

# **AWARE ONES OF THE TREASURE COAST**

## **BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER**

"We are Progressive Humanists  
We are the Soul of the Coffee House  
We are Love and Laughter"

Vol.1, No.4  
November 2016

### In this issue:

<b>SECTION</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Introduction	2
Member List	3
Meetings & Events	3
Member News	4
Commentary	4
The Way We Were	7
Articles	13
Letters	17
Poetry	18
Comedic Corner	20

-- Produced by the TC Secular Writers --

# INTRODUCTION

Ed Zillioux

We made it! Our fourth and final issue for 2016 of the Aware Ones of the Treasure Coast (AOTC) Newsletter! This started as an outlet for members of the TC Secular Writers (TCSW) to shed their life's blood, but all AOTC members are strongly encouraged to contribute. A big THANK YOU for all who have made these first four issues possible.

Our Sunday Coffee is in a state of flux. Our regular Stuart Coffee House is undergoing renovation and has prompted soul searching with regard to the best venue for our expanding membership. Return of our snowbirds has added to the urgency for a solution. Stuart Coffee House is not out of the running, but it seems that sufficient space for our gang may be a determining factor. Last Sunday we gave Importico's Bakery a try with mixed reviews: better outside than inside because of sound effects. I've checked out one of my favorite spots, the Osceola Café, but they are just too busy without a proper space for us. So it'll be Importico's again for this Sunday, but let's discuss other potential options.

Talk about our own web page also continues, but not much action yet.

AOTC members have survived Hurricane Mathew with more inconvenience than serious damage. One month to go before getting through the traditional "Hurricane Season," but with global warming upon us, we may have to extend that definition.

Along with our first chilly mornings, it's the season to welcome back our Snowbirds. We've missed you all ('cause we love you). And it really is chilly! With the first cold morning all my rabbits have disappeared, gone down those rabbit holes I guess!

Looking forward to our first 2017 newsletter. Look for it the first of January, or thereabouts. And write!

## MEMBER LIST

This section is password protected. Access limited to AOTC members only.

---

## MEETINGS & EVENTS

### Meetings

Sunday Coffee – Every Sunday, Location TBD, 10 a.m.

TC Secular Writers – Every other Thursday, Jensen's House of Brews, 6:30 p.m.; November 3, 17; December 1, 15, and 29.

### Events

The biggest pot luck of the year: THANKSGIVING!

Portions of this section are password protected. Complete access limited to AOTC members only.

---

## MEMBER NEWS

This section is password protected. Access limited to AOTC members only.

---

## COMMENTARY

"The time has come," the Walrus said, "To talk of many things..."

### Laissez Les Bon Temps Rouler

Bert Mautz

A classmate in grad school, supported by a gerontology fellowship was conducting his dissertation research on residential-care facilities for the elderly experiencing dementia. His big conclusion, the thesis of his thesis, a design recommendation, was to include a fenced outdoor area, to protect these tragically disoriented from walking off. Within the fenced yard, for passive suggestion, a walking path, assuming the residents would take the

hint and walk the loop, benefiting from the fresh air, the exercise. There but for the grace of random happenstance go we, walking that path in circles, but can't remember why.

Dr Ezekiel Emmanuel wrote, in the *Atlantic* a while back, loosely quoted, "I want to die at 75.... After that it's all down-hill. 74, it's a matter of luck, morbidity projections, all good luck, enjoy it."

"But here is a simple truth that many of us seem to resist: living too long is also a loss. It renders many of us, if not disabled, then faltering and declining, a state that may not be worse than death but is nonetheless deprived. It robs us of our creativity and ability to contribute to work, society, the world. It transforms how people experience us, relate to us, and, most importantly, remember us. We are no longer remembered as vibrant and engaged but as feeble, ineffectual, even pathetic."

Eileen Crimmins, a researcher at the University of Southern California, who assessed physical functioning in adults, concludes: "There was an increase in the life expectancy with disease and a decrease in the years without disease. The same is true for functioning loss, an increase in expected years unable to function."

When did you sense you were aging? Put another way, when did the inexorable advances of maturation/deterioration begin to be a negative, slowing you down, eliminating activities taken for granted a decade previously? Are the maturation changes you are experiencing, negative, a downer, or are there compensating positives associated with aging, say discretionary time, due to retirement, making new activities or interests possible?

