

AOTCJournal

Welcome to the **Journal of the Aware Ones of the Treasure Coast**, a secular humanist gathering, providing companionship, conversation, support, and good times, within honest and objective atheist, agnostic and freethinking values.

"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

WELCOME ALL!

As you can see, we are in the process of changing the appearance of our Journal, just trying for a bit more class.

We are also in the process of increasing its distribution in the hopes of attracting new members. If, after reading this issue, you would rather not be included in the distribution, please e-mail me to that effect at zillioux@bioindicators.org.

If you haven't heard of us before, I will try to correct that.

The AOTC is made up of atheists, agnostics, and freethinkers who support evidence-based science. Although we are largely non-believers, we embrace what is now called "the golden rule" which has been a part of the human condition even before it was adopted by various religions. This principle goes back at least as far as Socrates, circa 400 BCE, when he inscribed the words, "Do not do to others what would anger you if done to you by others."

Along the same vein, we are also spiritual. I have defined spirituality in past writings on the subject as follows: "Spirituality is the desire and the will to do good, without anticipation of reward, and the capacity to feel joy and inspiration in the beauty of nature."

Carl Sagan, who also was a committed atheist, wrote in his book *The Demon-Haunted World*, "Science is not only compatible with spirituality; it is a profound source of spirituality," and "The notion that science and spirituality are somehow mutually exclusive does a disservice to both."

I mention the above only to emphasize that our brand of Humanism is inclusive of basic human values that we all should embrace. Please also visit our website which provides a more detailed introduction of who we are:

<http://www.AwareOnesOfTheTreasureCoast.com>.

This Journal is primarily a product of the AOTC writers' group, also known as, "The TC Secular Writers." However, we solicit and welcome contributions from all members, whether or not they are also members of the TC Secular Writers. To become active in the writers' group, members only have to show up. We meet at the Jenson Beach House of Brews every other Thursday at 6:30 p.m.

The content of our Journal has always consisted of eclectic writings appearing under self-explanatory headings such as articles, brief communications, etc. In this issue, we are adding a section containing writings dedicated to a particular theme. These dedicated pieces will regularly appear under the heading "Commentaries." This issue's commentary theme is, "Separation of Church and State," that contains four submissions by Bert Mautz, Ed Zillioux, Virgil Thorp, and Jim Longo, each approaching the topic in different ways.

By way of background, separation of church and state is guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution which became subsumed into the Constitution with the ratification of the Bill of Rights on December 15, 1791. Since its ratification, the First Amendment has been interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court on several occasions.

In [Everson v. Board of Education](#) (1947), the Supreme Court incorporated the Establishment Clause (i.e., made it apply against the states). Writing for the majority, Judge Hugo Black wrote,

"The 'establishment of religion' clause of the First Amendment means at least this: Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions or prefer one religion over another. Neither can force nor influence a person to go to or to remain away from church against his will or force him to profess a belief or disbelief in any religion. No person can be punished for entertaining or professing religious beliefs or disbeliefs, for church attendance or non-attendance. No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion. Neither a state nor the Federal Government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups and vice versa. In the words of Jefferson, the clause against

establishment of religion by law was intended to erect 'a wall of separation between Church and State.'"

Unfortunately, the First Amendment has been attacked again and again in the courts, which reminds us that we must be diligent to insist that these basic rights continue to be protected.

The subject of our next issue's Commentary section will be, "Hypocrisy: religious, societal, and the world, and/or why."

This issue also contains a very inventive and amusing article on G.O.D. by Jim Longo; brief communications by Bert Mautz and Ed Zillioux; a letter sent to Senator Rubio by Jim Longo; a poem by Ed Zillioux; and ends with the Comedic Corner with contributions from Virgil Thorp and Dan Vignau.

We hope you enjoy our efforts.

