

# **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"

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-- Produced by the TC Secular Writers --

# INTRODUCTION

Ed Zillioux

And thus begins the third year of our independent newsletter. It's a bit late again but I will strive to get subsequent issues out more punctually. But not too late to wish all our members and friends a very happy and prosperous New Year!

As everyone in the world knows, we are now in the throws of a government shutdown. So what's new? Absolutely nothing. I worked for the federal government for 13 years including my stint in the Navy, but not counting 5 more years working on grant research from the EPA, National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, and NSF's International Decade of Ocean Exploration. In all of that time there was one thing that seemed to be a constant: the threat and, not uncommonly, the reality of, a government budgetary shutdown. Most of the time the shutdowns proved to be brief, like just two or three days and hardly bothered those working in government research. One I remember, in which we were actually furloughed, came while I was working for the EPA during the Regan Administration. Ann Gorsuch was the Regan appointee at that time to head the EPA, or, rather, to dismantle the EPA. If the name sounds familiar, look no further than Trump's appointment to the Supreme Court; Neil Gorsuch is her son who, apparently, did not fall far from the tree. But our furlough lasted only a few days and I can't remember that there was any serious fallout. Year after year it was the same thing. Everyone fretted about the specter of losing our funding, but mostly it was just about politicians posturing for political gain. Same ol' same ol'. I predict it will not be very different this time, causing some minor inconvenience in getting checks out that many people depend on, but likely only a few days late. The major issues, like DACA, will probably be saved, either now or a bit later, because the political price of their demise would be too great for even the Republicans to swallow. As soon as both sides can somehow claim a win it'll be all over.

And so we struggle through our Florida winter. I don't care, I have a closet full of warm coats that I seem to have collected on every winter business trip I ever made after misjudging how cold it was going to be. Besides, I have plenty of wood for the few times I will actually have to stoke up my fireplace. Take heart, Spring is coming!

## AOTC MEMBERS & FRIENDS

### Members

Joan Auerbach  
Marsha Banks  
Rick Burkhart  
Sandra Burkhart  
Paul Carlos  
Gloria Cosgrove  
Barbara Lange  
Jim Longo  
Bert Mautz  
Charlie Thompson  
Marilynn Thompson  
Dan Vignau  
Ed Zillioux

### Friends

Amar Almasude  
Joanna Almasude  
Marilyn Graton  
Stretch Graton  
Bob Haskins  
Roberta Synal  
Virgil Thorp

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## MEETINGS & EVENTS

### Meetings

Sunday Coffee – Every Sunday, Importico's Bakery, Stuart, 10 a.m.ish  
outside when weather is tolerable, i.e., no snow.

TC Secular Writers – Every other Thursday, Jensen's House of Brews, 6:30 pm; January 11 & 25; February 8 & 22.

## Events

### Monthly Potlucks

#### January

Bert and Joan will host a potluck on Saturday, January 27, at 633 channel ave, stuart (s. shore of frazier creek).  
Wine pourings begin at five, dinner at six.

#### February

Ed Z will host the February potluck on Wednesday, Feb 21, at 4411 Sunrise Blvd, White City (directly across from the intersection with Wetherbee Rd, ½ mile North of Midway Rd). Gather at 4 pm for starters, dinner at 5. See the unveiling of The Bather statue (Allegrain's Venus) and help Ed celebrate his B'day!

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## MEMBER NEWS

Sandra got the flu and gave it to Rick. They, of course, refused the 10% effective vaccine. On the up side, she reports: "But we have the best possible caregivers looking after us. They notify us of mealtimes (theirs and, oh yes, ours), when to refill water containers (theirs and, oh yes, ours) and to get vertical every few hours to let them out. What more could one ask?!"



Poor Sandra, poor Rick, poor doggies

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Ed (that's me) has been busy, with the arrival of a pretty, though very cold 300-pound lady, developing a suitable place for her in his front yard (that's the side away from the creek). Not to be outdone, the creek also has a new resident: a 65-inch tall metallic pink flamingo.

You can see all these wonderous things and more if you attend the AO's February potluck (see above).

