

# 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.

Vol.5, No.1  
January/February 2020

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-- Produced by the TC Secular Writers --

## INTRODUCTION

### 2020 – Clarity or cataract

Here we are, the first issue of 2020 and for all my years, I don't believe I have felt more ambivalent about the year's future than now. Sure, 1961 was the same no matter how you looked at it, and 1969 was very uncertain for me as I

was welcomed to active duty on board the U.S.S. Oriskany in the South China Sea. But I was so young then and virtually indestructible – I thought – not so much anymore.

What will happen this year and can we adapt to it? Darwin would have shaken his head and said, “to survive, you better adapt.” And adapt we will, we have no choice.

But take heart, Aware Ones, there is hope. Just this week on our journey down Indian River Drive, between the many “Trump 2020” flags, there was this one little sign, signifying not more than a crack, if you will, but an extended middle finger at best.



So, this small gesture is also why we do this journal. It may seem insignificant, but each act and statement of dissention produces another crack, another chip and the erosion of the elements crumbles every monument to intolerance. There must be many like us and I’m sure they are fighting back too, whether it is a newsletter in Florida, coffee klatches in



Arizona or podcasts from a home next to a cornfield in Illinois.

As we passed the sign last Sunday, I noticed something had changed. Apparently, some zealot decided to spray paint over the words on the sign they objected to. The

owner of the sign was having none of it and fixed it.

We are not alone and there is almost an entire year to experience before we know how the future will move.

One last thing, I've been reading where the red star Betelgeuse in the constellation Orion is dimming and may be in supernova (exploding). Since we won't know for another 600 light years if it has or not, should we really worry what happens November third?

For 2020 I harken to the sage advice of Steve McQueen in the 1960 horse opera, *The Magnificent Seven*, when he memorably mumbled to Yul Brynner as they drove a hearse to confront bigots who wouldn't let a dead Indian be buried in boot hill, "Let'r buck!"

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.

*If you do not want the journal and wish to have your address removed, please email [vmthorp@outlook.com](mailto:vmthorp@outlook.com) for confirmation.*

## AOTC MEMBERS

Joan Auerbach	Stretch Graton
Marsha Banks	Bob Haskins
Ernie Breud	Barbara Lange
Eddie Buitrago	Jim Longo
Rick Burkhart	Yashi Nozawa
Sandra Burkhart	Roberta Synal
Paul Carlos	Lucy Thorp
Gloria Cosgrove	Virgil Thorp
Ray Duryea	Dan Vignau
Marilyn Graton	Ed Zillioux
Gail Baker	Linda Webb

# 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 2, 16, 30; February 13, 27; March 12, 26.

As of now, no one has volunteered to host the January and February potlucks and hopefully some brave soul will step up. Lucy and Virgil have called dibs for a March 21<sup>st</sup> Equinox potluck. They warn that they now have backyard neighbors so no nude druid dancing before 10 p.m. Blue body paint available on request.

## Events

Jan. 5 – National Bird Day. Not certain if that means something for ornithologists or a reaction to a perceived insult. *Pictured – Megan Rapinoe displaying the grace of a bird and the victorious signaling of a true champion soccer player.*

Jan. 16, 1920 – U.S. Prohibition of alcohol began, directly creating favorable conditions for the rise of organized crime and disrespect for law. Rescinded in 1933 by the 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment.



Jan. 22 – Martin Luther King Day (b. 1929).

Jan. 27 – Lewis Carroll Day (aka Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, 1832 - 1898) Follow Alice through the Looking Glass, today.

Feb. 1 – Langston Hughes born, 1902.

Feb. 2 – Bottlecap patented 1892.



Feb. 4 – Rosa Parks born 1913.

Feb. 12 – Darwin Day. Charles Darwin (1809 – April 19, 1882)



*There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.*

Feb. 12 – AOTC Journal 5-2 contribution deadline.

Feb. 14 – Ferris Wheel Day.

Feb. 16 – Nylon patented by Dupont 1937.

Feb. 22 – George Washington's birthday. Also, "Be Humble Day" or World Thinking Day promoted by Girl Guides and the Girl Scouts.

Feb. 25 – Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday).

Mar. 21 – AOTC Equinox Potluck. Hosts; Virgil & Lucy Thorp. 8402 Pensacola Rd., Ft. Pierce (Lakewood Park).

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### Thoughts From Daily Ingersoll



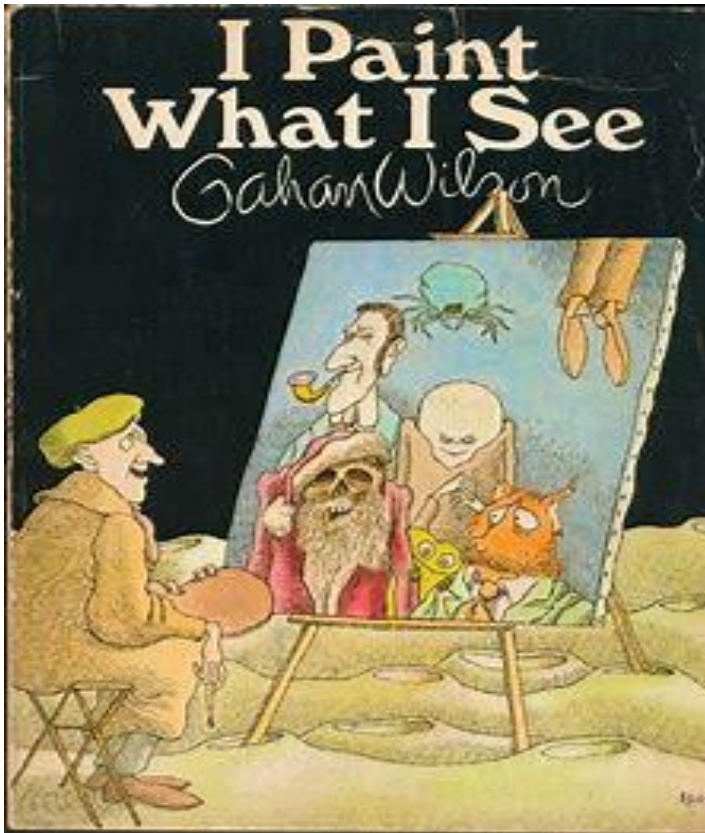
Every effort to really better the condition of mankind has been opposed by the worshipers of some God. – Robert Green Ingersoll

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## Passings



– Gahan Wilson, the iconic cartoonist of the macabre was a prolific contributor to Playboy and The New Yorker magazines.



*Feb. 1930 – Nov. 2019*

D.C. Fontana Author of many Star Trek episodes and other stories in the science fiction genre. C.W., like George Sand, and other women writers, hid the fact that she was a female in an occupation dominated by males. She was a lecturer in the Screenwriting department at the American Film Institute Conservatory and would conclude her classes by asking her students the simple question of “Why write?”



*Mar. 1939 -- Dec. 2019*

### Honors –

Greta Thunberg was named Time magazine's Person of the year much to current president Donald Trump's envy. Most people found the greenish hue complimented his mostly orange visage.