AOTC MEMBERS & FRIENDS

Members

Joan Auerbach
Ernie Breud
Barbara Lange
Jim Longo
Bert Mautz
Yashi Nozawa
Lucy Thorp
Virgil Thorp
Dan Vignau
Pat Winchild
Ed Zillioux

Friends

Amar Almasude
Joanna Almasude
Marsha Banks
Rick Burkhart
Sandra Burkhart
Paul Carlos
Gloria Cosgrove
Marilyn Graton
Stretch Graton
Bob Haskins
Roberta Synal

Charlie Thompson
Marilynn Thompson

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Meetings

Sunday Coffee – Every Sunday, Importico's Bakery, 555 S. Colorado Ave., 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; July 5 & 19; August 2, 16, & 30.

Events

No Potlucks in July

August 25, Saturday, potluck at Dan's 5 p.m., 2348 SE Monroe St., Stuart, 34997. 772-285-9860.

COMMENTARY

[Starting with this issue, all entries into this section will be dedicated to a single subject]

Current Subject:

"SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE"

OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

Bert Mautz

Not an exclusive hope or best wishes of conciliation, but aggravating. Whether emanating from the ever-present blue-collar media, or evangelical vote chasers in politics, what do prayers help? Must confess a personal skepticism about prayers' efficacy. If you "feel comforted" than you are made comfortable? This prayer stuff is all in their heads. Never concrete effect, never.

Test: Try praying for money. Simple, right? Not water into wine, just win the lottery. Help me Jesus.

The Constitutionally guaranteed freedom of worship/religion, contained in the First Amendment along with free speech, together for equal importance has never been respected by government. Founding fathers and mothers' very moral core was based on Christian dogma. The conservative minority that still prays, just elected a president. Not encouraging the praying thing will stop anytime soon.

The New and Precarious Idea of Separation of Church and State

Ed Zillioux

Our species, or rather our subspecies, of *Homo sapiens* began to evolve, along with others of the *Homo* lineages, some 1.8 million years ago. That is, when we began to exhibit *Homo* traits that distinguished us from other ape ancestors, notably the branch that evolved into the modern gorilla. In the history of life on Earth, however, that wasn't all that long ago. This is put into perspective when we consider that the 5th and most recent great extinction event that wiped out the non-avian dinosaurs and opened the way for the ascendancy of mammals occurred approximately 65 million years earlier.

We were, at that earliest time of our evolution, sentient beings, as were all vertebrates and many invertebrates, but we were a long way before we developed the ability to think and to act based upon an objective understanding of our subjective environment, in other words, became sapient. It should not be surprising that our earliest efforts to make sense of environmental phenomena that we could not understand were entirely metaphysical. Indeed, this early manifestation of consciousness persists even today in the form of religion.

Although we were incapable of articulating our wonderment, since language itself was not invented yet, we could not escape the feeling that something had to cause the lightening that felled trees and ignited fires, as well as other natural, awesome, and sometimes catastrophic, events. This something eventually, that is a few hundreds of thousands of years later, became known as "a higher power."

Speech, in its crudest form, was invented only about 150,000 years ago, and the earliest known writing a mere 5,000 years ago. Between these two events, we gradually began to pass along our primitive, and flawed impressions of reality, which later became the beginnings of an

oral history, steeped in metaphysical explanations of the unexplainable.

It is generally agreed that the first fully-formed and functional civilization emerged a mere 4,000 years ago among the Sumarians in southern Mesopotamia. However, archaeological evidence shows clear uninterrupted continuity of the Sumarian culture from as early as 5,700 years ago. These were farmers who migrated south from small village communities along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers where they developed the first sophisticated agriculture and irrigation technologies as far back as 10,000 years ago. They also developed early religious rituals meant to assure adequate rain and good harvests. These led, in turn, to a culture of priests. By the time they formed a group of approximately 12 city-states in southern Mesopotamia, each was essentially an independent theocracy. The pattern was the same in all. Each was built around a central temple dedicated to the god or goddess of the city and ruled by a priest or priest-king who oversaw the city's religious rites. There was no distinction between the temple and the state.