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Ed (me again) has finally foiled Irma and all her dastardly deeds with the help of his very own chain gang. That's three daughters, two stepsons, one son-in-law, one daughter-in-law, one granddaughter, and five chainsaws. The pile(s) of yard waste, growing ever greater since Irma passed in September has been ignored by the Waste Pro services that we all pay for automatically through our taxes. This despite four complaints registered with the county's Waste Pro contractor. Remember that scene in *Three Billboards* of the fire bombing of the police headquarters? Well, stay tuned. (Note below, the piles extend way past my driveway.)



Poor Ed

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## COMMENTARY

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

### Who Asks Whom to Go to the Movies?

Bert Mautz

Clearly a generational issue, back a few years, guys were expected to take the initiative when asking a gal to join them on a date. Guys asked gals to go to the prom, not the reverse, generally. Judging by a plethora of complaints and accusations, some guys can't get this right and presume and take advantage, when they ought to propose politely, stopping for a drink after work.

Pat her on the butt is another matter; the elder Bush, Al Franken are acknowledged butt cuppers. Franken apparently was unaware,

automatically taking such advantage, as posing for photos with her husband, right there, holding the camera. Standing in a group, she gets a shoulder hug from the boss. Is this friendly gesture always awful?

The power move, manipulative suggestion, while centuries old behavior, is always inappropriate, and at last, subject to public awareness and behavior changes. The Harvey Weinstein repertoire of seducements are understood to be a pathology of, "I may be ugly, but I control your career," power moves.

For another time we must discuss the workplace wardrobe differences between genders, the a fore mentioned nondescript dark suit versus the provocative cocktail dress. They are saying "Don't look at my dress. My dress does not say yes." OK, but what does the dress say, and why do ladies insist on such professional attire? Favorite example being the ESPN Sport Center talent. So the corporate fellow is required to ignore the corporate lady's presentation of self?

The male and female humans are not the same. Their differences can delight, frustrate, procreate, and obfuscate. Will the human race ever figure this out? Why cannot the exploration be a fascination? The work place; factory floor, twenty-third floor, or surgical patients floor compel men and women to work together and better if harmoniously. Recently read the successful, surviving marriage being hard work, knowing how to fight, demanding continuous attention. Who can argue that?

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Enough!

Ed Zillioux

Getting tired of it – no, getting sick of it. Every time you turn on the TV, pick up your mail, open the internet, check your email, see your doctor(s) you run into it, hit in the face with it: explicit, condescending, smug instructions of how to turn your aging body, or worse, your brain, into something it once was, or something you wish it was or might have been. They go like this:

"Preventing Dementia and Mental Decline, just follow these 3 Daily Habits!"

"An unusual food actually shown to prevent memory loss and Dementia!"

"Extra Strength Brain Supplement for Focus, Energy, Memory & Clarity – containing an ingredient originally discovered in jellyfish!"

"Stop dementia! Info@BlahBlahBlah.com!"

Of course I'm aging (no I'm raging). I embrace my aging. How the fuck else am I gonna turn all my supposed intelligence into "WISDOM"??? What is wisdom anyway? I don't remember. Which is really inconvenient, especially because it seems you have to get old to have it then you can't revel in it if you can't remember what it is. However, I think it's when you get to the point where you sit seemingly stoic at family parties while everyone else and their endless noisy offspring run around playing games, laughing at every utterance and telling themselves they're having FUN. And then it hits you: Why am I here? How do I escape? That's it! That's wisdom!

I was at one of these recently. The food was passable, until they insisted that I try the deserts, "So you can tell Chrissy or Sammie or Gracie how good their creations are and how much you enjoy them." God awful! Pure sugar, all of them! It seems strange that as I age I become more tolerant of many things, like people with different views, different backgrounds, different joys, emotions, aversions, visions, while less tolerant of many products of human ingenuity. You know, the stuff we don't need, like artificial plants.

But the most offensive is artificial food or what passes for food. Like artificial sweeteners, artificial milk, artificial ingredients, so that foods can be labeled "reduced calorie" or "reduced sugar" or reduced anything the latest trends posit are bad for you, when it's really about what will produce more profits. I'm particularly intolerant of people who pounce on any new scientific finding of potential harm from human consumption of some food, typically a lifetime consumption, as an opportunity to be the first to come up with an alternative which is very likely more injurious than the natural product. After all, if you're really concerned that some food is bad for you, just don't eat it. You don't need it, and you certainly don't need to eat some artificial replacement



so you can pretend that you can still have the same gustatory experience.

