

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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Richard Lewandowski

1948 – 3 Jan 2019

A DEDICATION



PREFATORY NOTE

We had barely eased into the new year when the entire Aware Ones circle of friends was shocked by the news that we had lost one of our own. Richard was a special person.

This issue is dedicated to Richard. We begin, therefore, with several tributes written with our memories and humor intact as he would have liked. Our regular journal content follows.

The GIFT of Richard George Lewandowski

Roberta Synal

Richard and I took a roadtrip to the Keys over Christmas - my first time! I always get to find the airbnb's for our excursions, and this time I had a connection: a camp friend from 45 years ago -- we were 15-yr. old "wild-children" sneaking out of our cabins to go party with the townies in Bennington, NH, and I was psyched to see her again after 45 years.

Renee turned me on to a friend in Big Pine Key, just 30 minutes north of Key West, Bonnie, who lived on a "Key Deer" reserve. We had our own little bed & bath, with coffee and snacks each morning on the porch with whomever was around. Deer came by for their morning carrots ...

Anyway, Renee was crazy in love with a new guy and living in his RV. Bonnie bred doberman pincers and her husband of 30+ years was a charter boat captain. Conversation was always lively on the porch in the a.m. and on the second day Renee showed up, too.

Bonnie teased, "Wait 'til you see Renee and Tom together ...they're in the puppy-love stage! Me and Roy are just Old Dogs!" Clearly, it was up to Richard and/or I to plug into the metaphor to describe ourselves, and we smiled and wagged our tails like the Golden Retrievers that we weren't, and said, "We're Rescue Dogs!"

And we were, in so many amazing ways. The closest thing to unconditional love I've ever experienced (besides my childhood dog, of course). Together, we were the best versions of ourselves. And, we were the loves of each others' lives -- a very Rich time.

"The people we surround ourselves will either raise or lower our standards. They either help us to become the best version of ourselves or encourage us to become lesser versions of ourselves. We become like our friends. No man becomes great on his own. No woman becomes great on her own. The people around them help to make them great.

We all need people in our lives who raise our standards, remind us of our essential purpose, and challenge us to become the best version of ourselves."

— Matthew Kelly, *The Rhythm of Life: Living Every Day with Passion and Purpose*

At Richard's memorial service at the funeral home in Livonia, MI, where he lay in casket as requested by his son, I did my best to portray the Richard that this mid-western, unawakened, very Catholic family never understood.

I read this, from one of his journals:

"Reality is my god.
Evidence is my scripture.
Big History is my creation story.
Ecology is my Theology.
Integrity is my spiritual path, and
Fostering a just and healthy future is my mission.
LEARNING IS MY PREOCCUPATION."

I also shared a poem that Richard had taken the time to write down in his journal that reflected his gentle nature -he **was** Nature- as well as the pensive mood of the service:

The Peace of Wild Things

BY

WENDELL BERRY

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,

I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

© Wendell Berry. This poem is excerpted from "The Selected Poems of Wendell Berry" and is reprinted with permission of the author and Counterpoint Press.

Richard's note: "That piece describes my deepest feelings, more intense in more intact environments because I'm sensitive that way. We are one."

(not our dog!)



Richard Lewandowski

Bert Mautz

Hold your left hand up, fingers together, palm away. This is a hand puppet of Michigan's lower peninsula. Pentwater, on Michigan's sand dune, west coast is just below the little finger, on the very edge. Richard is from Pentwater, thirty minutes south of Hamlin Lake, an occasional summer ice cream cone destination.

Richard exemplified a life style he taught, lived, promoted even, conservation of our earth.

Made several reading turns, teaching the writers' group about imbalances of humans and our live-stock biomass.

Brought illustrative handouts on small, pieces of paper. Exemplifying a life's consistency.

He joined in on the wide-ranging email conversations; eruditely, or mystically, but always an enjoyable contributor.

This consistent example he made was impressive in itself But further, Richard was a socially adept, friendly, a conversationalist without taking over, no "preaching."

Watching Richard and Roberta become a loving, cohabiting couple was a joy.

The Solstice party face time with Paul and Gloria, was both a technological connection and coordination, a gift.

He exuded a warmth, approachable, enjoyable to share his company.