### Dishonors –

President Donald J. Trump was voted to be impeached in the United States House of Representatives Judiciary committee, Friday, December 13, 2019. Remember this date.



Donald J. Trump Jr. executed an endangered long horned argali sheep during his trophy hunting in Western Mongolia. There was no word on whether his penis got longer from his long horny girlfriend Kimberly Guilfoyle.



\*\*\*

**driftglass** @Mr\_Electrico Nov 13

"I just start extorting them. When you're president they let you do it. You can do anything ... Grab them by the military aid. You can do anything." This really is all that Trump's cringy, bug-eating Renfields are left with as a "defense".

## *Thanksgiving Potluck KUDO'S* –

rick and sandra,  
my oh my, what energy.

a marvelous vibe in  
your great room.  
much fun.



thank you for all the effort such hosting demands  
a potluck for the ages!



much appreciation  
to you both.

bert

\*\*\*

Rick and Sandra: I  
had a great time  
and hope to do it  
next year.

BTW, I washed my  
car to keep from  
embarrassing you,  
like last year, but

to no avail!

Rick headed me off at the pass to park next door.

For those of you who do not get my humor: There were no  
spots in the driveway.

TeeHee (J. Dan Vignau)

\*\*\*

It was a wonderful  
evening!!!

Ed





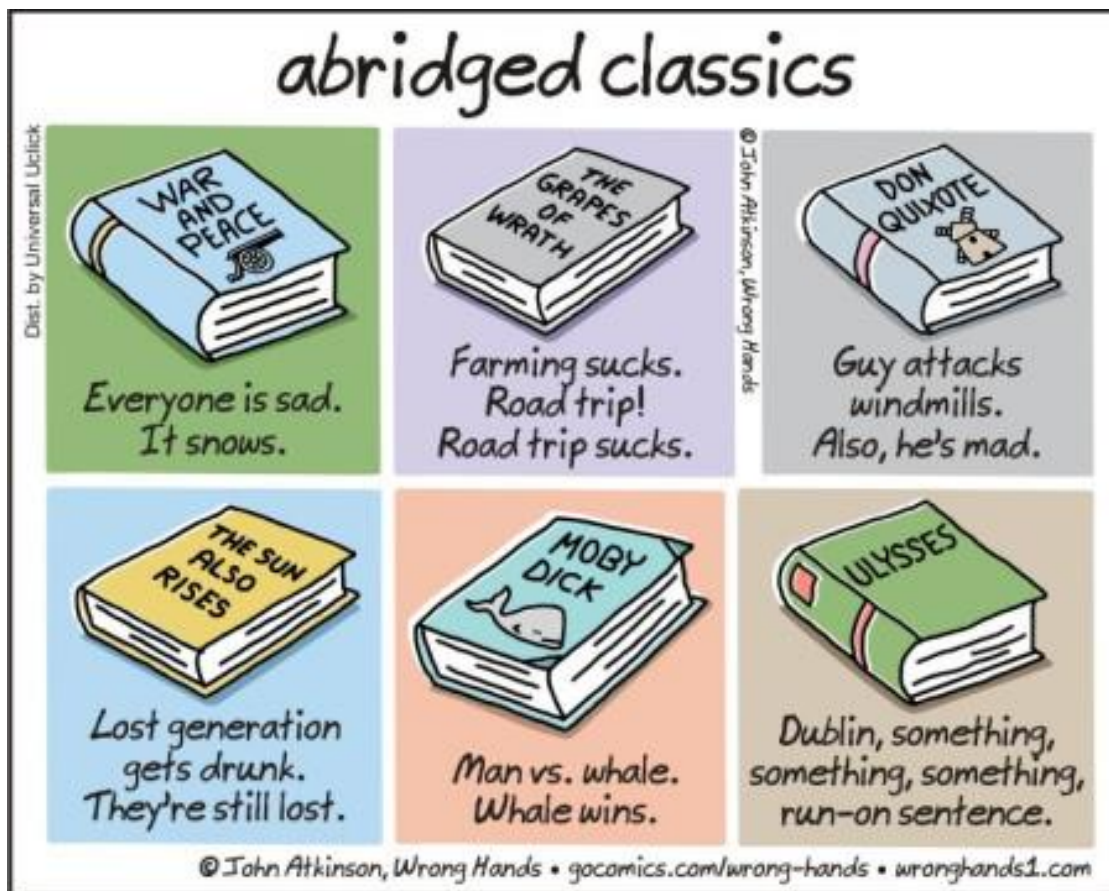
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Thank you Outrageous314!

We wholeheartedly concur with bert and everyone! What a terrific spread of food and desserts.

Virgil & Lucy



# COMMENTARY

## Decade End Musings

By Bert Mautz

### **Ford vs. Ferrari**

Starring:

Carroll Shelby –  
Matt Damon

Ken Miles –  
Christian Bale

*Ford v Ferrari,*

James Mangold, director, meets many of the criteria for a great cinema experience; story line, character development, dialogue, cinematography, action, musical score, and often missed in the midst of all the *sturm und drang* – subtlety.

For my money, the best subtlety of all is that which leaves you thinking, wondering about the answer to the merely suggested question. What just happened? Is that it? Does it end this way? Leaving me hanging? We've got to talk about this.



The plot involves Ken Miles, driver and Leo Beebe, a Ford exec. Characters don't like each other. When Ken Miles and Carroll Shelby develop the car to challenge Enzo Ferrari and achieve victory at Le Mans, Beebe contrives to rob Miles of

the win and ego craving satisfaction.

Back in California at the Shelby headquarters and test track, "Has it got any gas in it?" Ken Miles asks as he gets in his

tirelessly refined race car, fires her up, and squeals out onto the track. See the car on a distant back straight, and then the explosion. Miles destroys the victorious Ford GT40, and himself. Test drive mishap? Or was this payback?

(*Parenthetical insertion* – Have discussed this movie with several friends. All the gals caught the Ken Miles suicide immediately. None of my guy friends – their wives got it – but none of us caught the significance of the event, though unanimously agreed, once it was explained.)

## CELEBRATIONS, OR NOT

Ruth and Bob had a cautious regard for Christmas. A modest tree with bubble lights stood in the corner of the living

**RUBES**

**By Leigh Rubin**



"There goes Uncle Albert again ... a couple of drinks and he completely forgets he's housebroken."

room. Hand knit stockings were hung on the fireplace mantel with care, the tree was nice, but not for too long. A week was enough. Any longer would be insufficiently humble.

Christmas cards were a big deal back in the fifties. Bob wrote a yearly letter, more an annual report, stuffed in with Ruth's card. Never shared his letter with us kids. Ruth dutifully updated the typed address



list. The Christmas card thing was further a dutiful update for their numerous siblings. Bob, youngest of eight. Ruth, second youngest of eight also.

