finger spinning typical of narcissists.

Guess what? We've come across more American Airlines assfifery. A recent online exchange started off with the revelation that someone at the airline stole \$700 worth of clothes from a flier's checked luggage. The passenger's name tag that had been securely fastened to the suitcase had been removed too.

Somebody replied saying an airline employee stole about \$1,200 in unspecified items from their luggage. They were lucky they noticed it before they left the airport, so they could report it right away. The airline lost one customer's bag and said that items worth over \$100 needed the original store receipt to be reimbursed. Yet nobody keeps receipts after they can no longer take items back to the store. Another commenter said American Airlines "kept everyone's luggage hostage" for hours in Philadelphia and wouldn't tell them when they'd be able to claim it.

One person said 3 rings were stolen in a different incident. One was an irreplaceable family heirloom. The airline paid all of \$100 for the thefts. Another said the airline completely refused to pay for a valuable ring. Another said Disney stuffed animals and other souvenirs were stolen from their little sister on an Orlando trip. The airline insisted it wasn't their fault and refused to cover the losses. Another flier lost a hair dryer to theft.

One commenter said the airline stole thousands of dollars in clothing and electronics during a Los Angeles trip. After being told repeatedly that the luggage would appear on the next flight, this passenger spent every day of their 2-week vacation going back to the airport to see if it turned up. Two months later, after an attorney intervened, the luggage magically reappeared but the most valuable items were missing.

It's not just luggage. One customer said an airline employee stole their car too and went joyriding in it. He was finally caught after stealing other passengers' cars.

And it isn't just airlines. The TSA did a "random inspection" of a bag in Philly, broke the zipper, and stole several items. A 2006 report revealed that harmless items that the TSA confiscated under color of law were given to a Pennsylvania firm that in turn sold them for profit on eBay. This included sex toys. Some unfortunate buyer on eBay was getting used sex toys that had been seized from airline travelers! It also included items like a plaque from a fishing contest that couldn't possibly be used as a weapon.

They could have instead just poopified things by writing "The pee and the poo!" on everyone's suitcases.

## Food, folks, and fascism

When I saw a headline saying that a McDonald's location now requires customers to be at least 21, I *knew* it was going to be in Fairfax County, Virginia—which has become America's big fascist stronghold of late. Bush did win the county, after all.

There are good arguments against the Electoral College, but this is one in favor. Do you really want the growing right-wing fascism of the big urban areas to decide our elections?

Let this sink in. You now need to be 21 to go to a *McDonald's*, of all places.

Those who laughed when I said that "America is fast becoming a police state" are looking awfully silly now.

What prompted this expanding totalitarianism? Observers say teenagers had been vandalizing restrooms, starting fights, standing on tables, and speaking some naughty words. In other words, the same things kids were doing at the now-defunct Highland Heights location 40 years ago.

Strange. I don't remember anyone in my day demanding that McDonald's kick out every teenager just because of a few bad apples in the community. That simply wasn't done in those days. Back then, this was still America.

Whose idea was it to ban kids from McDonald's? An official statement from the restaurant said this rule "was developed in partnership with local school officials."

Oh.

Imagine that! The Fairfax County school system—a district whose reputation has been so thoroughly pulverized by its own incompetence that it's become the target of criticism all over the country—wrote a school rule banning anyone under 21 from a McDonald's that is not on school property, which applies even to those who are not students there. That's like if Cline Middle School banned me from a younger cousin's birthday party at McDonald's, which took place when I was no longer a student at Cline. (That's the party where I stuck tape on a light bulb and it melted onto a table where another customer was eating.)