About Richard

Gloria Cosgrove & Paul Carlos

Human beings are complex. But Richard Lewandowsky was more complex than many of us. Most of us ask questions, but Richard asked questions beyond questions. Like the Starship Enterprise, he boldly went where few men go and where not all of us could easily follow. He searched for answers and he pushed for action. He was concerned about nutrition. When we met Richard in 2013, his first question to us was about a healthful place to eat and a health food store. As time went by, he gathered information and went on to organize discussion groups to share his knowledge. And perhaps to prove a point on a smaller scale, on New Year's Day of 2017, he made us a scrumptious, nutritious sweet potato chili for dinner.

He was concerned about the health of the planet, about micro-organisms, plant and animal life. His curiosity about Florida plants led him to take a course and raise questions that the instructors could not answer. When visiting us, he paused to examine our carambola and mango trees. He kindly asked only questions we could answer, but we had the strong suspicion he could easily have probed deeper

His interests took him beyond science to social justice. We saw him approach and calmly question anti-abortion protestors outside a Planned Parenthood event. He took part in The Woman's March, he won a contentious fight with a school board, and another with a contractor who had destroyed part of his property.

Richard lived and laughed and loved. He figured out how to hook up the equipment so that we could attend the Winter Solstice party at the Graton's via video transmission. He had fun trying to dig through N. Carolina red clay soil in our backyard to make way for a radio antenna. He shared many Sundays of conversation and laughter with us at tables in the Tabuleh Café. In our last telephone call with him, when we asked him how he and Roberta were doing, his face lit up the cell phone as he replied, "I can't imagine being any happier." That is how we will remember Richard.

Richard

Ed Zillioux

Richard... To start off on a positive note: He liked beer. Good beer too. None of that Budweiser or Miller Lite stuff for him. I found out at one of Jim's Halloween extravaganzas. I don't remember the brand. What I do remember is that after he and Roberta showed up, I spent the rest of the evening digging through the drink coolers for the excellent hops that he had brought, and when I determined there was none left, I quit drinking beer. But what the hell, Jim's pizzas were primo so it was a good party.

I remember Richard as something of a lovable enigma. I remember numerous conversations with him, although after some of which I found myself wondering, "What the hell was he talking about?" Although, at most times, having dialog with him was good fun, enlightening and intellectually stimulating. I did occasionally get tired of his fixation on our gut bacteria, and only managed to get his attention when I brought up the gut Archaea and Helminths, which are, arguably, just as important to a healthy gut as the gazillions of bacteria. Nevertheless, whenever he showed up at Sunday Coffee, you could look forward to his contributions to the conversation - dynamic, always interesting, never boring, even though he seldom talked about cars or the latest game scores.

Richard was an occasional participant in our Writers' Group. That doesn't mean he would necessarily write anything, but he definitely participated. You might be entertained with pictures or graphs projected on the ceiling or the passing around of geometric figures he had crafted from sticks and paper to illustrate a particular concept. It has been remarked in a matter-of-fact manner without malice, "If he comes to the Writers' Group, he should write something that could be read," unsaid was "like the rest of us do."

Richard made us think. Sometimes he achieved this in a convoluted manner, and often made his point with arguable constructs, but never mind that, *he made us think*. For that reason if nothing more (although there certainly was more), his was a life worth celebrating. We shall miss him.

Into the Sublime

(Afterlife Reimagined)

Jim Longo

"Where the hell am I?" Richard asked after following that bright light to its natural end.

"Well it could be hell, it could be heaven, it could be something or it could be nothing. Like life, you decide," a voice spoke inside him.

"There you go. I'm just going to keep as cool as I can. I'm just going to sit here, have a cold beer and figure this out," And in a blink of an eye in that white-out of the afterlife, a table, a chair, a beer bottle, and a glass popped into existence.

Richard sat down, poured himself a cold beer and took a sip. "Wish I had some sea salted kale chips," and a bowl of kale chips appeared.

And there he sat munching kale chips and drinking beer in the sublime, realizing what he wanted was to find out if he was right. He took one more sip of beer closed his mind's eye and created.

He created a twenty-first century world without cattle and internal combustion engines. And he found sheep had taken the place of cows and the amount of methane from that source remained pretty much the same if not slightly greater.

The loss of the internal combustion engine led to an increase in the use of steam engines, which required the use of more coal, firewood, and oil to push the water to move the gears of industry, and to make electricity, recharge the batteries to keep the world running, and the CO₂ levels were even greater.