But then, what really rattles this old mind is artificial behavior. You can argue that vanity is a natural human trait, but have you ever known anyone who is vainglorious? I have. Someone who is arrogant, overbearing, conceited, egotistic, solipsistic or pretentious? I have. Hell, I don't have to look any further than my own family.

I've known many people who take on the persona of others. Pretending to be something they are not. Now there's nothing wrong with altering your behavior to be more like someone you see as a role model. That can have a positive outcome, if it's honest and genuine and fully incorporated into your persona to make you a better person. With many shallow people, however, it's put-on behavior, a façade that just masks who they really are, spending all of their energies trying to impress others, instead of actually trying to become what they are only dishonestly projecting.

Politics are rife with artificial behavior. I do get some benefit from that, however, since it gives me something to rant about. Full disclosure here, I actually do love to hate some people. Tolerance goes just so far, and then it's: Get the hell out of my life! The world doesn't need you! There should be some allowed exceptions for murder! If today's brand of politics is good for anything, it's providing an outlet for venting, which is much better than going next door and killing your neighbor for once again piling his yard waste in front of your house.

Ok, so I have strayed from my original irritation over pseudo-scientific cures for dementia. But hey, the inability of keeping focused is itself a characteristic of dementia, so I'm right on target. It turns out that science is on my side, which doesn't say much for any hope I could have had to curtail my own.

Put simply, from a bunch of peer-reviewed and published studies, there is insufficient evidence for any one intervention making a whit of difference in the onset or progression of age-related dementia or memory loss. Sure, you can learn a skill associated with memory improvement, but it is applicable only to the specific skill involved in the training with no carry-over effects to over-all mental function. Nevertheless, authors of these studies all emphasize that a healthy life style including physical activity, combined with management of the entire set of risk factors, such as diabetes, obesity, smoking, high blood pressure, depression, LDL cholesterol

levels, taken over the course of a lifetime, would have positive benefits to brain health. Well duh, good luck with that; what is the average age of my readers? I would say the only sensible conclusion we can make is to not worry about any declining cognitive function and focus on what gives you pleasure.

Dylan said, "Do not go gentle into that good night... Rage, rage against the dying of the light." Go Dylan, go!

And, oh yes, if anyone knows how to program your computer to selectively block any emails with words like dementia, Alzheimer's, memory, cognition, hearing aids, neuropathy, macular degeneration, Parkinson's, Huntington's, Creutzfeldt-Jakob, or any words related to these, please come to see me.

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## My Button

Ed Zillioux

**"...my button is bigger than yours, and my button works!"**

Is this the Dr. Strangelove moment?

To paraphrase a quote from Herman Kahn, "Donald Trump does not have a war plan, he has a Wargasm!"

Are we at the mercy of a six-year-old?

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## Science Magazine Publishes a Biblical Rebuff

Ed Zillioux

Having long shown a reticence against directly confronting religiosity, the flagstaff publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science has finally stepped up to the plate in publishing a letter to the editor by Barry Wood, a professor at the University of Houston doing research in Historical Anthropology, Archaeology and Cultural Anthropology. The letter is titled: *Museum of the Bible: Questionable Science*.

Wood sums up his review as, "The archaeological Museum of the Bible, like the Creation Museum in Kentucky, is a Medieval throwback featuring spurious evidence in support of an invented narrative misread as historical fact."

In a more general vein he states, "There is no evidence for major Biblical events." He illustrates this by citing lack of any evidence for specific "events" contained in the bible, including: a community of Hebrews residing in Egypt for 400 years; 600,00 males, plus families, said to have fled under Moses supposedly wandering in Sinai for 40 years; locations of the birthplace and tomb of Jesus; and so on.