Do you think about what makes you happy; a premium sleeping pillow, Hagen Daz coffee ice cream, take out sushi, a night you sleep through, Netflix, or big things like overseas travel, the full size pick-up with chrome wheels? And then are you proactive in availing yourself of those things that bring you pleasure? Conversely, how is your pain/inconveniences/aggravation avoidance working out? Can you say "No," to requests you would really just as soon avoid?

Where/how do economic realities limit or enable availing yourself of pleasure? Are you creative in budgeting your pleasure resources?

Are psychological skeletons in the psyche, inhibiting you focusing on individual pleasure, guilty pleasures? Is hedonism a bad thing, too selfish, influenced by our depression era parents? Ought to be giving, caring for the less fortunate?

How does socializing provide pleasure? Spouse, or romantic friendship sufficient social contact? Do you make friends easily, do club memberships,

church on Sunday, a bar scene provide accessible social contact? We're told there are happy loners, but difficult to imagine as we are inherently social beasts. Friendships and taking the time to enjoy them are priceless. Lest there be any question, this writer argues for pleasure, pleasure above all. We are each responsible for our own happiness.

---

## Sentimental Attachment: Post Game Seven

(Never easy being a cub fan....)

Bert Mautz

Being a fan of those "Lovable Losers," wasn't really all that awful. The Wrigley Field game experience on a warm summer afternoon was a party with a baseball game going on. The "bleacher." seats above the remarkable ivy covered outfield wall epitomized the good time party vibe. Harry Carey, a bigger than life baseball radio personality would lead the seventh inning stretch singing of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame." Dare we believe a near religious, a shared experience, singing a loved anthem together. Concluded by his cry into the microphone, "Let's get some runs!"

Warm sunshine, a dripping cold cup of beer, laughing with friends, bright green grass, and oh, by the way a baseball game, does it get any better? Just possibly enjoying the ebb and flow of nine innings of baseball without the unnecessary drama of divisional/league rankings, or the expanding statistical minutia of competing All Stars. No worry, enjoy the ball game going on in front of you, right now. Winning is fun, surely, but losing today's game won't ruin your afternoon at the ballpark, so joyous was a sunny afternoon in Wrigley.

Wrigleyville exists, ney thrives in an urban residential neighborhood. There is no long walk in from seeming square miles of paved parking. Take the L to Wrigley Field on the near north side of Chicago and stroll over one block to the ball park. For our twenty years in metro Chicago we lived a mere block from the end of the line, Linden Station. Inner city life is convenient. It's about your personal time, a fundamental criteria of your quality of life. The Cubs are accessible.

For the 2016 Season the Chicago Cubs amassed the best record led by most total wins. 2015 was a good year with Joe Maddon's taking the helm,

but no league championship appearance, but a tease, an inkling of what the young hitters and seasoned pitchers were capable of. Meanwhile the Ricketts family of immense wealth set about renewing Wrigley. It was all coming together. Theo Epstein, of the twice World Champion Boston Red Sox was assembling a championship level team. Those three names are forever to be Chicago legends.

The question: Are those good ol' days gone, gone forever, as now our team of Loveable Losers, the new sign above the Wrigley Field entrance proclaims "World Series Champions," are contenders, leaving us to worry, to obsess on rankings, batting averages, and ERA's?

"Hey Chicago, Whadaya say, The Cubs are gonna win today!"

---

## THE WAY WE WERE

### My First Time

Ed Zillioux

I had a tough time growing up with a lot to overcome. I sometimes wondered about my parents. Somehow they didn't seem to fit together. But I guess I figured they were just typical parents. Mother prayed all the time and Dad prayed with her as sort of an obedient response to keep peace in the family. Mother would have liked to go to Mass every day; Dad figured out how early he could skip out of Sunday Mass and still be able to claim to have attended the definitive part – the consecration I think it's called. Oh, did I tell you we were Catholic?

As far as I was concerned, Dad relinquished most of the parenting responsibilities to Mother. As a young boy, this was a near disaster. I didn't know that at the time, but then I didn't know anything at the time. The problem was that there was no one during my critical formative years who ever told me anything about life. And particularly nothing about girls. Consequently for a long time I had a fear of girls that was almost pathological. Between my pre-teen years on into my mid-teens I worked my

way out of this but it was a long and often arduous trip before I finally emerged as a functional social person. This is the story of that trip.