And with snap of his mind's eye the world he created didn't exist. He sat there with his beer and chips. Had another sip of beer and thought what I really need is another existence because two minds are better than one.

And a moment later a second chair, a glass of red wine and moment after that a pretty little mind sat across from him. Next thing he noticed she was taking a big healthy bite out of a burger, and the first comment to him was, "You want a fry. You know you do."

"That stuff will kill you," Richard said.

"Dude, we're already dead," She said.

"Yeah, but..." he said with a pause.

"But here you are trying to solve a world's problem in which you don't even exist."

"Yeah but, I really wanted to find out."

"You're not the first to enter the sublime and still try to find answers from the dimension you left behind."

"Can you help me figure this out?"

"You know it is kind of pointless, even if you do figure it out, what can you do with the answer?"

He sat quietly, took one of her fries, took a sip of beer, "It has never been about the problem, or the answer."

"Then what was it about?" She asked swirling around her wine before taking a sip.

"Small men talk about people, average men talk about events, but great men talk about ideas, and I wanted to be a great man."

"You were," she said, smiled at him and took his hand.

"So what about my problem?" Richard asked.

"It is just basic Petri dish bacterial growth."

"How that?" Richard asked.

"Every living being living in a closed environment has a lag phase, a log phase, a stable phase and death phase. The people of earth are pushing the edge of their log phase and will proceed to a phase where food and pollution will stabilize the population until pollution will overwhelm it."

Richard sat quiet.

"What's a matter?"

"Well you answered my question, now what am I going to do for eternity?"

"Well Lennon is playing tonight, do you want to go?" She asked finishing her wine.

"John?" Richard asked finishing his beer.

"No Vladimir, I said Lenin not Lennon."

"Well why not, I have nothing planned."

She got up from her chair he followed suit, they moved away from the table and chairs. The furniture vanished into the sublime.

"You should hear when Frank and Harry get together with him," She said.

"Sinatra and Chapin?" Richard asked.

"No Roosevelt and Truman," she said, as the dissident on the string in that dimension moved up the line.

AO JOURNAL CONTINUED

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-- Produced by the TC Secular Writers --

INTRODUCTION

Ed Zillioux

As you all must know by now, in December I visited the Galapagos Archipelago where I boarded the National Geographic ship Endeavor II. Over the course of a ten-day exploration of eight of the major islands and surrounding waters, I spent considerable time with an interesting woman who had led a fascinating life. I have now entered into a book deal with her to help write her biography.

In part because of this new commitment, I have decided to resign my role as editor of this Journal. I had been considering this move recently anyway, having been in the position of editing Humanist newsletters for six years now, starting first in Joe Beck's group and starting it up again when the AOs was formed. So the book project is not the sole reason for my new direction, but certainly adds icing to the cake.

Our Journal will live on, as Virgil Thorp has magnanimously stepped forward to take over its editorship. Virgil is one of TC Secular Writers most experienced writers and I am sure he will bring improvements to our Journal, along with his own special wit and style.

At last Sunday's Coffee, with most of our group in attendance, several changes were suggested and voted upon with respect to the AO's operation. Changes agreed upon by majority vote include:

- Membership in AO open to all who show up at Sunday Coffee or at TC Secular Writers on a regular basis
- No annual contribution required for membership
- Voluntary contributions will be accepted but not solicited
- Balance in AO acc't will remain until need is identified and voted upon by members present at Sunday Coffee
- A forum of at least six members is required for voting purposes

We have all followed the saga of the Burkhardt's loss of their beloved Hagar the Horrible, for whom many tears were rightly shed



despite his problem with authority. But we all agreed that Captain Jack needed another buddy, so Sandra and Rick rose to the challenge and found a whole litter from which Jack was to have his pick. However, with best laid plans, etc., the litter shrunk to just two very special puppies, and it was decreed that Captain Jack should have both. So here they are, a happy family once again:



We continue the process of increasing the distribution of this Journal in the hopes of attracting new members. If you are new to the Aware Ones and would like to know more about us please visit our website at <http://www.AwareOnesOfTheTreasureCoast.com>. You are also welcome to join our table at Importico's Bakery, 555 S. Colorado Ave., Stuart, where we gather every Sunday around the hours of 10 to noon to share ideas and challenge your mind.