Generally, good things were not to be overdone, enjoyed for too long. Conspicuous pleasure taking was somehow out of character. Was it a depression era childhood? Humble large families? It takes a few decades of maturing to question those childhood patternings and decide for yourself that the evergreen in the living room smells good once a year, and why not enjoy it for the whole month of December. Dragged to the curb, needle-less, on New Year's.

Essentially, personal enjoyment of the big holidays, Christian and otherwise would require redefining to suit. Additionally, the dividing of Mormons and non-Mormons into separate camps by Bob one fateful thanksgiving, so that any premise of family traditions, gatherings and sharing disappeared. Siblings would go their separate ways, further divisions aggravated by influence of spouses-in-laws and geography. Kay and I succeeded in making Wilmette Thanksgivings into a celebration with cousins – never since duplicated – and some really awful dinner invites since. Shudda stayed home with bourbon and football.

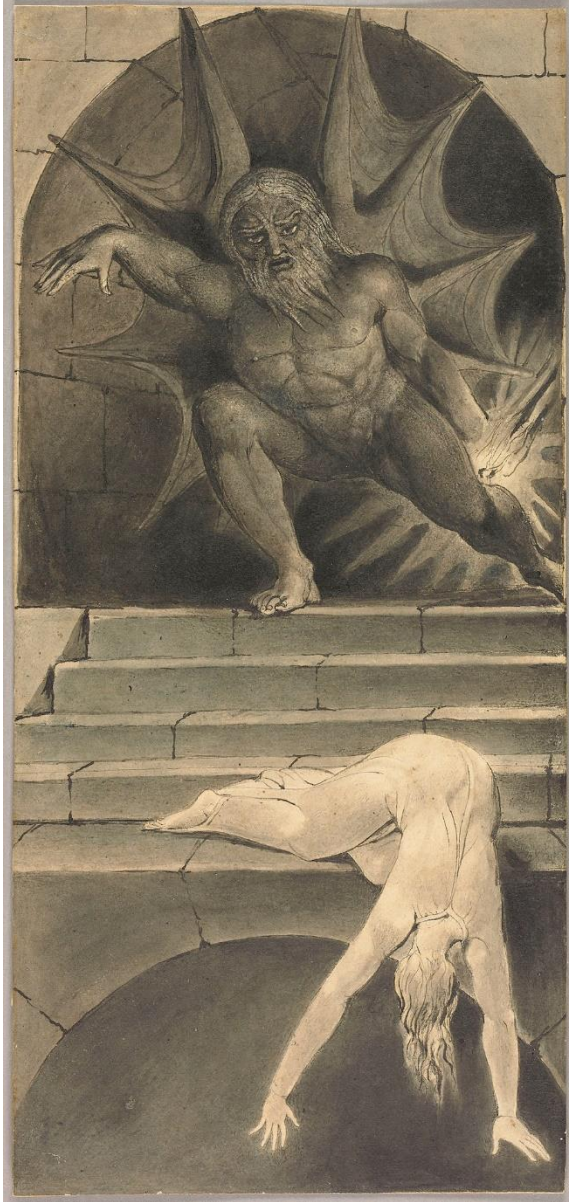


## **WHAT IS LEFT OF MANLINESS?**

"You would worry less about what people think of you, if you realized how little they do."

An old man's sense of self, if self-aware at all, is to acknowledge the loss of all of those manly qualities so doggedly sought since puberty; virility, that essence of





**William Blake – Death pursuing Life**

*world but loses his own soul.*" Mark 8:36. Seriously, what's the point of taking on causes? What is in it for you, personally? Feeling better about yourself? Or simply to combat one of life's last and cruelest curses, boredom. That brain of yours needs fuel to burn, stimulation to process. Michael Cohen, going crazy in jail is pleading for clemency, house arrest, community service. "I cooperated with

masculinity, in contrast with femininity, strength, skill set capabilities for sport, of work, and the respect, even admiration of other men. All of it is gone now. We have become old, of no more serious consequence.

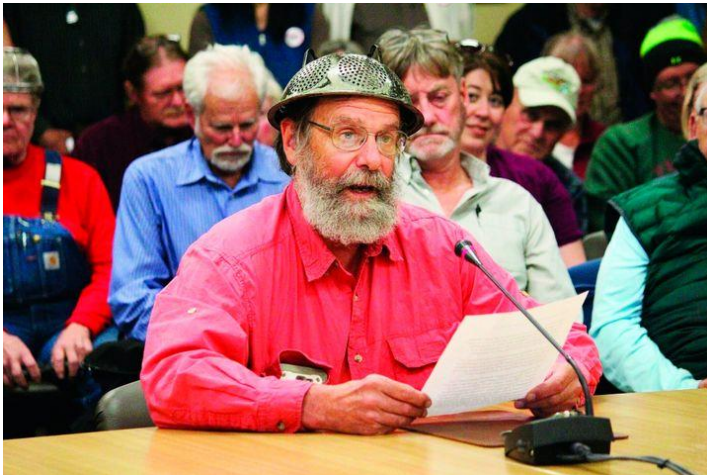
If we are lucky, we have aged with other men and women who are similarly affected, sympathetic, and accepting. There is still much of life to engage, but from a different posture, almost ineffectual, but at the same time, does no longer matter. Spectating can be amusing, take the follies of leadership, governance, oncoming generations, your own kids and grandkids making their own way, striving to make a difference, to matter, to achieve effectance.

There will always be causes. One can volunteer, give it away. *"For what profits a man if he gains the whole*

subsequent investigations, now let me the fuck outta here!" he pleads.

How much more of aging's punishing degradation can I take? Walker? Done that. Wheelchair? Done that. Oxygen tube in the nostril around the ear and down my back? Tank in the shoulder bag? I don't know. What will this do to the spontaneity of my bar stool conversations? Push me beyond the pale, to never return, this is goddamn old!

So here we find ourselves, in search of meaning, or mere distraction, amusement. So, try weed and porn. That'll distract you and watch more television. You can do it. Hang on. Suffer in silence, 'cause no one wants to hear about your doctor appointments, or what you did in the army. Or not.



## **WHY IN THE HELL BOTHER?**

Causes, what draws us to them? Why do we invest time and energy, care so much, and so often are rewarded with disappointment? At a time when we could

focus on personal pleasure in our waning years, instead we donate to politicians, canvas for charities, write letters of protest to city government, why? You are a single voice, of absolutely no effect.

Have joined organizations thinking they had something for me and found myself saying, "yes," to calls of service, and wanted more for the organization than it wanted for itself. Misread the philosophy, mission, and role so badly, have been asked to leave. The one third, one third, one third rule is so predictive of member participation, and those fighters

for causes, that last third, to be exploited and rejected ultimately.

Have been challenged recently to think about, "why bother?" When the cause is futile, the effort expended considerable, and the personal payoff negligible to utterly nonexistent, then why? Must not devalue the psychic expenditure, the cost to our morale, our visages of good humor, or simply disappointment.