In retrospect, this was an exciting time in the history of our species. Civilizations began to coalesce independently in many disjunct locations, but in all cases bringing their superstitions and their gods along with them. For example, between 5,300 and 4,700 years ago the establishment of early theocratic civilizations included: the Indus (or Harappan), the largest of all ancient civilizations extending from the Arabian Sea to the Ganges Valley; the Xoïs city-state of the Egyptian Delta; the Lung-shan culture in Northern China; the ancient Greek civilization; and the Mayan civilization of Central America. All incorporated religious rituals, many including human sacrifice, with state rulers indistinguishable from the religious hierarchy.

Even in the first recognized democracy, the Athenian Democracy, c. 2,300 years ago, there was no attempt to separate church from state. At this time, it was as close as we came to an enlightened society where everyone was considered equal... well, everyone except slaves and women, of course.

Throughout the next millennium there was no discernable progress regarding the separation of the religious from the secular. In Europe, the theory of the Devine Right of kings swept over the numerous theocracies in which the temporal power of political rulers was believed to come from God in the same way that the spiritual power of the church came from God. In practice, however, the Devine Right

monarchs asserted their power over religious affairs so that no separation of powers existed.

The Christian church was established in what is now referred to as the first century of the Christian Era, ruled over by a continuous line of popes. However, rituals were held in secret over the first three centuries with members of their flock worshiping in private houses to avoid persecution. This all changed after the Roman emperor Constantine carried the Christian banner into a crucial battle and defeated his enemy in the year 312 AD. Thinking his win was the direct result of his alliance with the Christian god, the emperor invited the pope to hold a council openly in the Lateran palace. Constantine followed by establishing three churches including St. Peter's cathedral in the Vatican, resulting in a lasting link between the joint powers of church and state.

Meanwhile, in the Byzantine empire, Caesaropapism was founded which combined the power of the state with religious power. That is, the head of the state, or emperor was also the supreme head of the church. This essentially turned the concept of theocracy on its head in that the authority of the state was superior to the authority of the church. Although inverted, Caesaropapism and theocracy were both single power structures in which there was no separation between church and state.

Much has been made of the passage in the Christian bible, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's," as an affirmation of separation of powers. Attributed to Jesus, this seems more likely to be simply a ploy of an itinerant preacher to get him out of a difficult trap when asked publicly if it was lawful for Jews to pay taxes to Caesar. In any event, it did not initiate any lasting effect on the separation of church and state.

This is not the case with another preacher. Martin Luther delivered a sermon in 1528 on a principle of separation that became known as the Two Kingdoms Doctrine. He is credited by James Madison, the principal author of the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution, with leading the way to providing the proper distinction between civil and ecclesiastic governments.

Later, James Madison wrote in a letter objecting to the use of government land for churches, "The purpose of separation of church and state is to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries."

The constitution of the United States came into force on March 4, 1789, and the first 10 amendments, collectively known as the Bill of Rights, were ratified on December 15, 1791. The first amendment, principally drafted by James Madison, is the first, or at least one of the first, national codifications of a separation of church and state policy in the world.

Acting mostly on our lead, there are now numerous nations with the separation of church and state principle incorporated into their constitutions, with some of these using language lifted directly from the U.S. Constitution's first amendment.

Since the first recognized civilization 5,700 years ago, 5,473 years had passed before the first codification of a national law requiring this separation of powers. Only the carry-over of our primitive metaphysical confusion can explain our long path from the first human sacrifice to appease a vengeful god, through an extended period of mostly theocratic civilizations, to arrive at this monumental principle of separation between the affairs of church and state. But there are still numerous nations with state-sanctioned religions that lack this protection. In the context of our entire history, this is truly a new idea, and we must work hard to hold on to what we have finally achieved, since, even today, it remains under constant threat.

A Simple Thing?

Virgil Thorp

The question is simple, it is an either/or, yes or no question with no equivocations allowed. However, it has tremendously important implications to your health and well-being. And, it is all about the necessity of keeping state and church separate.

Do you want your medical professional to be an educated, biologically and chemically literate practitioner who employs logic and the scientific method to determine what your body's cells and organs are doing or;

do you want your medical professional to employ myth, voodoo, superstition, chakra and prayer to take care of you and your family?