"We're neither pure, nor wise, nor good; we do the best we know." — Voltaire

AOTC MEMBERS*

Joan Auerbach	Barbara Lange
Marsha Banks	Jim Longo
Ernie Breud	Bert Mautz
Rick Burkhart	Yashi Nozawa
Sandra Burkhart	Roberta Synal
Paul Carlos	Lucy Thorp
Gloria Cosgrove	Virgil Thorp
Marilyn Graton	Dan Vignau
Stretch Graton	Ed Zillioux
Bob Haskins	

*Or should that be associates?

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Meetings

Sunday Coffee – Every Sunday, Importico's Bakery, 555 S. Colorado Ave., Stuart, 10 a.m.ish, outside when weather's agreeable.

TC Secular Writers – Every other Thursday, Jensen's House of Brews, 6:30 pm; January 10 & 24; February 7 & 28.

Events

Here's an advance notice:

Virgil and Lucy will host the Spring Solstice Pot Luck on March 23.

COMMENTARY

GOIN' FOR A RIDE IN A FAST CAR

Porsche Turbo S convertible

Bert Mautz

It's a beauty; rich deep red paint with a black top, cinnamon interior. Getting into the cockpit like passenger seat with gravity working with me wasn't too tough. The bolstered buckets literally hug one in place. Got on sunglasses and long billed cap. Let's go. The Roosevelt bridge north bound and up hill was the first chance Rick had to accelerate hard. Five hundred plus horsepower, all wheel drive, necessary to get twin turbo power connected with the pavement. The car virtually explodes with a roar of exhaust, turbo induced intake shriek, and neck wrenching acceleration force. And then on the ceramic pad brakes, as suddenly we are on the back bumpers of cars half a bridge length away a moment ago.

Computers sense and integrate; transmission gear selection, shock absorber resilience, tire traction. The driver just has to hold on push down on the gas and keep between the lines. Performance management of all of the above can be further fine tuned for normal, vigorous, or lunatic race track excitement levels with a little black button on the lower left corner of the center console.

The multiple personalities of a car like this is itself remarkable. It will purr along normally, giving no indication of the fury on tap. The only clue might be a firmer than most ride due to 235r35 19 front, 305r30 20 rear very low profile Michelins able to withstand the top speed capability. Rick found a section of straight, traffic free road.

Brought the Porsche to a full stop. Without giving me a warning, performed what he later explained was a "controlled launch," to achieve the ultimate zero to sixty time of probably under three seconds. Before taking his foot off the brake, the engine revs are brought up to, perhaps five thousand. The brake is released, all four tires chirp, and still more violent neck wrenching occurs, and we rocketed off in a blur of roadway, and Rick hits the brakes, whose deceleration is as impressive as the launch.

Laws of physics governing straight line acceleration, lateral acceleration (centrifugal force), and deceleration are taken to their limits while providing a whole new level of kinesthetic awareness. In other words, helluva thrill. Suffice, that anytime the awesome potential was utilized the driver is exceeding posted limits.

Upon thanking Rick for the experience, he admitted the few opportunities he has to demonstrate what the Porsche Turbo S can and willingly will do. We had a great ride together.

LOTS OF FOLKS LIKE CHRISTMAS

Bert Mautz

Can we consider for a moment that some people really like the many manifestations of Christmas?

There may be a spiritual rationale for the Santa Claus myth. Maybe it is good for kids to know blind faith and then be crushed by the truth that Mom and Dad put the unwrapped presents under the tree after the kids went to bed, because it saves all the trouble of wrapping. Maybe children are hereby prepared for inevitable future disappointments.

About to retire last evening to see a painfully bright tapering spiral of light atop the neighbor's roof, adjacent to the pink whale wind vane. Likely symbolic of the Christmas tree, as there was a star atop the spiral. The night before, this neighbor started a display of pastel snowflake images racing across the entire front of her house in dizzying profusion. Are these displays for me? Didn't see her out in front watching the show, had the drapes closed.

Mall santas complain of drop off in tike traffic, as folks shop at Amazon and the malls that killed downtowns are taking their turn at obsolescence and death.

Do pervasive illuminated trees in the background of every television broadcast studio spread holiday cheer? Somebody thinks Dan Patrick's audience of red neck NFL/sport enthusiasts want a tree added to the visual chaos of his memorabilia adorned/strewn studio. Who does this to a man cave?