Is wanton hedonism so terrible, if it hurts no one? My critical parents watching me on my own, making a family, establishing a household, saw everything I did as some kind of ill-advised extravagance, unsuited to time and place in my life. Yet ultimately home, cars, vacations of their own were clearly across the line of luxury, if not extravagance, but earned, if not outright deserved.

Henceforth, be it noted, no causes about to be lost. Paid my dues, paid my taxes, paid devoted allegiance, but no more. Apathetic, or recalibrating motivations? Together with my friends, we will focus on being and sharing happiness.

## **BREAKFAST ON THE WATER'S EDGE**

The aging silver snout chihuahua mix was leading its owner off the sidewalk and around the trees, sniffing. She was wearing a puffy jacket on this chilly morning and skintight gray

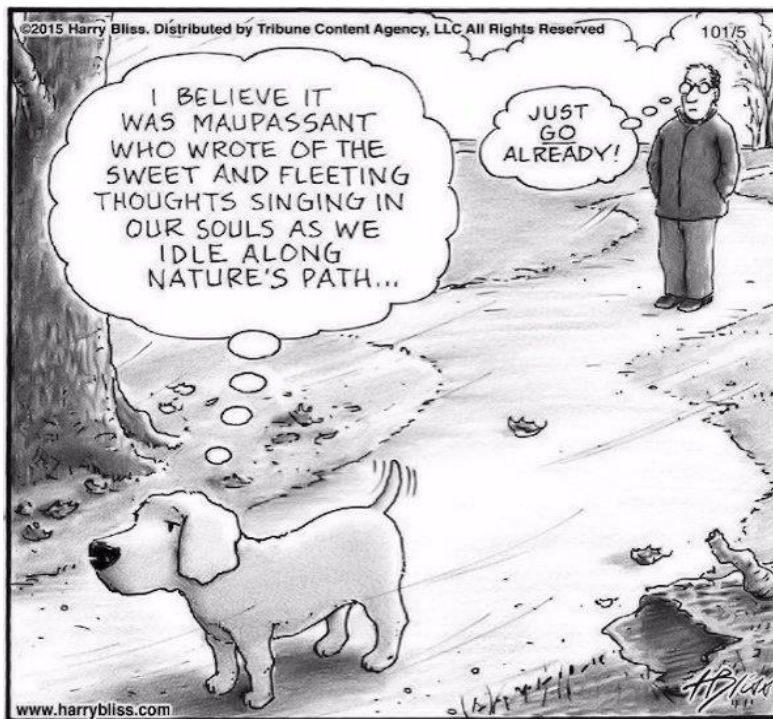
sweatpants. The leash reel, poop sack in one hand and a tall coffee cup and cell phone in the other. The mutt assumes the position and squeezes out a couple turds directly in front of us.

We are enjoying breakfast sandwiches and coffee, overlooking the middle fork glistening in the morning sun.





And the lady turns to walk away. "Can you believe her?" I mutter incredulously. No! In a flash Betty has opened the



car door, "Are you going to clean that up?" she asks in a strong voice. The lady pauses, likely thinking, "Damn, she caught me," and about how she would do this with both hands full. Sets the coffee down on the sidewalk, returns to the scene to

fruitlessly try to open the wrong end of the poop sack, right there in front of the car. Figures out she's working on the wrong end of the sack, searches among the wood chips, finds the turds, and turns away, collects her coffee.

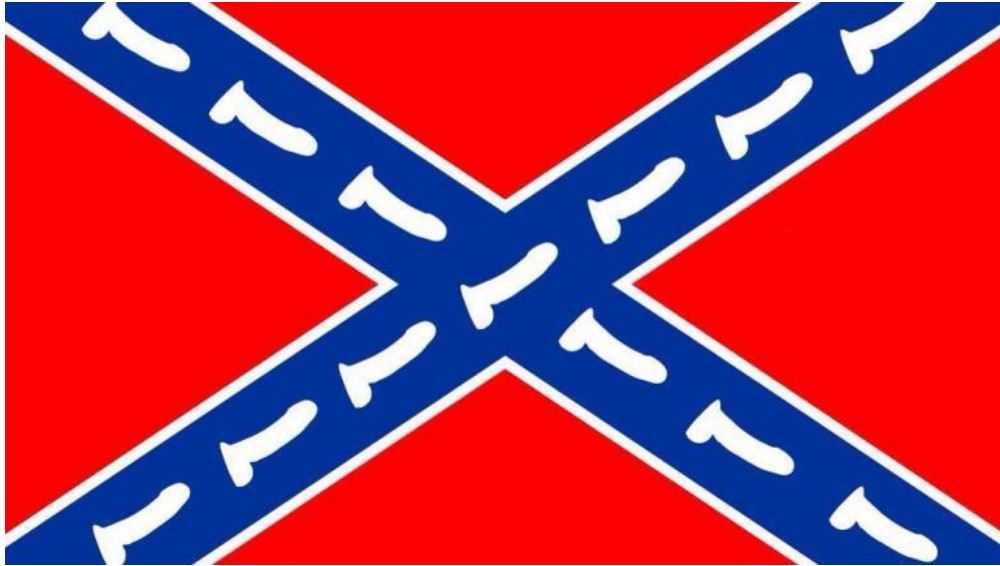
"Thank you," Betty cheerily sends her on her way.

Wonder what was going through her mind after subjecting the picnickers to the scene. Have to give Betty credit. The nonconfrontational coward that I am, was simply going to grumble in disgust. But no, see the crime, confront the crime. You go girl.

Dog owner sighting again this morning. With a man, low cut sundress, was telling him the story pointing to the site in the mulch and then to where the critics were watching from their parked car. Betty made a big impression. End



# The South and Jesus Rise Again

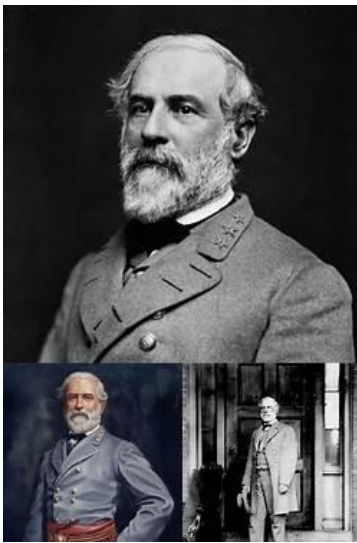


By Dan Vignau

Previously, I have written about how religious mythologies travelled from place to place by ships and caravans, and how slowly stories changed over the years. These trips took months and dispersed and shared information very slowly. The invention of the printing press, the telegraph, greatly sped up the distribution of knowledge, as well as myth. Later the distributions of newspapers, and the proliferation of radio and television significantly spread knowledge and conspiracies; however, the internet has added nuclear power to the process of information dissemination.



When the Civil War ended 150 years ago, Southern historical revisionists had a lot of rationalization to justify. After all, how could the noble cause of the Southern States possibly be beaten by the true perpetrators of evil, the Yankees? Today, how can the noble, god-given causes of the Christian conservative right be questioned? Only God can judge people. Conservatives, mostly Christians, which I shall refer to as Southern Mindset People, or SMP's, do not judge. That is God's job. SMC's simply fight for their own god's judgements to be institutionalized.