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## THE WAY WE WERE

### KUDZU: The Lifesaving Vine

Dan Vignau

Ahhh! It was a beautiful Sunday morning. Steve had the bikes polished and ready to go, and the gang would arrive anytime now. I decided to ride my 750 Interceptor, with its brand-new Michelin radials, the same tires that my 88 GSXR Slingshot had come with. They were not as sticky as my old 591 R Dunlap race tires, but radials were finally arriving on the bike scene. Brent arrived first, on my old 86 Gixxer 750, then Ron on his 86 1100. Both had replaced the original Dunlap radials with the normally biased 591 R's. Since Steve ran these tires

on his Hurricane 600, I knew how well they stick and how predictable they are when hot. The new Michelins were certainly better than the Dunlop radials, but whenever I rode the 88 Gixxer, I was not thrilled with how slippery they were.

Tim arrived next, with his new Michelins on his tariff-beating 700 Interceptor. He had the good exhaust, slip on twin Supertrapps with the center cap machined out. I had the worst exhaust, a 4 into one Yoshimura, like the great one I had on my, or now Brent's, Suzuki. How was I to know that the Honda V-Four would not work with this exhaust? Looking back, it is pretty obvious that the rear cylinders would have shorter pipes than the front, thus destroying any hope of high RPM horsepower, but it turned out that Yoshimura had really done something right with the exhaust after all. They made it breath just right in the midrange, where the V-Fours excelled. While the Suzukis were screaming up past 10 and 11000 rpm, I could simply pull out of the turns at a leisurely 5-8000 and gain a few bike lengths while they waited for their power to kick in.

The other advantage of the Interceptor was the 16-inch diameter front tire. While 17 inches had become the standard, the Suzukis used 18 inchers to counter the short wheelbase. Not only could I pull out of the turns with more authority, I could easily out brake them into the turns with my quicker steering. After all, I was the authority on that Suzuki, having wrestled it around on the mountain for the last year, until I sold it to Tim, who bought an Interceptor when he figured out the Suzuki did not work on the tight turns. Of course, Brent was 17 and a real racer, so he was a terror everywhere else, as I had been.

I got to know these guys because I had bought the Suzuki to return to Knoxville for a job at the Harley dealer. My ultimate goal was to complete my education, but that is a different, much duller story. The dealership was not selling any sport bikes, despite having Honda in the same showroom. Two years later, when I left to run the sales department for the competition, a Honda, Suzuki, and quite fatefully as it turned out, Sea Doo dealership, we had not only sold more sport bikes than any Honda dealer between Atlanta and Lexington, but we had taken on Yamaha and Ducati, as well. Still, I just really wanted to get away from the Harley's.

But this day was before that. In fact, I am going to tell you how I could have easily died twice, first on the Suzuki, then on the Honda.

Word had gotten out that a guy from Florida had moved to Knoxville, and that he had the latest Suzuki, but sold Hondas. The sport bike crowd all wondered just how bad assed a bike is the Suzuki if the Honda guy rides one.

They were after my butt but I knew what was in their mind, because I was not a Florida boy. I had graduated from both a local high school and college. I knew the routine: Let's take the flat lander to the mountains and show him how to ride. I had done it myself. In fact, I had once brought a total Floridian, had chosen the perfect spot to embarrass him but not kill him, then raced up to about a hundred or so, did the See-God-Then-Brake routine, and watched as he ran through the cow pasture. I even had time to grab the Nikon out of my tank bag and take a picture as he left the road.

Well, the challenge had arrived. A kid named Pete arrived on an identical bike to my Suzuki, with all the same hop-ups, full race exhaust, carb kit, ignition advance rotor, and three way adjustable Fox Shock, along with the solo seat cowl and headlight cover. I also had the Progressive brand racing front suspension rebuild, for which I would soon be very grateful. There were two differences in Pete's favor, very important ones, as it turned out.

We rode the back roads from my campus house to Loudon County, just past Concord, the area behind my alma mater, Farragut High School. It all looked very familiar. Oh, look, just around the bend was the mail box I slid my Dad's 327 Chevy into after our graduation party. Next, we came to the golf course, the one where I played until I discovered tennis. Three greens were carved into a hill. If you missed a green, your ball rolled into the creek below. The trick was not to hit a long drive, but to stop on the previous hill and aim for the clouds. But today, we were going to the Seven Hills area, just beyond the golf course.