Have mocked elsewhere, not very empathically, adding Christmas symbols to adult diapers, gutter sealant, Ford pickups commercials. Again, who believes the holly and bows adds to credibility of no-leak diapers?

To be continued – bert

ARTICLES

"Are You Really A G-G-Guy?"

Virgil Thorp

Can you tell the difference between a CD, a TG or a F-M TS? Do the terms pre-op and post-op confuse and bewilder you? Do you know what a "CIS" is? Did you laugh the first time you heard the phrase, "a woman trapped in a man's body"?

I can say yes to those questions, but to the latter, the memory is shaded by shame of my abysmal ignorance.

For most transgenderist (TG's -- you can't get in trouble using this all-inclusive term), their confusion (and ours) is no laughing matter. They have been abused, humiliated and made to live in a world of dread and fear.

When the 3rd annual Southern Comfort Conference convened in Atlanta, Georgia in November of 1993, Fonda and I were there. Although the conference committee was torn between allowing TV/TS Chronicle coverage -- since we are primarily a sexually orientated magazine, would we exploit them or not? -- they did allow us to attend if we behaved ourselves!

Negotiations were protracted over several months and a snag developed when it was determined that one of our representatives would not be attending en femme, that is, me! We could feel the apprehension at the check-in booth when we arrived, although the greeting was very gracious and friendly. We were being checked out just as closely as we were checking them out.

Our good friend Divinity of the Carolina Trans-Sensual Alliance (and the person who went to the wall for us with the

committee) advised us that many of Southern Comfort's attendees were extremely afraid of being exposed. "Please, please don't take anybody's picture who doesn't want you to do it. Make sure no one is in the background. Don't..."

"Hold it Divinity. It might be easier to tell us what we can do!"

After all, we had covered practically every alternative lifestyle in a variety of venues and never once had published an article that had featured someone who did not want to be in it and signed a model release.

Fonda and I felt that we needed something to convince everyone of our sincerity and respect. The opportunity came innocently enough.

We had decided that after attending the first day's seminars, we'd set up in the hotel's bar and try to meet some of the people who had given seminars. Divinity we knew to be an ally, but she was also on the conference committee and extremely busy in her stiletto-heels bounding here and there coordinating events for the conference and we felt we couldn't impose upon her to take us by the hand. We'd have to sink or swim on our own.

It didn't take too long, the attendees were very friendly and before we got comfortable, we had a table full of en femme people eagerly explaining to us the reasons why they were there. Their explanations ran a scale ranging from practical to comic to tragic.

"I've got a feminine side, but I really just like to dress up and freak out uptight people," Sarah told us with her impish gap-toothed grin.

"People used to beat me up because I was different," Tanya said. "Psychologically I'm a female. I'm taking hormones and therapy so I can have the operation."

Another en femme told us about trying to deal with those feelings for years, desperately attempting to be "normal". "I became suicidal. My wife left me and took the kids. She says I'm a pervert, but I'm not. I simply want to be who I really am."

Some of our new crossdressing friends didn't have that problem and Barb had brought his genetic female girlfriend, Bev,

with her.

"(S)he's all man," Bev confided about her six foot, broad-shouldered boyfriend, "but I prefer him when he's dressed. He's so much nicer (easier to get along with) when he's Barb. I don't have any problem with it or any sexual identity crisis of my own. In fact, it turns me on," the cute lady declared!

Meanwhile, we were having a grand time listening to all the interesting stories these people had to share. They were getting comfortable with us and we were getting comfortable with them. Southern Comfort, right!?!?

But, being Georgia, ostensibly the home of Billy Carter Bubbaism, we weren't alone. Like I had been before our arrival, several of the bar's regular patrons were clearly troubled by the influx of the flam--boy--ant convention goers.

"These here girls 'r really guys?" A furrowed brow Bubba loudly asked the bartender (clearly he was more than one beer over his limit).

"Most of 'em, yeah."

"Naw!"

I could understand his confusion and although many couldn't pass as females, there were several who were exceptionally pretty and attractive.

"Why they wearin' dresses?" (Verbs are as much an anathema to Bubbas as guys in skirts.)

"Just like doin' it, I reckon." Bubba II drawled.