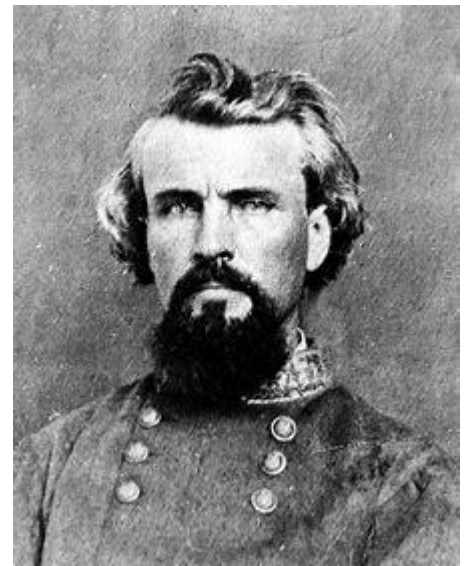
To the Civil War rebels, *God* was on the side of the noble and cultured South, and like all militant Southerners, brigade commander John Hood stated, "Any one Southerner could whip any ten Yankees." So how did they lose? Apologists for the South had to revise history to explain how this could happen. Southern General Robert E. Lee was practically canonized into sainthood, while his loss at Appomattox was compared to Jesus' Gethsemane betrayal.

Southern apologists wrote that General James Longstreet was to blame, and that there was no finer gentleman than Robert E. Lee. This took several steps, and continues today, except that the changes in technology have replaced the former geographical borders that divided the god-chosen Evangelicals of the South from the evils of the Damned Yankees. Now, with the internet both speeding up the distribution of information, while limiting most thoughts to a few quick memes, the mental borders between the god-chosen, Evangelical Christians, as too many liberals see the issue, are demonized by the sinful, evil ways of the Northern mindset, and this information can be addressed

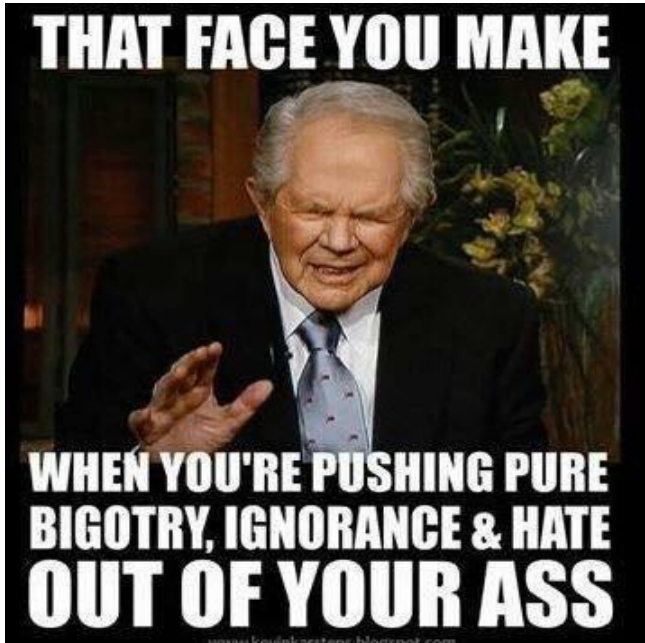
immediately. Moronic perpetrators of all causes, good and bad, can now join together electronically to justify their hatred and ignorance.

The so-called Lost Southern Cause, as touted in the literature of the conquered antebellum secession states, still attempts to reconcile just how the North won and how the current, faithful Christian Ignoratti continue to push their beliefs into the foreground of American politics and law as a result.

But it is not that simple. It is not the Evangelical Christians, *per se*, who are fighting to preserve the ill-perceived greatness of three generations ago, along with Rebel Heritage. For the South, and its electronically conjoined conservative and brainwashed brethren, to continue its belief in its moral and ethical superiority, all Confederate monuments must be protected. The races and sexes need boundaries. The proof of the evil liberal, *nee* Yankee, conspiracy is the continual removal of the monuments and statues honoring our Southern heroes, especially General Robert E. Lee, but certainly including the other two great men memorialized in the Stone Mountain Georgia carving, Confederate President Jefferson Davis and General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. These heroic noblemen of our past *must be saved*, along with religious monuments such as The Ten Commandments in our courtyards and schools, but not just the religious icon, and our revisionist historians are amassing the internet troops to do just that.



Of course, from the liberal perspective, we must first realize that the South had to find a substitute for victory, especially since it did not actually lose in battle, but was



simply overwhelmed by sheer numbers. While the actual total losses of men were comparable, only 1 in 3000 Yankees died, compared to 1 in 19 Rebels. There was near total devastation of homes, factories, and farms of the Southern institutions, yet few of their Northern counterparts. No matter, God was on the side of

the South, as he is now on the side of good ol' boys, gun-toting real men, country music listening and playing patriotic Americans, but especially the Rebels, who had fought much more bravely and better, but were simply outnumbered.

*Next*, the trinity needs to be explained. Yankees preached about The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but in the South, there was God, Man, and Satan. The fight for eternal souls lies here. We are born evil. Only a noble, Christian upbringing can eradicate our original sin. Only country music and our preachers' version of the Bible can save our great nation from the brown scourge of the hedonistic pagans who are entering our pristine country.

Did I say Country Music? Yes, I did, because it and it alone has, at its core, the continual striving amid perpetual disappointment, which is the heart of the Lost Cause of the Southern minded people. This does include all such people, regardless of their geographical location, because this



mindset is transported instantly through the internet.

*Third:* As Jefferson Davis noted, the “(Evil) Yankees fought with a ferocity that disregarded all the laws of civilized warfare.” (*Boo*

*Hoo: They did not fight fair!*) Worse, Satan’s soldiers of the North had unlimited resources, with 150 times more potential personnel and with most of the heavy manufacturing capability in the country. The noble South fought fairer, with fewer men, scant resources, and God on their

side, but somehow, could not overcome the overwhelming odds, no matter how righteous their holy cause.

*Fourth:* Robert E. Lee’s status was elevated to that of Patron Saint – as was Elvis – and now, through electronic, rather than geographical borders, is Donald Trump. Faith in Trump belies all rational thought. Sinners can be forgiven, and Trump personifies the sinner in us all.

It is still the Southern Mind Set, the one that Robert Penn Warren described as being; *lost in a fantasy of cultural isolation with contempt for the Yankee neo-liberal, whose own contempt for people for whom abstract reasoning is not*

## VOTING REPUBLICAN

I vote **Republican** to keep  
Foreigners, Minorities, Women,  
Socialist, Gays, and Liberals from  
**ruining** my life.



I vote **Republican** to keep this  
moron from realizing I'm the  
only one **ruining** his life.



*as important as is blind faith.*

That is the conservative mindset paradox, where reason and rationality are not important. There is no survival of the fittest or social institutions, only adherence to piety and faith in beliefs, no matter how outdated. Blind Faith in the Cause, or as in The Lost Cause, is all consuming.