Pete and I waited for the others to catch up at the stop by the 18<sup>th</sup> tee, just before the road where we were going to race. Peering down at the seemingly oily pavement, I asked Pete if the road looked really slippery to him. He grinned and said it was fine.

When the others arrived, I took the lead and severely out braked Pete into the big right hander, but his race tires and the fact that he weighed about 60 pounds less than me, allowed him to draw even out of the turn. He was not going to be out braked again. I waited as long as I could, then just felt that I had to really grab some lever.

Later, the other guys said my rear wheel was nearly a foot in the air. All I know was that I was sliding off the road held upright by a 2-square inch of rubber around 90 mph. As soon as the front tire hit the gravel, I would be a goner. Worse, there was about a six-foot drop to the rough of the golf course. And then there was the telephone pole. If I slid another foot, I would smash into it and certainly be dead, or wish such, so I whipped the bike straight up, jumped onto the course... Thank You 18-inch wheels and trick suspension... then aimed for a raised green. Pulling in the clutch lever and avoiding the brakes, I coasted at about 70 miles per hour toward people on the green.

But look. There was a space for me. If I did not crash into the side of the raised green, I might just be able to aim between the guy putting and the guy holding the flag. I never even saw the putter hurled at me as I sailed through the air, then landed quite nicely, if I do say so myself, on the green, before dropping about 8 feet onto the fairway, but toward... Oh Crap! The wall of the 16th hole grassy tee in front of me looked twenty feet high. I straightened out the bike again to hit it as squarely as I could, pulled in the clutch to avoid any engine braking on the grass, and miraculously landed right next to the tee marker where women launched their drives. Dropping back onto the course, once again in the rough, and having shit for brains, not to mention being super competitive, I looked back up on the main road. Wow! I could get back up into second place. With what was described by others as the best rooster tail they had ever seen from a street bike, I accelerated across 30 yards of golf course rough, powered through the parking lot, slinging dust and gravel everywhere, then ascended up the paved access back to the main road.

Behind us, a Ninja 600 was on its side, with its driver, Tim trying to lift it, and everyone else slowing down to watch me, and to go around Tim. Later, he told me he fell off the bike from laughing at his relief that I had not only survived, but was actually trying to rejoin the race.

Next up: The infamous Seven Hills. New to me and, as it turned out a quite easy experience with the centrifugal force of the Suzuki's large wheels, I gathered my bravado and looked toward the hills' looming in the distance. Pete motioned me over and told me what to do. "Just keep the bike in fifth gear at 120 mph, for a big surprise."

He and I left the pack in our wake and accelerated toward the hills. Up over the first hill, then down, but with the front wheel way up

in the air, where it remained until the next ascent. Then up again and back down six more times, front wheels wagging in the breeze. It was exhilarating, to say the least.

Thusly, I had introduced myself to the Knoxville Sportbike Community.

Now, back to the mountain on the Interceptors. With our new Michelin's, Tim T and I were both sliding around a lot more than we liked. I slowed and waved him by to watch his bike. We went up the main hill from the lake, past the Alcoa dam, and into the twisties. 318 turns in 11 miles is what the shirts say. I actually counted once, coming up with 108 turns, even being generous as to what was a different turn.

Nonetheless, this roller coaster of a ride did demand a lot of concentration. After a few dozen steep switchbacks, while dragging a knee on the slow parts at the bottoms of rises, my short shifting kept the front down when powering back up the next rise. This was very important, because a motorcycle is a lot easier to turn with both wheels on the ground.

As we raced to the hard part of consecutive ups and downs and arounds, I knew I could take Tim. To drain rainwater from the road, it sloped down hill. This meant that the all of the turns were off camber. To execute a fast time, the bike had to be leaned way past the comfort zone, because the road was banked the opposite of what we are used to with our nations myriad of banked interstate ramps.

After a bit of contemplation, I decided to set up to pass Tim on the third upcoming hilltop. I pushed him pretty hard and acted as if I were going to pass him on the outside, because he seemed to like to stay away from the drop off into oblivion. On the third crest, I went inside with some really hard late braking, but he looked back and blocked me. My momentum would still carry me around him, but on the outside. Woulda-Coulda-Shoulda, as they say. It seems that when I released my brakes, the sliding that I had learned to control, suddenly stopped.