We have grounds to say that Fairfax County school officials are such control freaks that if you look up *control freak* in the dictionary, it has their picture. Through their past actions, they've already forfeited the privilege of us presuming otherwise. A self-ordained ADHD "expert" who didn't live in Kentucky *insisted* that he *knew* that Kentucky schools didn't prescribe Ritalin—even though they did—and we have as much right to be as presumptive about other states' schools as he did. (This golden oldie from 2016 that was maliciously swept under the rug by the right-wing media shows that ADHD drugs like Ritalin cause heart disease: <https://www.nursingtimes.net/research-and-innovation/adhd-drugs-linked-to-risk-of-heart-rhythm-problems-01-06-2016>. Don't read the rest of this zine until you read that article.) The perfect embodiment of Fairfax County schools' toilet-minded, right-wing attitudes took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, when it was a showcase of COVID authoritarianism. The school district actually sued the state of Virginia because the state wouldn't let schools force children to wear masks. The district even defied the state's order outright. That was before Virginia rightly passed *new* bipartisan legislation against school mask mandates. This was a "This time we mean it" law, as Fairfax County schools openly disobeyed the previous order. (This law's biggest advocate in the legislature was a Democrat, but the party stupidly refused to renominate him after that.) Long after mask enforcement finally ended, the school district still refused to expunge disciplinary sanctions from the permanent records of students found to be violating its mask mandate.





This will still be on their records when they apply for college, if they haven't yet.

Forced masking of schoolchildren is abuse—period—and it's antithetical to education. We don't tolerate it.

But it's become the official religion of Fairfax County. Yep, leave it to a Bush county. And leave it to a county awash in COVID hysteria to ban kids from fast food restaurants—which elsewhere are open to unaccompanied teenagers without any barriers.

Why do elites hate America?

## Another idea that should be thrown in the trash

For the past couple years, some Bellevue residents have complained that their trash hasn't been picked up on time. Sometimes it went months without being picked up. It was revealed that the city's trash collection contract had expired and that the city didn't bother to renew it.

Now the city is entering into a new waste management contract with a different company. There's been some optimism that the problems will finally be fixed, but—once again—we think we're in for another gargantuan disappointment. That's because the city wants residents to pay for 14 dumpsters that large businesses use—instead of requiring the businesses to pay for them themselves. This will reportedly add \$20 per month to everybody else's taxes. This is a regressive tax.

You know how when some gentrification mogul buys a building and tries turning it into their dream business and lets an overflowing dumpster sit on the property for months to attract mice? That's what we're all going to be paying for. It's as if we haven't already paid enough cleaning up the messes it creates. That's in addition to the tax breaks these businesses already get—which we also pay for.

Welcome to the 2020s, the decade of the biggest upward wealth transfer in history.

## A fart happened and a teacher gasped

I remember one day when a nice, loud fart got released at school. Wow! Imagine that!

This was at the dreaded Bishop Brossart High School. One afternoon, a teacher for one of my classes was absent. So another teacher filled in. She was a very old woman, and I was never in any of her usual classes.

Anyway, an LAP bunker blast occurred right in the middle of class when it was perfectly quiet. When I say this trouser sneeze was loud, I mean it was *loud*!

And the teacher gasped in horror! It was as uproarious as you might envision!

Despite the thunderous roar, nobody seemed to know who the culprit was.

For a long time after, everyone talked about the hilarious time the teacher gasped.

## Just sit right back and you'll hear a fail...

The Democrats probably aren't going to run a Tim Walz/Andy Beshear ticket in 2028. It's not because of the taint of failure. Their failures actually make it *more* likely that the party will run them.

Here's the real reason they probably won't run them...



Hahahahaha!



## We dance all night doin' the Curly shuffle...

This is another new term we've come up with: *Curly shuffle*.

A Curly shuffle is an instance of diarrhea that's so bad that no amount of toilet paper can suffice in the aftermath. So you climb into the shower to get cleaned up.

We call it that because the song "The Curly Shuffle" (a tribute to the Three Stooges) was recorded by the Jump 'n the Saddle Band. "Jump in the shower" → Jump 'n the Saddle → Curly shuffle.

I'm reminded of the old *Saturday Night Live* skits where Tim Kazurinsky listed diseases with funny names.

We never shit our pants...We get up and dance and do the Curly shuffle!

## Traffic cones, chainsaws, and Fun Snaps, oh my!

Because this is a day ending in *y*, we must do another rapid-fire rundown of things people got in trouble for at school. The backlog is thick, the boogs are bubbling, and you're gonna read 'em and peep!