Dad seemed to have three lives. There was his life with Mother, his life with his work, both his gainful employment and his home shop where he actually was most of the time when he was "with" Mother, and his piano playing. I grew up at a time when every household had a piano. All my relatives had pianos. And they all gave family parties. And Dad provided the music and encouraged all to sing along. He was always the "life of the party," to quote Mother's often repeated remark. Dad had a legitimate claim to his musical ability, even though it was more mechanical than inspired – but I didn't know that at the time. When he was a boy, my grandparents recognized his natural ability and enrolled him into piano studies at the Munson Williams Proctor Institute in Utica, New York shortly after it was founded in 1919. Upon completing his studies a few years later he found a perfect venue in the speakeasies of the era for his playing skills as well as his lusting for loose ladies. Of course when I came along that was all behind him since the 21st Amendment ended prohibition in 1933, but it sets the stage.

I often wondered what brought my parents together. There are rumors, but this is not the time to go there or we would never get to the main subject of my story.

My mother's grand design for her three children was that I would be the priest, my sister Barbara would be the nun and my oldest sister Mary would provide the grandchildren. She almost succeeded with Barbara who entered the convent at the age of 13 and didn't escape until just shy of her final vows. She then proceeded to preempt Mary's assigned role and began delivering grandchildren. Mary couldn't care less – with Mother's focus on the future priest and nun, Mary was cut loose and quickly adopted the lusting ways of her Father. There's a rumor about this too, but we're not going there either.

Yet Dad was a good provider and instilled in me a love for working with my hands. He was a good teacher that way; everything else he figured I would learn from the other boys at school. It didn't always work that way. For example, it was only through my own diligent research that I discovered girls didn't have penises. Dad didn't get it. He was the youngest of five brothers so he didn't see or even recognize there was a problem. I remember earlier that I was never even allowed to see an infant being given a bath. Such was the fear that I might ask a question that Mother was not prepared to answer.

One of the things Dad provided for us was our family camp. He built it himself on a piece of property he purchased on Oneida Lake. It was an idyllic spot, quiet, peaceful, and isolated. Nearly devoid of any hope of my finding friends. I did have one occasional friend, however. I met him at the comic



book exchange that a man set up at his home about a half mile from our camp. Mark and I were both 10 years old but he was far more worldly than I was. I only saw him a couple times a week, but we carried on a friendship despite the fact that Mother always seemed suspicious of him.

Over the next four years, Mother and I spent every summer at the camp. Dad stayed at home since he had to work and only came to camp on weekends. Barbara was in the convent and Mary either stayed at home with Dad or with the parents of her future husband, whom she married when I was thirteen. Family often descended on us over the weekends for a cheap holiday. But Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday Thursday, and most of Friday, it was just Mother and the future priest with no car and no telephone.

By now I'm sure you get the picture. When I was fourteen things began to change. Explosively. The year before I went through a transition; I had finally shaken off the whole notion of a life in the "calling." The Maryknoll missionaries kept sending me their recruitment propaganda, reluctant to let go of a live prospect. So I started writing "not at this address" across their envelope and redeposited them into the post when Mother wasn't looking. Then I changed the message to "deceased," and it worked.

I started to notice girls along about the same time, but I was too shy to get any relationship going. But then a few girls began to approach me. This totally confused me and I had no idea how I should respond. I did respond physically, however, but that just confused me more.

And then came Agnes. Agnes was more like a member of our extended family. Read "safe." She was the youngest daughter of Mother's unmarried sister's best friend, or partner, and they were commonly a part of family gatherings such as weddings and reunions. We played together as kids and our first "date" was when I asked her to go to a movie with me. We were both 13 at the time and I was super conscious that I was actually going out with a girl. In the movie I wanted to put my arm around her like I saw other boys do with their dates, but the most I could manage was to stretch my arm across the back of her theater chair. I got up a couple of times to get popcorn and drinks from the concession stand feeling good about spending my own money on Aggie. I had no idea what was playing in the movie and could only think about how I should act on my first actual date. And then I blew it. I reached down and put my hand on her knee which was immediately and decisively knocked away. I thought I had lost Aggie forever.