Our heroes, flawed or not, are all we have to preserve our feelings of superiority. *So-what*, if Lee never had any real success, never owned property, and took 27 years for a promotion to general! *So-what*, if Donald Trump grabs pussy, is a slumlord, a liar, and a robber baron!

These two men exemplify all that a Southern Christian Mindset person can achieve, simply fighting for the correct causes, no matter how wrong they are intellectually, fiscally, or ethically. God sent them to lead us.



Our fight is not with their ignorant beliefs. The great philosopher Ron White warned us that we can't fix

stupid. We must fix the ignorance and apathy of intelligent people, not try to make morons learn to reason.

Again, our fight is not one of intellectual superiority. Instead, we simply need to protect our free press, support the rights of minorities, spread scientific knowledge, feed and cure our populace, decrease our population to a

sustainable level, save the planet, and somehow keep the right wing think tanks from leading the blind worshipers of imaginary gods to conclusions that only further the interests of the accumulators of capital – the rulers – who, at the expense of their own voters, bombard our airwaves and internet with false memes and contrite adages to inflame our increasingly mentally challenged population. Hell, Jarod Kushner was given more than that to do on his own.

We do outnumber the Idiocracy, but their members are multiplying faster than we can educate them.

Where should we start? How about getting rid of our antiquated two-party system that forces our lawmakers to compromise?

How about ending gerrymandering and voter suppression? How about not presenting corporate written bills through our



elexus jionde ✓  
@Lexual\_\_

It was through media bias and dog whistle politics in the 70s and 80s that bound poor whites more than ever before to wealthy white ones- and also to the Republican Party. In 1981 Reagan campaign consultant Lee Atwater said:

*You start out in 1954 by saying, "Nigger, nigger, nigger." By 1968 you can't say "nigger"—that hurts you, backfires. So you say stuff like, uh, forced busing, states' rights, and all that stuff, and you're getting so abstract. Now, you're talking about cutting taxes, and all these things you're talking about are totally economic things and a byproduct of them is, blacks get hurt worse than whites.... "We want to cut this," is much more abstract than even the busing thing, uh, and a hell of a lot more abstract than "Nigger, nigger."*



legislatures? How about saving our planet for future



generations, instead of killing it for short term profits to the top few percent of stockholders?

But mainly, how about writing letters to editors and political representatives? How about getting people to be concerned enough to vote?

The City of Lake Worth just had a vote to change its name to Lake Worth Beach. In a city of 38,000 it took fewer



than 1600 votes to make this change. Our other elections, even the most important ones, are decided by fewer than 20 percent of the population. With the internet, Fox News, and conservative think tanks are demonizing science and logic and, more importantly, getting hateful idiots to vote while convincing normal people to stay home, because their votes don't matter. By stopping the suppression of knowledge, truth, and reason, we can win, but only if we get out the vote.





*If these people are voting, we better vote too!*



# PRACTICAL ECONOMICS IN THE LIFE OF A SEVEN- YEAR-OLD BOY

By Bert Mautz



The bicycle abandoned by Connie Barkus five years earlier with a new tire and silver spray paint was to become a magic carpet for this skinny little kid. It was a girls' bike but no matter, it was my first two-wheeler. Have complained previously about the chain drive tricycle on Christmas morning, ugh, what were they thinking?



Around this time began receiving an allowance, small change, but to be my discretionary cash. With my pal Mike, we rode up sidewalks, north on Prospect St. to find the Dairy Queen. The smallest, and of course least expensive cone was a nickel. On less busy occasions, we would ride our bicycles right up to the window and make our purchase. God, I loved that nickel cone.



Drive-In food was to become staples of my life and true to this day. Largely feeding girlfriends. Flash forward sixty-five years, or so, on the spur of the moment was taken to a Dairy Queen shop, north of the Roosevelt on Federal. She emerged with a paper napkin wrapped cone in each hand.

"Guess how much your cone cost?"

"Is it the smallest? Like I ate as a kid?"



"Come on, guess."

"O.K. it cost a buck."



"Not even close.  
Guess again."

"Buck an'a half?"

"Still not close. That  
little cone was two  
twenty-nine."

"No shit? Tastes just  
like I remember.  
Damn near the same  
size!"

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# Sex, drugs and Rock n' Roll (or, how much obscurity can I shove into 700 words ... or less)

By Virgil Thorp



**T**hat's what my degenerate generation



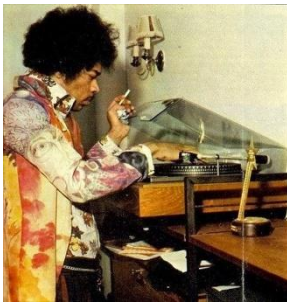
was interested in as alleged by many conservative social pundits. The echoes from that licentiousness was condemned from pulpits all over the country as undaunted technology sped that message across the republic at light velocity, convincing many that the previously pure generation was, indeed, "Eight Miles High".

Timothy Leary intoned with a dissolute mantra of, "turn on, tune in, drop out" that scared the bejesus out of middle America. "What would my kid do?" Everyone knew "one bad apple" would debauch the entire barrel and the infection would burn its way into every cranny of the nation, scorching even those areas known as "fly-





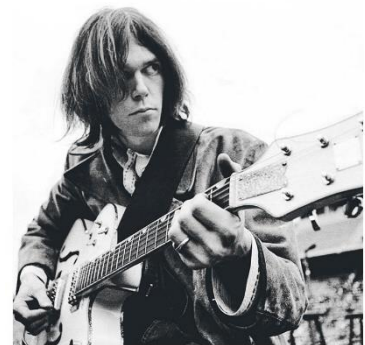
over” where progressive notions seldom ventured and everyone adhered to “that old time religion”.



The Era produced a delicious recipe for adultery; combine equal parts of sodomy, fellatio, cunnilingus, and a pinch of pederasty. Add a little Thai stick and stir to break the ice. Turn down the lights, turn up the music and serve hot. Before you know it, clothes are off and a whole new set of erogenous zones are discovered as the heaving orgy writhes its way to nirvana riding a glistening wave of lube and semen.

“What a field day for the heat, a thousand people in the street.” The fear is crouching out there, paranoid and waiting to pounce and the firm of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young are “Singing songs and carrying signs, mostly say ‘hurray for our side.’” As they take turns vigorously penetrating Joni Mitchell’s welcoming yoni and lamenting about four dead in O-hi-o.

“The young will turn upon the old, and this nation will become a land of Sodom and Gomorrah” if the contaminations from free speech, free thought and free love break the spell of blissful ignorance and believing in magic in young girls’ hearts. All along



the watchtower the alarm is sounded. Beware of the fire and the brimstone from the angry howling banshee in the sky.

“One pill made us larger and one pill made us small, but we found that the pills mother gave us, didn’t do a damned thing at all! Alice Cooper welcomed us to his



nightmare of gushing blood and gore wiping out the lucid azure glitter, sparkling in the sky from the merry minstrel diamond quartettes.