Of course the latter sounds more than absurd but rest assured, there are those who wish to demonize empirical reality and substitute their own ancient whimsical legends to what medical procedures will be allowed and which ones will be banned and/or restricted.

The reason is also simple. There is a movement of the cultish faithful who are driven by their evangelical zeal to impose their myths, voodooes, superstitions, chakras and prayers on the rest of us even if we think their beliefs are mired in presumption and audacity and are -- in the most derogatory expression -- Bullshit.

You can ask me, how can you be so sure this is happening? Because it is at this very moment and has been since Roe v. Wade in 1973 and back through history. Access to medical procedures and what medical procedures are funded by insurance and Medicare are being proposed and decided in both houses of the United States Congress, in state houses across the country and unfortunately, it appears in the Supreme Court as well. To me this is the same as practicing medicine without a license.

For instance; the ultra-religious owners of Hobby Lobby successfully petitioned the Supreme Court to exempt them from providing family planning services like contraception from their group insurance plan. What about the recently re-imposed gag-rule about women's options for their reproductive well-being in our health missions around the world? What about access to women's health care overall? Could other procedures be affected also?

Some sects (cults?) sincerely believe that blood transfusions are an evil as are others either not mentioned or specifically condemned in the Bible. (Well, maybe not specifically because those backward, bronze-aged yahoodie's had no idea of modern medicine because Galen hadn't even born yet.) We do know there continues to be abject opposition to women's reproductive choices like contraception and abortion.

More importantly for me at my age are life-sustaining and end-of-life issues.

The name that should be recognized is Terri Schiavo. The young woman suffered a tragic accident that left her brain-dead. She had made her wish known that should she ever be in a persistent

vegetative state, she would not want anything like prolonged artificial life support if this ever happened to her. Her husband attempted to carry out her wishes but was not only thwarted by Terri's parents but also aided and abetted by members of the state and federal governments.

This was the most blatant imposition of church into state. The governor of Florida, Jeb Bush, the brother of the then president, inserted himself and his religious beliefs into a private family matter. There was no government neutrality there. And this case stretched out for 15 years before she was allowed to expire. (I don't know if it was agonizing for Terri, she had so much brain loss she was little more than a carrot with a basel ganglion).

Let me cut to the chase here. Currently we are dealing with Dominionist Christians who are wanting to not simply blur the line between the separation of their church and our state, they want to knock down the wall of separation and make their superstition the law of the land; a theocracy.

They believe in the big anthropomorphic guy in the sky. They believe that human beings and dinosaurs lived together in Flintstone cartoon-like harmony! They believe the Earth is only 6,000 years old! They believe in the power of prayer when we can see that despite fervent beseechments, there will be no resurrections, severed limbs and gouged-out eyes will not regenerate and fate will have its way if you are unluckily standing on a beach and a tsunami approaches.

And the agenda isn't limited to healthcare. It is a desire to limit what you see and hear, sing and think. They want to restrict knowledge that is shared and learned from textbooks if it does not agree with their ancient misunderstandings. And (unlike the recent Hobby Lobby case) they had a near successful attempt to ban teaching hospitals and med schools from instructing their interns on how to perform D&C surgery (dilation and curettage -- a procedure commonly used for abortion and, ironically, to also help infertile women conceive). What if they tried to prohibit other procedures, the life-saving ones as well as the merely cosmetic?

"We don't serve your kind" laws and court decisions excuse their inherent bigotry as they justify it shamelessly by twisting the gentler tenets of their religion into self-righteous pricking thorns. Bakers, florists, pharmacists have made a mockery of "all men are created

equal” and “justice for all” with their rebuke of public accommodation standards.

The movement advocating this censorship and prohibition are the evangelical supporters of President Donald Trump and his Make America Great Again (MAGA) faction of iconoclasts. It is obvious that at the heart of MAGA is a frenzied desire to return to a time that is considered a better era. But, better for whom? Isn't it simply a return to a bogus idealized past which the Red Hats feel has been stolen from them by the march of time, knowledge and civilization? A return to a medieval mind-set that will have tragic and disastrous unintended consequences; one that will be archaic, barbaric and fraught with biblioclasm!