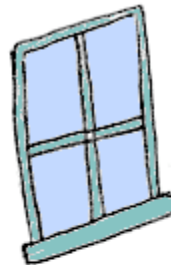
One online commenter said he and his pals stole all the traffic cones from the athletic field for gym class and ran around using them as megaphones. He didn't get paddled, but a student at another school said he did—just for talking in class. That student happened to have a pack of crackers in the back pocket of his Jams (apparently, this was during those 3 seconds in 1986 when Jams were popular), and cracker crumbs flew everywhere when he was paddled. The principal was "mortified."

One student was almost expelled for "system tampering" because half the computers in the computer lab were broken and this student took a working keyboard from a broken computer and plugged it into a working computer that had a broken keyboard. A high school freshman brang a small chainsaw to school for an engine repair class. It leaked gasoline in the student's locker, which caused the school to be locked down until they could figure out what the smell was. A university student who lived in an 8<sup>th</sup> floor dorm got in trouble for throwing Fun Snaps out the window.

A student at one school was banned from all football games and extracurricular activities for the rest of the year for having a seizure after a game, which "traumatized the students." An elementary school held an emergency assembly with the entire student body because someone knocked a few flakes of paint off a neighbor's fence next to the ballfield. One commenter said they got in trouble in 1<sup>st</sup> grade for having 5 Pokémon cards in their backpack, and the teacher confiscated them.

A commenter said a friend went on a trip abroad with her music program, and she got in trouble at a restaurant for throwing a piece of pineapple through a window onto classmates' pizza. The music teacher yelled that she was a "disgrace to America!" A 4<sup>th</sup> grader got detention for wearing a t-shirt with the name of the Thai city of Phuket, because the principal obviously didn't know how to pronounce it. A high school teacher cried because a student sat in her chair and said it was the worst thing anyone did in her 30 years of teaching. At another school—a *public* school, no less—a teacher accused a student of "spreading intolerance" for doing a report on evolution.

An 8<sup>th</sup> grade honors student got in-school suspension for blowing up a hand sanitizer bottle with dry ice—after her teacher encouraged it. A student at another school got busted after leaving history class to use the restroom and spending a half-hour in the lavatory throwing wet paper towels at the ceiling. In the early years of the TRS-80, a 7<sup>th</sup> grader was threatened with expulsion and jail for "breaking" a computer by setting it so you could only type 2 characters per line. It only took 10 seconds to fix, but the resulting suspension prompted the student's dad to hire a lawyer. (Back then, people used to sue schools over things like this.)



A student had a teacher who was obsessed with lotion and spent hours talking about it. So this student purchased some trick lotion and gave it to the teacher. The lotion turned the teacher purple. Another commenter said that when they were in elementary school, they got in trouble because some other kids threw rocks at the teacher's car. Another got suspended for failing to tattle on somebody who threw inflated condoms into a classroom. The real offenders only got detention.

A pupil got suspended for bringing a car magazine to school. The school said it was "porn" because it had models posing on the hoods of cars. Another got detention for writing a book report in crayon. Another hung metal trash cans from the door to the boys' restroom so that whenever anyone opened the door the cans would crash to the floor and make noise. A high school freshman was expelled for having a butter knife in their lunchbox to use for lunch. They never went back to school and had to get a GED.

A sibling duo got expelled from a Catholic school because they wrote things like "penis" in a Mad Libs book. They threw away the book afterward, but they were caught when a teacher fished it out of the trash.

A 5<sup>th</sup> grader kept ketchup packets from lunch and was accused of "stealing" them. The school even notified police: "Never seen mom laugh so hard." An 8<sup>th</sup> grader was required to miss most of field day after some other kid dumped a whole cooler of water on them. The victim of this tomfoolery was accused of wasting water. A college student was accused of plagiarizing an assignment, even though all it consisted of was "hello world."

Another collegier used to sleep overnight in a school library instead of their dorm. This student was caught hiding bottles of whiskey above a ceiling panel in the library. This student also ruined the carpet in a dorm by using bleach that they stole from a supply closet to clean a filthy mattress pad. At an elementary school, a 2<sup>nd</sup> grader got in trouble for bringing in a toy E.T. finger that lit up, as the teacher thought it was a sex toy. Some people are weird.