The ruddy-faced man turned his attention to our congenial group. I thought, "Oh jeez," as he staggered our way, "what are we in for now?" -- not knowing if this would end up in a fist-fight or not. I looked at Barb and Sarah and felt better. It would have to have been a foolhardy bigot indeed to challenge that duo in spite of their feminine appearance and Divinity's words came back to me, "several of our people are professional athletes and even police officers." I also realized that Tanya had

reached a point in her therapy that she could scratch a bigot's eyes out if she had to.

"Hey," he greeted in traditional Bubbaese. "R yew a guy, r yew a girl?" he asked Bev his head tilting opposite ways for each word he mangled.

With a charming smile that would melt a Snickers Bar, Bev reached into her blouse -- I really liked her chutzpah -- pulled out her left falsie (gay deceivers were originally a woman's accouterment, you know) and asked with great panache, "What do you think?"

The air hung heavy as our Bubba considered the question. Was this a challenge? Was this a putdown? I braced myself for however he'd react.

"Naw," he said with an expression that said "yew just shuckin' me now, ain't ya? Yer really a woman," his finger pointing at her. "But yer"... I followed his finger as he shifted his aim to Fonda ... "a guy!"

Poor Fonda. She had worked so hard to look good. But our table broke up with gales of hysterical laughter. If anything, Fonda doesn't need falsies!

"Give me your hand," Fonda demanded and brought it under her sweater, Bev's chutzpah was rubbing off. "Do these feel like guy's tits!"

Bubba was too drunk to be embarrassed, but the story spread like wildfire. The ice between us and the conference was broken and we were accepted into the ranks. From that point on, it was "so now you know what we have to put up with."

Southern Comfort isn't an orgy of TSs, TVs, whatever. It is, above all, a forum of support. A convention to exchange and learn ideas and about how to learn about yourself.

But, I'm sure you all are asking, is there sex at Southern Comfort? Well, of course. Where ever you have any kind of human endeavor, you are going to have sex. Suffice it to say, sex isn't on the conference's agenda -- but it does occur. Like all alternative lifestyle conferences, overt sexual displays in public were

discouraged and what happened behind closed doors was no one's business but the consenting adults. Despite that, I will admit, as a couple, we had plenty of invitations to "walk on the wild side" if we were so inclined.

Southern Comfort is a well-run affair with fantastic luncheons, dinners, seminars, speakers and communication -- whether it was a seminar on Feminine Behavior, hormones, CD history, legal issues or using the "Ladies'" room without embarrassing yourself or anyone else (biggest tip -- Do NOT leave the toilet seat up!).

The conference provided many specialists and experts who answered attendees' questions regarding surgical procedures both from a male-to-female and female-to-male perspective. Another plus was Dr. Sandra Cole's all-day seminar devoted to the concerns of Significant Others -- women who have relationships with transgendered men.

Both Friday and Saturday's keynote speakers, Merissa Sherrill Lynn and Naomi Evans, entertained us with hilarious anecdotes of their CD experiences and sobered us with the grim reminders that CD and Transgendered individuals and their admirers have been targeted by bigots who refuse to understand or accept them.

It was at Saturday night's banquet and ball where everyone shone in formal finery and it wasn't "a drag"! Once again, I had to keep reminding myself that the majority of these people were guys. Sure some were in various stages of surgical reassignment and some had already had the operations and were now technically women (to my great regret, the prettiest TGs declined signing model releases for us -- they were pursuing careers as actual female models in the straight world!). It was a tough assignment as I fought the urge to "cop a feel" on their new and gorgeous titties so I came up with a scam, er ah, plan. "Miss, for scientific research may I feel your ...?"

"Hell no!" came the contralto reply along with a disparaging look that reminded me of other events where I had tried the same ploy. It hasn't worked yet.

It was clear to us that Southern Comfort accomplished a variety of tasks. The people who needed support received it. The people who simply wanted to show off and have a great time, got it.

We received it all. We tasted the hospitality of the SCC communities, got an education and had a ball to boot! We left with a new and lasting respect for these special people who are doing their best to deal with the cards that fate dealt to them.

We were standing outside the hotel on Sunday morning, waiting for our ride to the airport when a minivan pulled to the door and two large guys got out.

"Is this the hotel where all them queer-assed guys dressin' up like girls hang out?" one of them asked.

"Hey pal, don't talk down about my friends," I started to say and then I noticed the distinctive gap between his two front teeth. He was "Sarah" in his regular clothes!