When government is neutral it means just that; no favoritism of any side! That also means few prohibitions either! For whatever obtuse reason a citizen may have to embrace or reject a notion is their business and their business only. What's good for you may not be good for me and vice versa. Requiring the government to impose that business on an objector is tyranny in its most ignoble manifestation.

So my wise, gentle and thoughtful friends (readers), you've got to decide what you want and what will be for our collective good. Do you want superstitious ignorance or do you prefer policies based on empirical evidence? Strict separation of state and church is essential for your health, your welfare and our future. Let's continue to keep these two things, state and church, as separated by more than simply “and” as they should be.

The Darkness Cometh

Jim Longo

Church and State has been the beast with two backs screwing the common man since shamans stated that the Gods endorsed a given chieftain. What are the two greatest cons in civilization? God's will, and one should be your leader because they know best. Mike Pence still

believes this. Together, Church and State un-separated is the divine right of kings, the endorsement of the almighty to be your leader. In most cases all it took was that divine right and armed forces to maintain any leader's place at the top of the heap.

The founding fathers in the height of the Enlightenment searching for a more perfect union, decided that the people not Popes and an enlightened minority not Gods should decide who should lead, but that's not where we are today. Through gerrymandering of congressional districts, and the Electoral College, a now unenlightened minority controls all the wheels of power.

What does the unenlightened want? They want to return the most powerful, least productive, industry in the history of man back to prominence. They want to destroy the founding fathers' dream where Church has no place in state. They want Popes and Princess of the Church to direct people, to tell them what they can do, and what they can't, in their homes, in their bedrooms, in their bodies.

This unholy alliance will take place; it has been mandated by the believers, that the United States should be religious and more exactly a Christian country. We are already at the point where if you don't profess the right beliefs you can't be elected. How far before we go back to if you sin in the Church/State's eyes you have committed a crime? How far before if you are not the right religion, we will take your rights away? How far down this slippery slope before there are Pogroms?

The other side would say I'm blowing this all out of proportion. We have more rights today than any other time in our history. LGBTQs can marry. Marijuana is moving towards national legalization. You can live together out of wedlock. Get divorced. Get an abortion. Well that last one might be the first to go. And if the separation of church and state is lost, do you really believe all the rest are safe? What can we do?

Write, fight, vote, join, lobby, bitch, get involved, whatever it takes. It is always darkest before the dawn. Let us hope it doesn't get any darker than this.

ARTICLES

Game Operator Developer

Jim Longo

"When I stepped out of the multiverse and decided to start my own universe I didn't think it was going to make such a big bang," the game operator developer said to the interviewer.

"So you weren't expecting an expanding universe?"

"Well I knew it would be an expanding universe, they teach that in school."

"Then what do you mean?"

"Well let's just say it took a lot of trial and error to get a game that anyone wanted to play. At first, I tried the rudiments of a simple eco-system eat or be eaten, then tried the whole predator-prey thing, but everyone said, 'Boring.' So I had to come up with something a little different."

"So what did you do to make such a big hit?" the interviewer asked in anticipation.

"I thought small. All my buddies, they have busy jobs making singularities, galaxies, dimensions, and whatever AI does. So why not tune out and turn on a game where you can pick on a human being or for that matter a few million beings that have a rough idea what is going on with just a touch of imagination and emotions and a limited time in the game to figure it all out."

"Is that all you did?"

"Well I got them to write a few holy texts to really screw themselves up in which only psychopathic liars could even dream of interpreting."

"Is that all?"

"I didn't have to do too much, these game pieces, avatars, players, human beings, call them what you'd like, seem to have just the right amount of initiative, imagination, emotions, and stupidity to keep the game interesting."

"How about their dimension?" the interviewer asked.