For some time after what I thought was my failed encounter with Aggie, I started hanging out with my cousin Keith who lived in the city and of course was much more knowledgeable about everything than I was. The city was Utica, New York, a town with a colorful history as an important terminal on the Erie Canal. I lived in the small town of Clinton, about seven miles West of Utica. I was sometimes allowed to stay overnight with my cousins on

weekends, whose parents were much more permissive than my parents about letting us stay out late and even occasionally, like on New Year's Eve, allowed to pull an all-nighter (as long as we showed up at midnight mass). I learned a lot during this period. We typically began an evening at a local billiard parlor playing rotation for a couple of hours. On other occasions Keith and a friend of his set me up with a couple of blind dates. I still remember their names. One girl recently moved there from Texas with the unbelievable name of Texina Wood. Another was a much softer girl named Deloris Alessandrini who lived in the suburb of Herkimer just East of the city. We didn't do much other than hang out in various haunts and hamburger joints in the city, but I gradually got more comfortable talking and just being with girls in an informal setting.

About this time, the plastics firm where Dad worked as a tool maker moved to a new location East of Syracuse, and they wanted him to stay with them so provided support for us to make the move. For me it was the chance to really come out of my shell. We bought a house just three miles outside of Cazenovia, a beautiful little village that hugged the eastern shore of Cazenovia Lake, also known by its native-American name of Owahgena, or Lake of the Yellow Perch. There was a pier and yacht club and an extensive park that encompassed the lake's outlet, Chittenango Creek. A large old boat house occupied the juncture of the creek and lake. It had an exterior balcony overlooking the lake that was soon to figure significantly into my story. Sailboat races were held frequently from late spring through fall dominated by Lightning and Comet class sloop-rigged dinghies. All of this was close to Cazenovia Central School where I enrolled at the beginning of my sophomore year.

I had maintained my friendship with Aggie and had gotten over the embarrassment of our first "date." I had jokingly asked her if she would like me to take her to a movie again and she responded with a giggle, "Well, I don't know, have you improved your technique?" So when my new school held a dance shortly after I had moved there, and before I had a chance to get to know any of the Cazenovia girls, I asked Aggie if she would go with me. She surprised me by quickly accepting even before we worked out the logistics that needed to be arranged with my parents, given that we now lived much further apart, and at 15 years old we were not yet in control of our own transport.

It all fell together much easier than I expected. Aggie was picked up the day before the scheduled dance and was given one of the two extra bedrooms – the one without an interconnecting door with mine. This extended family thing had its limits. Dad was to drive us to the school on the following day with the understanding that I would call to arrange our return pickup shortly before midnight. Dad figured since the dance ended at eleven we would have a little together time before we were to be picked up. When

the time came to leave home, Aggie and I jumped into the back seat with Aggie making a remark about having our own Chauffeur and that Dad should have worn a proper Chauffeur's cap. Dad, of course, loved the banter. Aggie's hand immediately found mine and I knew it was going to be a good night. As it turned out, we were to have a lot more together time than Dad had surmised.

The dance started out okay. It was held in the gymnasium with bleachers collapsed against opposing walls. The band, heavy with saxophones across the entire front row and situated under the home team basket, began playing the popular dance music of the day. All the kids, who had only recently met me, the new kid, were great in welcoming Aggie. But after the initial flurry of questions about where she lived and how we met, there wasn't a lot of common ground for conversation. So, after the first hour passed at about eight o'clock I summoned up courage to ask Aggie if she would like to take a walk down by the lake. The moon was full in a clear sky and I told her it would be beautiful. I really didn't need to convince her, she said, "Sure, let's go." I stopped to grab a couple of heavy towels from the gym locker room, "To protect your dress from getting dirty from the benches," I told her and she looked at me and grinned.

We were there in just a few minutes, and soon I was leading her up the outer stairway to the balcony of the old boathouse. I had told her the view would be gorgeous from up there with the moonlight shimmering across the lake and it did not disappoint us. I spread the towels on the wide bench that ran along the outside wall and we sat down. When I put my arm around her and asked if I might kiss her she giggled and said, "I hoped you didn't take me up here just to look at the lake!"

I said hoarsely, "What lake?" and we were quickly locked in a passionate embrace that was totally beyond my experience and yet seemed as natural as breathing. Our hands began exploring, caressing, probing. Somehow the front of her dress became unbuttoned and my hand was tracing the curvature of her bra.

And then suddenly her breast was in my hand and I thought that I had never felt anything so beautiful in my life. I stammered, "Your n-n-nipple is so hard. I didn't know...."

"Silly," she said, "That's because of you." And I surged with a throbbing I had never known, and I took her hand and invited her to me.

We were both breathing hard when she said, "Ed...I-I have never done this."