A racist vice-principal falsely accused a student of being in a gang, because they wore a plain white t-shirt. The student was forced to change into a dirty DARE shirt and suspended. One other time, the student donned a skateboarding helmet as they were preparing to skateboard home from school. A teacher confiscated the helmet because hats weren't allowed at school, and the student was forced to skateboard home without a helmet.

A 4<sup>th</sup> grader was accused of bringing cigars to school, but actually they were breadsticks. A 5<sup>th</sup> grade student in 1979 got in trouble for singing "Conjunction Junction" from *Schoolhouse Rock!* when the teacher started talking about conjunctions. That's like the time when I was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade when the teacher said, "Take it away!" and someone started singing the Paul McCartney song and the teacher got mad. Another commenter said that when they were in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, a teacher said something about "concentration", and the student said "constipation." Big trouble ensued. A student at another school got in trouble for building a bonfire in a locker room and for breaking a fence on a field trip to a nature reserve by sitting on it. A group of high school juniors got lunch detention for a whole month because they thought pepper spray was perfume and sprayed it everywhere.

The Alexander books it is not.

## The gulf between Google and reality

They gobble. They gug. They're Google.

A few years ago, Google launched a counterrevolution that hid search results by independent bloggers and websites and promoted "approved" news stories that were reprinted in countless "mainstream" newspapers. This is an antitrust violation that has cost bloggers their livelihoods.

But, if you're one of these MAGA conservatives, don't get ahead of us here. Don't cite this as an example of some "liberal" plot at Google. For one thing, nobody 10 years ago would have recognized this as "liberal." For another, Google sponsored the far-right Conservative Political Action Conference on several occasions. The company donated at least \$20,000 to the 2012 event. That was just a couple years after Google demonetized The Online Lunchpail for being too liberal. And now, Google is full-bore Trump.

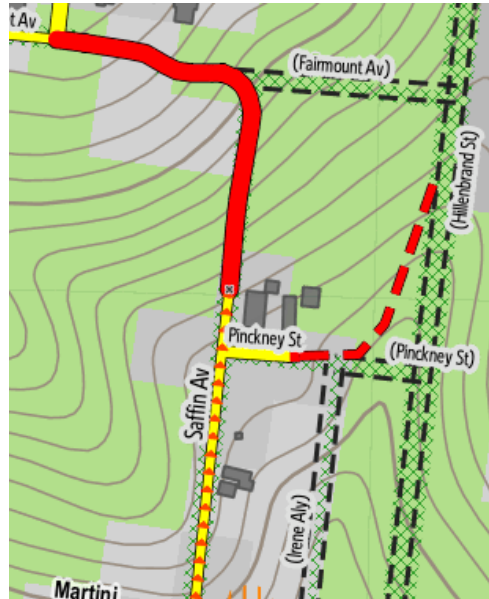
Google Maps should be renamed to Google Craps. That's because it participated in Donald Trump's illegal directive to rename the Gulf of Mexico to "Gulf of America." The presidential order is null for several reasons. One is that a vast majority of the gulf is outside U.S. territory. Another is that changes to names of public geographic features have to go through a more detailed process *and* be

recognized by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names.

In short, Google kowtowed to Trump's unhinged political nonsense by labeling the gulf with the name that he tried to assign to it.

This discovery unnerved some Google Maps users to such a degree that they actually suffered heart palpitations and other physical reactions. If Google bows to Trump's bullshit on something like this, where does it stop?

Recent Democratic administrations have also been guilty of not following the proper process for geographic name changes. They were perhaps more ham-handed, and their top-down methods were yet another reason to blow bubbles in your beer. But at least it involved features that weren't as well-known.