"Gotcha," he said.

The Microbiome*

Are our gut microbes always our friends?

Ed Zillioux

Can you remember when you last watched television straight without having to endure countless ads about weight loss schemes? Typically, there will be claims that product X will help you lose weight fast and keep it off. The second half of this claim, leading you to believe that with the use of their product, you can overcome what is commonly referred to as yo-yo dieting, is the most problematic, and probably beyond the capability of any product that makes these claims.

This is serious stuff, given the huge increase in obesity in just the past few decades. Indeed, it is now rare to find anyone who could not point to someone in their immediate family that is obese. And obesity is a major risk factor for type II diabetes, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, ischemic cardiovascular disease, as well as reduced life expectancy.

So what is causing this pandemic of obesity? Evidence is now indicating that disruption of our bodies' circadian clocks brought about by the modern human lifestyle, such as shift-work, frequent jet lag, or exposure to artificial light during the night, is linked to metabolic diseases including obesity and hyperglycemia. These natural rhythms play out both diurnally and, perhaps to a lesser extent, seasonally. Their evolution in most animals occurred to adjust the animal's physiology to the daily environmental fluctuations caused by the earth's rotation on its axis. Moreover, their microbiome communities evolved their own circadian clocks in lock step with those of their hosts. And everything went along just fine for nearly all of the history of human development.

We, originally and collectively, hosted a microbial community of amazing complexity. Trillions of microorganisms living in a balanced generic diversity far greater than seen in our more modern human cultures, with each microbiome genus secreting unique metabolites that modulate the physiological functions of the host. Today, however,

fecal studies of humans around the world show that the most primitive cultures currently harbor gut microbial diversities greater than 10 times that now present in the most advanced cultures. The consequences of this huge decline in biodiversity among our gut microbiomes is only beginning to be realized.

In our original evolutionary state, the free passage of microbial metabolites into the body's circulatory system was limited by a barrier function of the gut lining. This creates a condition analogous to the toxicological principle that the poison is in the dose. When the gut barrier, or gate, becomes more open, the metabolites that are normally important for healthy physiological function can, in excess, cause detrimental metabolic effects. This is what happens in the hyperglycemic condition typical in obesity.

It has recently been shown that one of these microbial metabolites, the amino acid imidazole propionate, when released to the bloodstream in excess amounts, can produce glucose intolerance and disrupted insulin signaling typical in humans with type 2 diabetes. This may be the factor that causes many obese individuals to develop diabetes.

New research has shown that disruption of host circadian rhythmicity causes altered gut microbiota whose properties can predispose the host to obesity and glucose intolerance. It has also been shown that persistence (that is, even after successful dieting) of both the altered gut microbiota and the more open gut lining resulting in freer metabolite exchange between the gut and the blood circulatory system, could be the ultimate cause of recurring obesity, or the yo-yo effect among temporarily successful dieters.

*Much of the research reported here is so new that it has not yet been published in the peer-reviewed literature. We are learning more about our microbiome every day, and there's much more to learn.

POETRY

If I Were A Woman

Virgil Thorp

If I were a woman I'd be angry as hell
How dare you tell me what parts are good
or what parts are bad
that some parts are evil
and tempt men so sad
If i were a woman there'd be no pussy for you
If I were a woman Lysistrata'd be true

If I were a woman I'd be shouting out loud
Look out girls here it comes!
The thing we've been dreading!
There are little men who think they've seized, the right to our secret
selves

Those hypocritical wild oat seed sowers
attempting to slut shame us from our reproductive sovereignty

Real men recognize our worth, and respect us morally
Not like those craven Incels, whose punkish immaturity
condemns them to their state of silly celibacy.

They retreat into insecurity, to bully and to bash
the wonder of the thing they desire, and to get them some hot ass
to grab us by the pussies just to have their way
And all we can say if we refuse their shameful control
is "wait until November or when you go to sleep sometime."
Because I am a woman!

Your erroneous thought
that if you had a pussy, instead of your thingy
that you'd be using it, I know, I know
you'd be fucking all the time -- ha--ha, ha—ha
But the truth is, you'd be looking over your shoulder
to see if you were being stalked

Jane Darwell was right in the Grapes of Wrath
Life for a woman is one long pull
Life for a man is what he is... a constant series of jerks.
Which is easy for men because

they are consistently constant jerks.