"Me neither," I squeaked (even my voice betrayed me).

We were now feverishly undressing each other, then "Wait!" Aggie said holding me still with both shaking hands, "What if I got pregnant? I can't get pregnant!" She was on the verge of tears.

"Don't worry, I've got a rubber." I pulled it from the back of my wallet where it had lived for about a year. The packaging was all frayed and coming apart but the condom appeared in serviceable condition. Aggie relaxed a bit and smiled...and then she screamed! **And she screamed!** She must have been heard all the way back at school! "What the hell???" I yelled and spun around looking for the cause of her fear. And then I saw them. Bats! A whole swarm of bats flying right through the length of our balcony! Even though they never hit us, I, trying to hold my pants up with one hand and flailing about with my other arm, to beat them away, to protect my Aggie, oh please, please go away! I sobbed.

It was too late. Aggie was frantically snatching up clothes, convinced they were coming back even after the main swarm disappeared but with one or two still flitting about, and I could do nothing but hastily pick up the remaining detritus of our passion and help her to flee the most perfect moonlit tryst of just a moment before.

After descending the steps from the boathouse balcony, I put my arm around a still-shaking Aggie and walked slowly out of the shadows to a bench along the lighted pier.

We sat there for a long time just holding hands.

Aggie broke the silence: "Do you love me?"

"I don't know," I replied. "I don't know what love is."

"I don't love you. But I like you a whole lot. 'Specially after tonight."

I looked into her eyes for a long moment, then whispered, "Darn bats."

We dissolved into laughter, we laughed until tears were running down our faces and we hugged long and hard and then it was over. We sat quietly again, until finally I had to say, "We better walk back to the school and call my parents so they won't be going crazy."

"I know it's time" Aggie said, "but I wish it wasn't."

---

That night, as interrupted as it was, marked a turning point in my life, an awakening, a door opening. Aggie and I saw little of each other after that. There was the distance issue of course, but I soon got caught up in the social activities at my new school, including my new friends and soon, too, a new girlfriend. When I did see Aggie at family gatherings that were ever

more rare, we would talk and exchange news of lives that no longer included each other. But I never forgot and every now and then over the next year or so, I would walk down to the lake on a moonlit evening, maybe climb up to the balcony of an old boathouse and just sit for a while with a smile on my face. Maybe it was love.

---

## ARTICLES

### Empathy and Sympathy

Dan Vignau

The last few years, I have wondered why I have no empathy. Recently I told a friend in a wheelchair I had no empathy for him, this despite his worsening condition. We are all dying, so what does it matter?

What kind of a person could feel this way? My symptoms on the ADHD/Autism spectrum are certainly above average, but I have survived many challenges with this condition. Asperger Syndrome comes to mind and I certainly have had inappropriate and limited social interactions, but living alone is probably the worst real consequence of this. My eye contact level when speaking is far worse than average. Conversations tend to be one-sided, at least until a friend mentions it. My obsession with certain topics certainly fits into this framework. There is no doubt that my repetitive fidgeting is noticed by others. Close friends even mimic my hand movements to tease me.

But what about my lack of empathy? Am I confusing sympathy with empathy? I am certainly sympathetic to the woes of others, but I do lack any real feelings about their situations.

I recently read that Asperger Syndrome is commonly misdiagnosed as ADHD.

To me, they seem to be the same thing, but psychologists now feel that the real difference is a person's lack of ability to interact and socialize rather than to pay attention. My lack of being able to see things from others' points of view, as well as not noticing when others either quit listening or are uncomfortable with a topic are certainly symptoms related to Asperger syndrome, but not paying attention while the conversations roar in my head is more akin to ADHD..

Nearly every day, I miss the intent behind another person's behavior, at least until much too late to act on it.

Still,, I was relatively successful in a field for which I was terribly ill-suited, sales.

Maybe that is why I was eventually stuck in a back office to work the internet and do finance. I simply don't empathize with other people's issues.

However, I don't have some symptoms, such as an inability to keep from crying or expressing inappropriate emotions. In fact, I am fairly emotionless, although somewhat self-medicated

As this thesis swirls around in my head, there are many situations which come to mind where I haven't noticed my lack of picking up on non-verbal cues until a few moments later when I ignorantly point out that I do understand, usually accompanied by my friends' looks of astounded disbelief.

Many people have wondered about me, with some actually mentioning that I see things too late, usually after everyone else has either moved on, or increased their attempts to get me to understand what is happening in certain situations, but I still do these things.