One of the reasons we like working with maps—like the one shown above—is that they can show the beauty of a world not yet devoured by the corporate empire. You can lose yourself in joy in those woods shaded in green. Look at those outlines of streets from a bygone era and think of the history. What Google Maps did would be like if Newt Gingrich went on *The View* and declared that the streets on this map were now called Ronald Reagan Saffin Avenue, Ronald Reagan Fairmount Avenue, and Ronald Reagan Pinckney Street, and that future versions of QGIS were legally obligated to insert “Ronald Reagan” before all road names when exporting a map.

## When teachers mention bubble gum

Every time you see gum at a store or in a TV commercial, you laugh. It's even funnier when it's of a bubble busting variety.

I had a couple teachers who I only heard mention bubble gum once. They never chewed the stuff, and they mentioned gum at other times, but there was only one time when they uttered the phrase *bubble gum*.

I was used to schools having *rules* against gumming. But my 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher didn't seem to notice or care if kids chewed gum in class. They even bubbled! Our class was divided into reading circles. Each group would occasionally gather in a circle while the rest of the class studied. One day, I had to read aloud from a book or worksheet during my reading circle, and I thought the word *simile* was *smile*. It went something like this: “A figure of speech in which one thing is compared to another is called a *smile*.”

One other time, one of the other reading circles was gathered, and one of the stories they read was about a club called Bubble Gum Rapper. When the teacher spoke the name of this organization, I snickered.

In 8<sup>th</sup> grade, a tiny, elite cadre of students got to produce a small newsletter about recent events they participated in. The only article I remember was about how they went on a class trip to the courthouse and got to see arraignments of criminal defendants. I made a parody of this newsletter. My homeroom teacher found it and read it to the class. My parody mentioned bubble gum somewhere—

causing the teacher to utter the magic phrase.

He once skeeped at a student because he had earlier chewed gum during indoor recess, but the phrase *bubble gum* was not heard.

Sometime later, the teacher announced he was taking my parody newsletter "hostage" and confiscated it. I never saw it again.

That was around the same time some kids in the other 8<sup>th</sup> grade class got in a big fight and knocked over and broke some prized statuettes that belonged to the teacher for that class.

## Map! Map! Mappy Cicada Pizza ew! Tea delivery!



I just found a folder full of maps of local neighborhoods on my hard drive I haven't touched in a decade. This endeavor has been taken over by my current mapping project, but what's of interest here is that most of these maps were accompanied by their own HTML file that I apparently used to have on my website. I had forgotten about these HTML's completely, but some of the tidbits they offered are still relevant.

The HTML for Arlington Heights mentions that the town had some of the highest per capita revenues from traffic fines in the area because it was grazed by I-75, and that several city employees had been indicted for allegedly stealing from municipal coffers. Similarly, the file for Bromley mentioned that a local officeholder was once accused of stealing gasoline from the big Boron tanks there. The file for the Cincinnati neighborhood of California said 5 people had been reportedly banned for life from Coney Island: "We'd love to know the details!"

Readers also learned that Crescent Springs was menaced by gentrification in the 2000s when a mobile home park was replaced by an upscale shopping center that received a tax handout. It was said that East Walnut Hills "seems to have pioneered the loldumb idea of trying to privatize public rights-of-way", as some streets were signed as private even though they were public. It was noted that while 3CDC claimed it would "preserve historic structures" in Over-the-Rhine, it instead demolished them. I also mentioned that a 1977 news photo showed a group of angry Taylor Mill residents scowling to stave off annexation by Covington.

This special project also featured maps that estimated how present the Tea Party was in local communities. I included these maps "so you can learn not to burn" at the grimy hands of the Tea Party. (The Tea Party sure sank like a boulder after the Koch network supported COVID lockdowns, didn't it? Fascist is as fascist does.)

Another reason we create maps is that it happens to be one of our strong suits. We taught ourselves this skill from scratch. As Paul Carrack would say: "It ain't written in the statute books...It can't be learned in school..." (Forgot about that lost hit, didn't you?) Actually, it *can* be learned in school, if only our schools would teach it. Instead, they tried teaching us novels that had pages missing and boogers wiped all over them, and kept taking us to "retoolings" that I was thoroughly uninterested in. They also marginalized students who were interested in practical skills instead of what schools taught.

Don't put up with crap. Instead, draw a map!