"You mean Earth. Well after the initial set up, it pretty much runs itself by evolution. It's simple, and elegant. The only problem is the players have been mucking up their own eco-system due to overpopulation, and bad decisions. The game might just destroy itself. I did mention stupidity."

"So what do your multi-version friends do in this game?"

"They come over and inject dangerous ideas as muses, angels, or other mythical beings, that go bump in human beings' minds and then we see what happens."

"Have you ever put yourself in the game, as a player in that dimension, or as you call world?"

"No never, that's against the rules. The G.O.D. can never do that," the game operator developer said.

"Oh come on, you can tell me," the interviewer said, flirting.

"Have you ever played Human? I'd think you'd like it." G.O.D said flirting back.

"Only if we can get in the game and you give me a tour from ground level," Interviewer said.

"We'll see," the Game Operator Developer said.

"You have done it. That's why your game is so successful. You broke the rules to get a better product"

"I never said that?"

"But you did, didn't you?"

"Ah, ah, ah, I never said that. Can we change the subject?"

"Okay, can the human beings reach the next level?"

"Occasionally, they call it enlightenment, the few that have are helping me develop a new game."

"What happens to most?"

"They have to start over, and over, and over again as their time runs out in the game."

"So, Game Operator D, did you break the rules to make this game so successful?"

"Who are you? Aren't you from the Multiverse News?"

"I'm from the Health Department."

"It's a game," Game operator D said.

"It has been found incredible addicting to multi-versions and you need to come down to Multiverse Central with me to explain why."

"But what about Earth?" Game Operator asked.

"Earth can take care of itself you said it yourself, the game is almost over."

"If the game is almost over why bust me now?"

"We have been watching you for long time and it has taken us forever to get a subpoena for your code, and it finally came through."

"Okay let's get down to brass tacks, what does the Health Department really want?"

"We don't want you to make another game. We want you to retire."

"Screw you. I'm calling my father and lawyer," and yelled through the multiverse, "Hey Zeus."

"While we are waiting for him we can see how this game plays out."

"Do you still want a ground-side tour?"

"Are you crazy? You'd leave me there."

"I'd go with you,"

"So you did do it?"

He just laughed.

BRIEF COMMUNICATIONS

Origins of Chauvinism

Bert Mautz

In the beginning women were our mothers, sisters, wives, mothers of our children, our daughters. Nightly warm body satisfying us, ovulating, nursing our babies, tending our gardens and collecting the eggs. Physically less strong than their fathers, brothers, husbands in an untamed and dangerous world. Females required our protection, kept close to hearth and home for their own safety. We loved and provided for all our women.

By extension, also saved from having to vote, holding public office, enjoying a modicum of equality in the professional workplace, as too delicate, too feminine for this man's domain of commerce. Men required a warm and fragrant home to return to. The role division was naturally evident, a god-given divide.

Equality of educational opportunity was likely the essential break with traditional male and female roles. They discovered and then demonstrated levels of intelligence, conceptualization, and problem-solving ability equal to the male half of the race. More than merely type the manuscript, she could edit it, and surely write the book herself, and did. The professional realm was next. She wants to be president of the company and astoundingly wants to be compensated equally. Why this final test of equal opportunity and reward has had so

much resistance in the board rooms of western capitalism is a difficult reconciliation.

Parental/maternal leave is to be expected, simply makes biological sense. So, for all the energy spent to achieve equality, we are not. Billy Jean King led the force to achieve equal prize money in tennis tournaments, while the ladies win for best of three sets, however, men need best of five. How is that fair? Longer matches earn greater sponsorship money. Contradiction of equal compensation for equal work?

Title IX ensured equal opportunity in competitive sports, produced uninteresting womens' basketball, and preserved balance beam for petite women and tackle football for very large men.

Still, we remain undecided and dissatisfied with the entire equality thing, as we obviously are not. Have not discussed the psychology of gender, or how world's religions subjugate the female, on the supposition of the elders' fear of their own ravenous libidos.

Irreconcilable differences, obviously.