An awareness of my insecurities and social indiscretions helps, but just how aware am I?

I do know a lot about The Sociology of Mental Illness, but nearly a decade of study accounts for these insights. Besides, I never liked labels. A label is merely something to live up to... or down to.

Human behavior has many variations that can be considered within the normal range, or at least within a functional range of acceptable idiosyncrasies. Learning to ride motorcycles well enough to beat up on lesser riders was a big step in my social development, but tennis was my real passion.

Grad school, not so much. I got by, but really did not enjoy it that much, except for the rare occasions I was able to present my research to others. Sports Car Club of America Solo II autocross was good for me, as

was Sea Doo racing, but these activities were really for my surrogate son, Steve. I did enjoy competing, but I mostly did this for his social development and personal growth.

The problem I had was that there was always someone, many people in fact, who excelled more than I did, at psychology, sociology, racing, writing, tennis, and especially in human interaction.

I actually thought I might make a career of playing age 35 and over tennis. It never occurred to me that I would have to play Rod Laver and John Newcomb.

I should call myself Mediocre Man, but I am well above average at many things, especially things that really don't matter.

What kind of a vocational counselor has no empathy for his clients? What kind of friend can't put himself in some one else's shoes? Who would really agree with a schizophrenic who says the world would be better of without him.

Why do I have to even out the finger fidgets with both hands, both in number and symmetry?

I call myself an Aware One, but am I? How could I be? I have no empathy.

Yet, I am aware!

With all my lack of interactive skills, at least I have sympathy, if not empathy. If I don't emphasize with the problems of others or always express myself somewhat coherently, at least I understand the plight of others... eventually.

I can't visualize myself in another person's situation, but I can understand and still try to help people in situations that are less than ideal.

For decades, I have said that this is the difference between the Republican and Democratic platforms:

When politicians who screw us out of our rightful place in society, the difference is in they way they feel: Republicans gloat in their often undeserved successes, while the Democrats reap the same rewards, but still act as if they have empathy for the less fortunate. But do they? Are they merely sympathetic rather than empathetic?

No one really knows what it is like to be stopped for Driving While Black except for black people. I have an idea, because as a youth, that is until about three years ago, I had issues with being stopped by the police.

The last time I could have had a DUI, and it would have been even worse if I had been caught racing a replica Cobra at over 150 mph 15 minutes earlier.

Growing up, I worried about being beat up by the police, but never once thought I might be shot for nothing, except when I worked Summers in Alabama, but even there I was still white and had some white privilege.

There have been others in our group on the Autism/Asperger spectrum. Yes that is plural.

Everyone must sometimes feel inappropriate. There is a story about Tony Curtis at Mar-a-Lago. He was so nervous that he might do something socially awkward, he squeezed his very expensive wine glass until it broke. His hostess, Emily Merriweather-Post saw his discomfort and broke her own wine glass to show it could happen to anyone.

I really appreciate being allowed to participate with this group, despite my flaws.

When I was at FAU, a parent of mine sent my GRE scores to Mensa, so that I might have some adult friends. Despite my grad school endeavors at the time, I was still hanging out with high schoolers, mostly stoner tennis players who either lived at the school where my parents lived, or were the stoner members of my college tennis team.

I was never able to relate to people my age or older. At least I quit feeling stupid. I knew I was a better person than Mensans who bragged about their IQ's and nothing else. What an idiotic reason to meet!

Tennis changed all or that for me. All ages of players became friends with each other, yet I was rarely invited to anyone's house more than once. I was just plain weird. If you think I am bad now, imagine me with a only a football school education and the social skills of engineers in a mountain community.

The Aware Ones is actually my first group of friends anywhere near my age. I know I am a nerdly guy with a lack of adequate social skills, yet you put up with me, despite my plethora of issues.

Thanks again.

Besides, I can't keep up with the kids anymore. I am too old and feeble. Otherwise, I would be playing tennis with cute guys, and going to concerts with someone, and who knows what.

Maybe we get feeble to keep from embarrassing ourselves, or worse.

I'll quit now before I continue to do any more damage to my image.



Anonymous. (AS IF!)