It was Vietnam and Ousley's Orange Sunshine

of your Love with the lasting memories of Agent Orange mashing a brain and disfiguring DNA. There, close to the edge with Leary and Kesey, Hofmann's lysergic discovery gave murderous Manson no reason to pause from the sound of a low spark of high-heeled boys.

Some of us walked on the wild side and to make us feel like a man, stuck a spike in our veins to instantly know that nothing will ever be the same. Each heart palpitation gives another rush to the brain. The senses blur with consecrated



intensity, mostly of a carnal nature when creamy truth is clutched at with each climactic, involuntary spasm.

"So where were the spiders" when Ziggy played guitar with Weird and Gilly? Were they at a fake reality



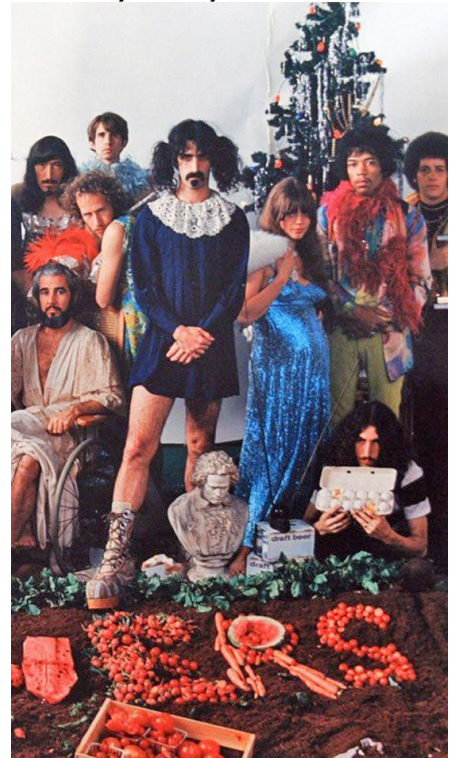


show? Some pornographic practical joke? A leper messiah? But I can't understand why she walked like a woman and talked like a man. Giddy with psilocybin giggles, the kinky lady ascends

a stairway to heaven twirling her panties over her head. Beckoning you to follow with her finger, "Come on, little boy, gonna make you a man!"

With that in mind, why am I tied to the whipping post? Hit me with your best shot because hell is for children. Oh, the wind cried Mary as the fool on the hill grabbed his ball in a pique of anger and made Airforce One wee, wee, wee, all the way home.

Why won't Zappa stop the weasels ripping my flesh? Good night kids, and thanks for coming to our concert.



# GROWING UP WITHOUT GOD – PT 4

*Hiding Out in the middle of  
the world*

By Lucy Thorp



When you grow up, you leave home and have to make a living ... wow. As screwed up as my childhood could and had been, I never worried about being kicked out of the house and forced on my own as a child because I didn't believe in a god or, more precisely, in their god. There were other circumstances and pressures that provoked my desire to leave home when I was finishing high school and I couldn't wait.



My alternative was meeting a boy who was cute enough, seemingly smart enough and he convinced me he was agnostic. There I was, way too young, way too foolish and unhappy with where I was. When Dave asked me to marry him my naïve mind reasoned, "this will

be an easy way out" and I consented despite my father's favorite name for him being "numb nuts." Even as I walked



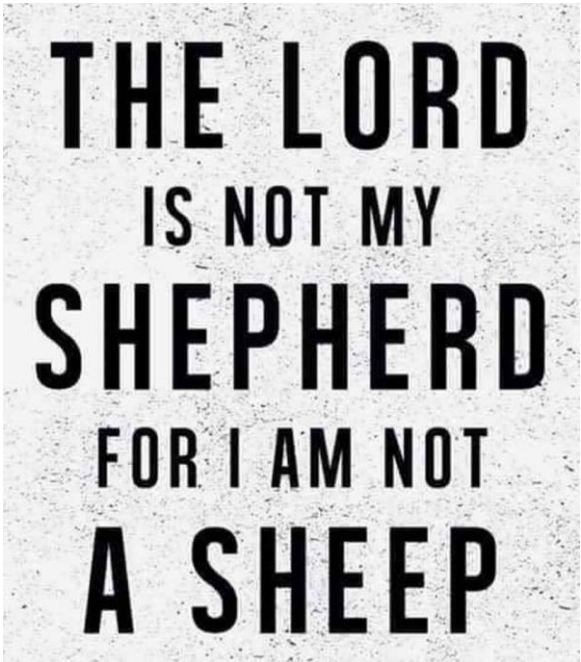
down the aisle of the church, I was asking myself, “what in the hell are you doing? Don’t, don’t, don’t!” But it was too late to stop making that big mistake.

I always thought he had been a momma’s boy and his mother seemed more than a little domineering. She and I were civil to one another but really didn’t want to know one another.

Dave cleverly avoided the Vietnam draft by enlisting in the Army (did I mention that my father called him “numb nuts”?). Because Dave was sent to boot camp at Fort Leavenworth, I had to move in with his mother and that’s when I found out her real personality. His mother was the demon from hell!

She discovered I was an atheist – the blame is squarely on my shoulders – and I was from then on never good enough for her son, or her or would receive any help. In her house I had to keep quiet about my unbelief or be expelled. Then, my sister-in-law who was a very sweet 16-year-old girl (2 years younger than me and extremely sheltered; much more like a child than a young woman) confided to me that she and her boyfriend had had sex. She had hardly any knowledge of sex or her body and she was very frightened. Of course, because I had been in the same situation not too long ago, I took her to Planned Parenthood and got her on birth control.

Unfortunately, my busy-body mother-in-law found the pills



**THE LORD  
IS NOT MY  
SHEPHERD  
FOR I AM NOT  
A SHEEP**

and the demon that she was, released all hell. She sent her daughter to her brother's house two states away (where things didn't end well). My demon mother-in-law proclaimed that if she had gotten pregnant it would have served her right! She was convinced that I was the atheist from hell that made her daughter a slut. I never saw the poor girl after that and am not sure if her life turned out okay.

Dave graduated boot camp and I joined him at Fort Hood, Texas. Fort Hood is between the towns of Killeen and Copperas Cove. You had to be at least a non-commissioned rank if you wanted to get post housing. Dave's Pvt 1<sup>st</sup> Class designation was not that rank. We ended up in a small enclave of trailers and shabby duplexes halfway between the thriving communities of Copperas Cove and Topsy, Texas or as I used to say, "halfway between hell and nowhere."



All of our neighbors were extremely religious. Most were from Baptist or even more fundamentalist sects. I was in secular humanist hell. You don't survive long in a small enclave of trailers and shabby duplexes if you don't

get along with the neighbors. I had no choice; I didn't talk religion. It was not a pleasant time and when Dave struck me during an argument, I had had enough.

After 18 months in the hell of Nowhere, Texas, I finally called Mom and said "HELP!!!" And she did. During my stay in Texas my folks had moved from Denver to Kansas City, Missouri. So, with just one suitcase of clothes, that is where

I escaped, January 1974.