Because I was hanging off the left side of the bike going around a left hand, off camber turn, my calf was firmly pressed against the rear of the gas tank, as I hung on for dear life. When the tires did stick, I was totally flung off the side of the mountain. Flying though the air, I just cleared the ground about a foot from the hillside.

Luckily, I was dressed for the occasion, with the complete racing regalia of helmet, boots, gloves, and leather suit with knee, elbow, shoulder, thigh, and butt pads. I really hoped for a soft landing.

A few months before, Tommy from Nashville had been killed when he ran his 750 Ninja into a tree, but that was the furthest thing from my mind. As my trajectory evened out, I started grabbing the sometime dreaded, but now last resort, Kudzu vines. Our great highway departments had planted these where roads were carved out of the mountains, for the purpose of controlling erosion. It certainly worked, but the vines covered all of the trees in early Summer. Everyone hated these vines. Everyone but me at this moment. I grabbed them and tore dozens out of the ground. Long, beautiful, entwining Kudzu, between my gloved fingers, around my ankles as I stuck my feet into their lushness. Sweet smelling, momentum slowing Kudzu. Kudzu: My newly acquired BPF, best plant friend.

A fistful here, a fistful there, I was pulling up twenty and thirty-foot sections of vine, and finally actually began to slow down. As I began to control my descent, my fall slowed even more. I had quit spinning around as I fell and looked up. I was in control, but there was danger above. There it was, the Interceptor, sliding on its side, teasing me on over the edge of the road as it teetered, ready to come after me for wrecking it.

Shit! Just as I had been able to come to a near stop, I had to let go and fall further down the mountain to avoid the bike. I dropped about another hundred feet in all. Twisting my neck to watch the bike, I finally saw that it was motionless and grabbed all the Kudzu I could find.

It took a good ten minutes to climb back up the hill to the road.

...and that is how kudzu saved my life.

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## Cars

Jim Longo

I never loved cars – yeah, maybe when I was under age. I remember wanting a Hemi Orange Dodge Challenger in the early seventies before I could drive. I remember loving the way the mid-sixties Mercury Cougar back turn signal blinked.

Maybe I loved my car in high school, or was it freedom, or was it just the increase potential for meeting girls, and being more socially acceptable with younger peers.

In college I didn't have a car and used the MBTA (Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority), which always came down to, "Oh we just missed the train."

Owning a car would have been a pain in the ass in the city due to parking, the expense, and in Boston cars didn't move all that well through a city with too many lights and way too many one-way streets. That city was meant for walking and that is what we did. One of these days I'm going back and walk all over you. Sorry Nancy Sinatra for channeling you.

Maybe that is when I started hating cars. Maybe it was after I bought my first decent bicycle. No, I didn't buy it for transportation. I bought it to be close to Catherine Tutter. I wonder where she is today. But that bicycle proved to me that cars weren't the end all. I used it originally for basic transportation and found I could beat traffic anywhere, and I never had to look for parking. Why would anyone want a car in a city?

On the other hand, maybe dislike for cars comes from my uncanny ability to have accidents. I learned to drive at thirteen. My father taught me how to drive on the Bishop of Springfield's 1963 Willys Jeep in 1973. We would take it out on spring Sunday afternoons around the town. It was a three-speed stick shift with continually-engaged four-wheel drive. Top speed for that beast was about forty-five miles an hour.

I used to drive up and down our drive way practicing my shifting. It was a long driveway, and I could actually get it into third. Backing up was the problem I'd speed back in reverse and one time I

hit the gas instead of the break and hit the telephone pole at the end of the driveway along with bending our chain link fence that bordered the neighbor's yard. My father straightened out the chain link fence and the priest never mentioned the dent. Of course, the kid across the street was watching and, yes, I never lived it down.

Maybe my love of simple transportation comes from that beast. No radio, no roll down windows, loud, slow, no padding; hell, the gas tank was under the seat, but my father drove it for free for years.

The day I got my license and took a car out for the first time I had two accidents. I scraped the garage door coming out of the garage, and I bumped a parked car at Sacred Heart where I went to check out a little league game. Yes, the first day I had a license I left the scene of an accident. Looking back was that ignominious or prophetic.