---

## LETTERS

### **Revealing Attitudes of Washington, Franklin, Paine About Religion**

Letter to the editor, TC Palm News  
(Published August 2013)  
Dan Vignau, Stuart

Kevin Levengood's July 25 letter (criticizing Bob Haskins' July 10 letter promoting the total separation of church and state) asks that all religions be given proportionate representation at government meetings, with preference to the dominant religion, now Christianity.

Levengood states that the United States was founded by Christians. Consider these facts from the Freedom from Religion Foundation:

George Washington rarely attended church, always stepping outside for a smoke during communion. He was criticized by his minister for not praying, at which time he ceased going at all.

Washington never once mentioned Jesus Christ in his writings, and said that religion is useful to help the masses with morality.

Benjamin Franklin said, "I think vital religion has always suffered when orthodoxy is more regarded than virtue."

Thomas Paine, whose writings greatly influenced the founders, wrote, "(Religiosity) supports itself by keeping people in delusion and ignorance."

John Adams wrote, "I almost shudder at the thought of alluding to the most fatal example of the abuses of grief which the history of mankind has preserved — the Cross."

Finally, Thomas Jefferson, who cut out the many sections of the Bible he thought to be wrong, wrote, "In every country and every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty. He is always in alliance with the despot (He has) perverted religion into mystery and jargon, unintelligible to all mankind safer for their purpose."

Get the point? Our nation was not founded by Christians. Don't pray while conducting government business, and don't allow prayer in our schools. In return, we atheists promise not to interrupt your constitutionally guaranteed rights to pray to whatever (holy) ghosts in the sky you worship. Don't pray in our schools or government-funded places, and we will not think in your churches.

---

## POETRY

### RELIEF

By Gloria Cosgrove

A single speechless blade of grass  
after the hurricane has passed.

---

### A Poem for Today

By Marilyn Graton

Alas the air is cold and wet,  
And yet...

We must stay here,  
No cause to cheer,

New Jersey in fall,  
Not fun at all.

---

## THORNS AND PRIMROSES

By Dan Vignau

No greater love of life has any man,  
So I will NOT go quietly!

ALL RIGHT!

I will NOT be be-psalmed. Nor Flower bedecked, nor bones embalmed.

It is MY blood. It sang Secret songs Heard only by those who can hear  
Mermaids in Seashells,

And think the sun is Sensuous.

Who watched for a pulse at the base of my throat?  
My Thorns? My Primroses?

I guess I won't be cremated. Though, it might be fun to go

POOF!

or to be fertilizer for a rose.

Though I tended primroses all my life, they grew on steep and thorny ways,  
They did judge me sane, BUT idiosyncratic as HELL!

Let them buy me a new suit. They need comforting,

And I love them enough to know their six or so sing secret songs.

The others will forget that the suit must be split up the back.

But Let me keep my blood.

Let it Rot me, Clot me, for it Begot me.

With symphonies heard only by those who will not be be-psalmed.

---

## COMEDIC CORNER

### Two Old Ladies and a Hurricane

Ed Zillioux

Woke up Friday morning and called my sisters at about 10 am. Each lives alone and are 3 and 4 years older than me, respectively. Barbara lives in one of those super wide & fancy manufactured homes, i.e., a trailer. So she evacuated and stayed with our other vainglorious sister, Mary, across town. This is in Ormond Beach near to the flood plain of the Halifax River, but a very sturdy house at the end of a cul-de-sac, of course. Barbara answered the phone. I asked, "Well, did you survive Mathew?"

"It's too early. It hasn't reached us yet. We don't expect it for another two hours."

I thought it must have really slowed down since I went to bed at 3 am, when it was already passing Vero. I said, "Did you get your shutters put up?"

"No, Mary didn't think it was necessary. We lost power here. Mary has a generator out in the garage but doesn't know how to start it."

"Do you have a battery radio?"

"Yes, but Mary couldn't find the right station."

"Let me talk to Mary."

"She's still sleeping."

Of course, I thought. It's a familiar scenario that doesn't require any imagination on my part. Mary had her first scotch about 5 pm or earlier Thursday evening ("It's always 5 o'clock somewhere,") and followed that in grand hurricane party mode until wobbling into bed. Barbara doubtless stayed up most or all of the night praying her rosary. I said, "I'll call you later."

After having breakfast, Ivy and I returned to watching channel 5 on the TV. Mathew was already devastating St Augustine and Jacksonville

was in frantic preparation mode. My beloved St. Augustine was underwater everywhere that was shown. After crossing Cape Canaveral, Mathew was now piling up water on its western flank and the meteorologist was predicting major flooding when it merged into and pushed up the St. Johns River in Jacksonville.