This is my pussy and you'll leave it alone

until I tell you I want it touched

Not grabbed not prodded not poked

until I take your hand and put it there.

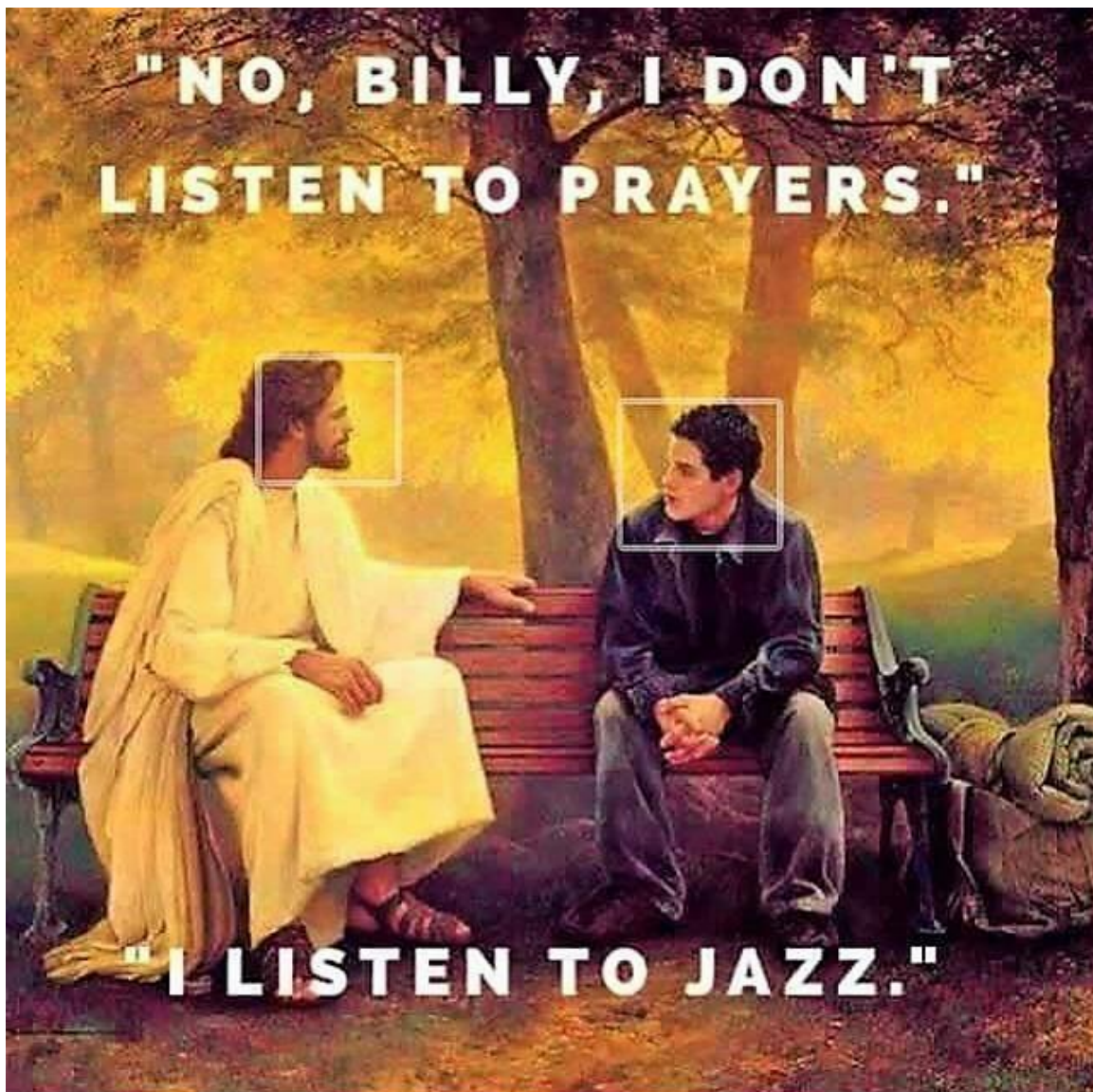
It is my pussy not yours

unless I gift it and you will respect it

Because I am a woman

And I'm angry as hell!

COMEDIC CORNER



Contributed by Amie Kroll