I think I only had one accident with the '72 avocado green two-door Dodge Dart Swinger (Jezebel), after that a scraper edging out of street with too many parked cars. But the Dart had a bumped up hood from an accident my mother had dropping me off at the bus stop before I had a license. I remember the guy my mother hit getting out of the car and start screaming at her. So I started screaming at him from the bus stop. "Shut up and get in your car or I'll come over there and give you a reason to shut up." He got in the car and just drove away, they didn't even exchange information. Maybe I have a genetic predisposition for being a bad driver.

The Red 1982 Dodge Omni 024 I bought after leaving college proved to me I hated cars. I hadn't any credit and paid 18% interest on it. Besides the red paint rotting off due to the love bugs and the hot Florida sun, leaving swirls when I washed it. I hit a BMW, a 280z, and a tree along with backing into a police car in the five years I owned it. Every time I'd put in a claim they would pay me. I wouldn't fix the car, and eventually had a down payment on my first house.

My next car was a shit brown 1988 Dodge Colt E (Nelly) with no radio, no air condition, and four on the floor. I never got into a car accident with her but the paint job rotted off like all 1980s Dodges. It had no grill from being backed into when I left it parked on the street for a week because I refused to pay for airport parking.

It was towed away as abandoned in less than three hours when I left it parked in front of a friend's house. I would be pulled over by

police driving through Tequesta for being profiled as a middle-age alcoholic. How do I know? I asked. Most girls would not date me twice once they got into Nelly. One of the reasons I'm with Barbara today, is because she didn't fear the Nelly.

Barb and I were driving around in Nelly, and were looking at houses. One was for sale the owner was in front of it we asked, "How much?"

He said, "More than you can afford."

Barb rolled up the window and said, "Buddy if you only knew?"

Nelly was the antithesis of all things cars in our society. I loved her. We are marketed to believe that cars determine our worth in society, they are tools nothing more and expensive tools at that. Every now and then I want something nicer and I'd stop by a dealership and they would offer me one car payment for Nelly and I'd turn to the salesman, "So let me get this straight, if I drive this car for another two months it will pay for itself twice. See you."

At the end, I stopped putting money into her. You couldn't roll up the windows because you would end up with carbon monoxide poisoning. At the end I had to keep a case of oil in the trunk. I think she was as close to a two stroke a modern car could be. I'd keep a gallon jug to stop at local canals to fill up the radiator because it leaked so bad.

One day I came out of work and there was a crow sitting on top of Nelly. I drove it home. Whenever I took it out I had to ride the clutch to keep it going. Barb gave me a ride to work. I decided to donate Nelly to the local high school, but when I went to drive it out to the school it started spitting metal parts out of the tail pipe.

. Met a girl the other night and her Subaru didn't have a paint job or reverse. I liked her immediately. Barb told me she was a lesbian. "It doesn't matter she has a great car." Of course, Barb rolled her eyes. I thought why am I always attracted to lesbians?

## ARTICLES

### TSUNAMI - The Inquisition Has Commenced

Virgil Thorp

In the summer of 1998 a seismic phenomenon, an underwater earthquake in the southwestern Pacific Ocean, triggered a Tsunami, a tidal wave which swept across the coast of New Guinea, the weight of it crushing out the life from thousands of people unfortunately in its path. Rich, poor, young, old, fat and skinny, ugly and pretty, no one could escape its relentlessness. It must have been an event of unbelievable horror as tons and tons of rushing water snapped off trees at their bases, crushed homes, buildings and tore children from the arms of their mothers. There was no way to dam up or control the torrential liquid onslaught. A knockout blow from Mike Tyson would not even register a dimple on a comparison graph. The battered survivors said the approaching wave sounded like an oncoming freight train.

Metaphorically, there have been a myriad of other events -- in varying degrees -- in history where there has been such devastation to humanity, the Holocaust being the most deadly, the most widespread. Six million people (some say as many as 11 million) died because of forces in control of the government, yet totally out of control of their humanity. A tidal wave of fear and loathing and terror and hate.