Journal or Anthology

Ed Zillioux

Our Journal is really not much of a journal. An observation was made by Ricardo Piglia that:

"The journal is that ideal literary form – one that can encompass all other forms. It's a form that tries to be identical to a life. In it, one can find stories, reading notes, ideas, polemics, conversations: It mixes politics, stories, travels, passions, tales, promises, arguments."

Our Journal, with the exception of a few notes for the larger membership (I should say distribution, since most of these "friends" are not members simply because they refuse to make the very nominal annual contribution for reasons I have failed to understand), it would more properly be called an Anthology of the products that come

primarily from the AO's writer's group. I might add that all regular members of the writer's group are legitimate members of the AOTC. (If this offends any of our non-member "friends," I'm so sorry.)

Although I do think *Anthology* would be a better name than *Journal*, I am not suggesting at this point that we should change the name. Adopting changes in this group is just too stressful.

LETTERS

Dear Senator Rubio,

Even though I am a former member of the Republican Executive Committee, I have never written anyone in our government, but am writing concerning the probable appointment of Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court.

I find it disconcerting that our current president would appoint someone to the Supreme Court who holds the jurisprudential principle, that a sitting president should not be investigated, or indicted.

Normally this wouldn't be a concern, but with the president under an active investigation, this jurist may hold the key to the destruction of our Republic.

Please consider, not voting on this nominee until after the Mueller investigation is concluded, or at least until after the current election in four months. We know the Senate can do this because they have done it in recent past.

Sincerely,
James Longo
Stuart, Florida

POETRY

Johnny

1942

Ed Zillioux

(Based on a true event)

For Johnny, a day with his friend
 was always a most wonderful adventure.
His mother had sent him to meet Kitty, his sister,
 who finished classes at noon at the neighborhood school.
But she wanted to play with her own little friend
 and sent him back home with a bribe of ten cents.
Then Johnny had found his secret friend,
 and they shared two ice creams with Kitty's dime.
And they raced through boxcars at the railroad siding,
 and clambered over stacks at the lumber yard.
Pausing for greater effect,
 they gazed at each other in secret comradery.
Two little boys sharing the bond of poverty,
 one needing love, the other, adventure.
Johnny's family disapproved of his friend's family,
 and family decided one's acceptable friends.

Class dwells most pervasively
 in these tenement neighborhoods,
For mothers must fight to save their children
 from those whose spirits despair.
But many a secret alliance was born,
 among the children of that lost generation.
These were the seeds of flight that raised a few,
 from lives that were almost not there.

. . . .

But best of all, this day his friend held a surprise,
 that he promised to share at the end of the day.
Then they went to the old gas station, long abandoned,
 with pumps removed and building stripped.
A skeleton on an empty corner transformed to a clubhouse,
 a favorite place for the street children.
It was different today, with a big pit, freshly dug,
 and a big old soil-stained tank.
But workmen chased them away,
 “You can’t play here today,” they had said.
So they watched till the workmen left, then crawled through the pit,
 and hid in the curve of the great dark tank.
Then his friend pulled from his pocket his grand surprise,
 a marvelous, magical, mysterious match.
Johnny waited in suspense for the beautiful flare,
 first hissing then flaring in blue and gold.

And there in the acrid fumes of gasoline-soaked soils,
with happy smiles beaming, the match was struck.

. . . .

Mrs. Kelly clucked her tongue in irritation,
as the jelly glasses rattled in her cupboard.
Mr. Kelly was still working the second shift at the arsenal,
he thought, "they must be testing the big gun again."
Seven of their nine children were home on time,
but supper must wait for Catherine and Johnny.
"They'll be home soon, and then they'll have
some explaining to do!" Mrs. Kelly promised.
"I may just send them to bed without supper!"
was the next empty threat.
Then there came a Knock! Knock!
at the door to their basement flat.
And no one ate supper
at Mrs. Kelly's that night.

. . . .

Kitty hurried her friend who was staying over that night,
for it was late and she promised to be home by supper.
Their route would be taking them past the old station,
where her little brother so often played.
They were but a block away,

when it seemed their whole world exploded.
And through the blackness of fire and smoke,
they glimpsed an apparition of running, screaming flames.