At 2:30 pm I called Barbara again. "Hello," she responded. Her voice was so weak I hardly heard her and feared for their condition. (She was actually just exhausted; all that praying is very tiring, you know.)

"Are you all right? Did you get much damage?"

"Oh, the hurricane hasn't got here yet."

"Barbara! It's battering St. Augustine now! It's already passed you!"

"It has? Oh thank God!"

"Yes, and it was probably already past you when I called the first time."

"Oh. Thank God!"

I told her, "St. Augustine is underwater."

She said, "But it's still blowing hard here, will we be flooded?"

I said, "Barbara, open your front door. If you don't see any standing water, you'll be Ok. You're just catching the lower bands of the hurricane winds."

"Oh, thank God."

"Barbara, It's time to think about all the people north of you that are *really* getting battered."

"Yes, I'll put them in my prayers." I thought, 'St. Augustine, you are saved!'

"Can I talk to Mary?"

"She's still sleeping."

"Get some rest. I'll call later and check on you."

I hung up and related all their travails to Ivy. We both practically rolled on the floor in laughter.

I didn't set my alarm Friday night, or Saturday morning when I finally got to bed. When we woke it was already past 11 am. After we got up, walked the dogs, and finished with breakfast, I called Barbara back to get a post-mortem.

"Good morning, did your home survive?"

"Yes, I heard it was Ok. I haven't seen it because we can't get out, a big tree fell across our driveway. Mary's grandsons are out there cutting it up. You were lucky to reach me, my cell phone is almost dead. We still don't have any electric and the charger in the car doesn't work."

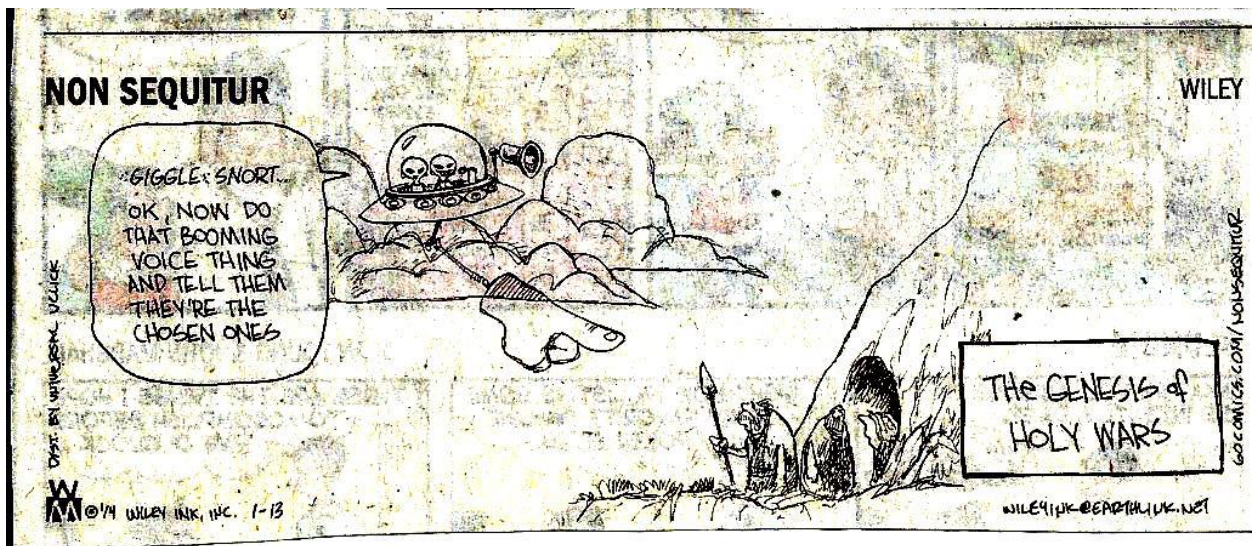
"Well, you'll be out of there soon and you can get back home."

"Oh no, I can see down the street and there's big trees down all along it."

"Just be happy to be safe with Mary. I'll hang up so you can save what time is left on you cell phone. Doesn't Mary have a cell phone?"

"Yes, but it doesn't work."

I said good-by and hung up. I didn't ask if I could talk to Mary.



Contributed by Ed Zillioux



Contributed by Dan Vignau





Contributed by Ed Zillioux