In the 1950s in America, we had what Lillian Hellman called "The Time of the Toad," when congressional anti-commie zealots went hunting for "reds" behind every door and under every bed, using fear to manipulate confessions and expose friends, acquaintances and, in more than one case, total strangers who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

That era was preceded in medieval times by the Spanish Inquisition. We'll never know how many heretics were tortured and burned at stakes because of their blasphemous questioning and rejection of prevailing superstitions. There are some who say the pogroms of the Inquisition exist even today on every continent, in every country... perhaps lying dormant in every brain, like a lethal

virus, needing only the right set of circumstances to become contagiously deadly again.

There is a certain irony of these "out-of-control" forces causing much more destruction and suffering than the supposed dangers to society they railed about had, or would ever cause. How are they able to accomplish such a thing? Because it is fear that is their means, the irrational collective fear that they skillfully exploit to achieve their ignominious ends. They feed those fears by telling lies, countless lies and the more fantastic and absurd the better; manipulating the superstitiously ignorant into believing that "the boogieman will get you!" Or, what I call "Bigot Fodder."

The latest whopper of "Bigot Fodder" has to do with homosexuality. While all open sexuality is under the gun -- women's health care rights, adult publications -- the powers of fear and ignorance are particularly interested in wrecking the advances of freedom and equality LGBT Americans have labored to construct. In fact, Gays soon may soon find themselves elevated, much like the "uppity" blacks whose viewpoints of the error of their "equal opportunity" ways and voter registration drives were enhanced from their being strung up into trees, a practice which we thought had died in the early 1970s but promises to be resurrected again given a few more elections and judicial appointees.

It may have been a slow escalation from former Senator Dick Armey referring to Representative Barney Frank as "Barney Fag" to Senator Trent Lott (oops, I spelled that wrong, excuse me Mr. Senator Lott. I'm very sorry I did that -- muffled laughter) trying to demonize homosexuality by comparing it with a psychologically compulsive behavior like kleptomania. All the while, hovering in the background like that virus I alluded to, is the conception that homosexuals, much like Count Dracula, the vampire Bram Stoker dramatized, can only increase their population through recruitment from the pure, virginal heterosexual population. In their minds there is no other way such a sexual preference could or would exist.

There has been publication of several full-page ads in newspapers and websites purporting that homosexuality is a curable disease. Have you any doubt that we won't see a war against the infection? A scourging with fire, much like the vigilante mob of ignorant townspeople justified when they drove the Frankenstein monster, in the film version of Mary Shelley's precocious novel, up the

hill to his doom. To quote another movie; to "terminate with extreme prejudice."

The current desire is to return to the days of our mid-century -- Hellman's "Time of the Toad" days -- the time, when gays were firmly in the closet and conformity was the rule from the iron-fisted fear which had been planted, nurtured and fertilized with the manure of the deplorable. Those days which lesbian activist Barbara Gittings recalled in a documentary about gay culture in America and the courage it took for Harry Hay and those early gay-rights activists to meet to form the Mattachine Society.

She said, "The very first meeting that grew into the gay movement, as we know it today, took place in someone's apartment in Los Angeles and I'm told they had the door locked, the blinds drawn and a lookout posted for the police because they actually believed they could be arrested just for talking about homosexuality."

To return to those days could only happen through some incredibly destructive force that wouldn't care whose life was in its way because no closet, no basement, no attic would be a safe haven. And surely, just like with a Tsunami, everything in its path, not only homosexuals, would be destroyed. It wouldn't take many fanatics to become a holy wave of destruction and death.

That was 1998, almost twenty years ago. Has the cancerous seed germinated and metastasized? Do you hear the rumble of an on-coming freight train or is that just the ghost of Johnny Cash crooning Folsom Prison Blues?

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## LETTERS

Sorry, nothing this time.

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## POETRY

### Clichés

By Gloria Cosgrove

If apples were more like oranges  
I asked myself as I put away the groceries  
Would we still refuse to compare them?

If my kitchen floor was really clean enough  
To eat off, wouldn't a whole host of  
Microscopic creatures literally  
Starve to death?

And shouldn't it be creativity, not cleanliness  
As my best friend this morning suggested  
That is closest to some god or other?

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## COMEDIC CORNER



Contributed by Dan Vignau

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