. . . .

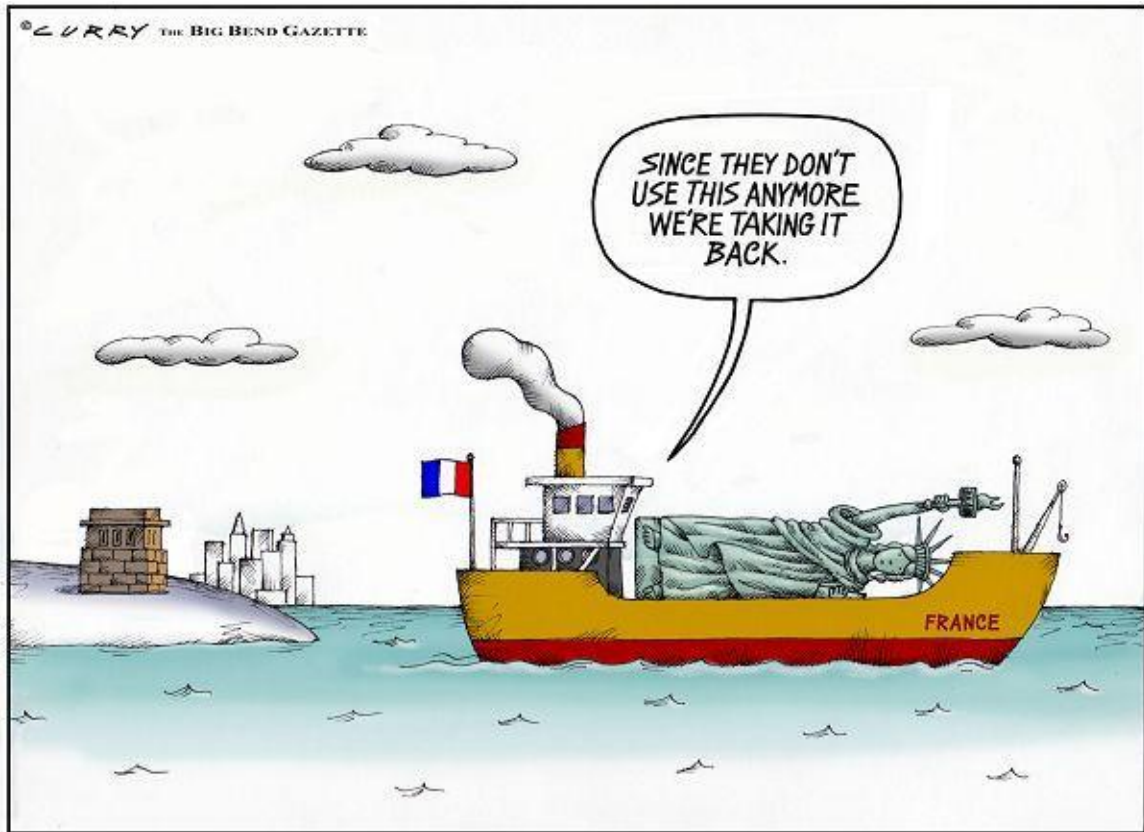
The soldier, home from the war on medical furlough,
sat rocking on his porch wrapped lightly in a blanket.
The force of the explosion knocked him out of his rocker,
and broke all the windows facing the street.
Like a scene from battles he hoped to forget,
a little boy burning ran straight past his house.
Never hesitating a second, he sprang to his feet,
catching the boy, smothering the flames with his blanket.

. . . .

Johnny's friend was more lucky of the two little boys,
dying instantly in the force of the explosion.
Johnny, burned over his entire body save the bottoms of his feet,
died late that night in the burn ward of the local hospital.

END

COMEDIC CORNER



Contributed by Virgil Thorp



Contributed by Dan Vignau



ATHEISTS

WE'LL NEVER GET ANY RESPECT UNTIL WE COME UP
WITH OUR OWN SILLY LITTLE HAT

Contributed by Dan Vignau