After a couple of weeks trying to regain my sanity, I asked my Mom if she'd help me enroll in the local community college. One of my classes was Philosophy 101 conducted by Professor Don St. Clair, a person the governor of South Dakota once called, "the most dangerous man in the state." He was involved in a counter-cultural group called the "Foolkiller"; a theater/music/ philosophy, artsy-fartsy college-aged bunch of people that liked all of the previous mentioned activities as well as partying – hard partying.



I ended up there after St. Clair put out a "casting call" in class one day. A play they were putting on needed a couple of female roles filled. I went to audition and before I could put my coat down, I was in the cast, on stage and reading lines of what appeared to be a cuttngly funny tongue-in-cheek parody of the Watergate scandal.

The writer / director was so handsome. I went home and read the entire play. I discovered to my delight that he was (is) also a great writer. During the run of the play I found out he not only like to smoke pot, he was also an avowed, non-hesitating atheist. I not only liked what I read, I liked what I saw! He eventually became my forever husband. Meanwhile, everyone was secular, and it was invigorating ... I felt like I had found a group that cherished freethinking and satirized dogma. Especially religious dogma. The only drawback was that it was impossible to make a living at it.

In 1981 my husband and I decided to upend our life and open a grocery store. We sold our house and bought a small store in Concordia, Missouri (Pop 2100) which is a German Lutheran enclave. The biggest business in town is the Lutheran College and the biggest church is the Missouri Synod Lutheran, St. Paul's. Interestingly it is that one of the town's biggest draws is the Concordia Fall Festival Parade which always had floats ridiculing religion. Easter arrived after we had been in business for only a few months. We had, up until then, avoided attending any church services on



Sundays by "giving the time off to our employees." We felt we HAD to go to the Easter Sunrise Service to continue to do business in town after we received a rather pointed invitation from the assistant pastor who was our next door neighbor.

Afterwards, we felt truly sullied; we had "sold our souls" for business. We vowed to never do it again. What were we thinking?

"What do you think?" I asked my husband.

"I think I need a bath," he said sniffing his arms.

Rumors abounded, but they always do. It didn't make a difference. We were never going to make money in that

venture. My father-in-law years later acknowledged that he



had guided us to that location because he thought it would bring his son (and me) back to the Lutheran religion.

"If I ever came home and saw your son reading the bible and quoting it to me," I replied. "I would have left him on the spot. I learned from my first husband that I could only love a man who is an atheist."

We've never spoken of it again, yet he says I am his favorite daughter-in-law (heck, I'm his only daughter-in-law!).

Life goes on.

After the grocery store, we both took other jobs. Religion was either avoided or not important so as not to be of conversation or controversy. Whenever confronted, we would politely shut up.

I have been employed for the last 20 years by a man who is a devout Cuban Catholic. He assumes I am a good Christian because I have given him no reason to think otherwise. He trusts me with the company money. He trusts me to run his office. He trusts me to handle everything. I hope that if I told him I was an atheist he would still feel the same way; I don't know if I want to really find out. Meanwhile, I discovered another atheist at work, and we have our little

secret. It is better than nothing.



Then, 2015 ... my husband signed us up for the Florida Free Flo convention sponsored by the Florida Humanists in Orlando. For the first time in what has seemed like an eternity since the Foolkiller days, I



am at a venue that had a whole bunch of atheists in the same place. I got to meet *The Thinking Atheist*, Seth

Andrews (fan girl!) and many other people who think the same as I do.

No more fear, no more hiding.  
At last I'll be able to say what I  
am thinking!

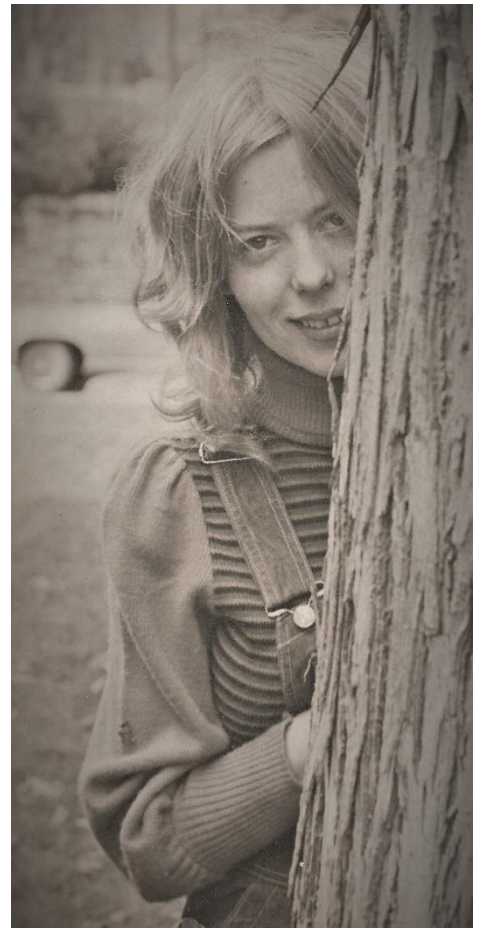


Not just one or two, a couple of hundred! 2017 – get to fan girl over Matt Dillahunty of the *Atheist Experience* television show and even more non-believers ... two

hundred plus! Then, this last November 2019 over 300 people sold out an amazing convention and I got to fan girl over the atheist celebrity, Aron Ra. My *Unholy Trinity* meet is complete!

Some of our friends were there for the first time this year and it reminded me of our first time. Wow...

If we hadn't gone to the first



convention, would we have the friends we have now? I doubt it and it would be a great loss. Every convention is an opportunity to meet others. There is no better time than now to support our secular friends.

My boss still doesn't know I am an atheist and he never will. What good would come of it? I am going to retire next June and will no longer worry about disappointing him or losing my job for being discovered. Wow! No more fear, no more hiding.

\*\*\*\*\*





*Art courtesy Apollonia Saint Clair* Support Apollonia Uncensored:  
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# AROUSAL

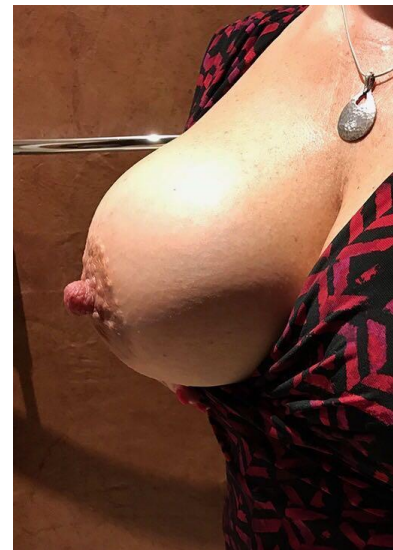
By Betty Tewksbury

Putting mere words together, to describe human sexual arousal, of the free, uninhibited and mature adult, sends my mind racing. I must confess my flesh has been sent the message – from the all-powerful thought maker, the brain – and is now fully engaged and is eagerly awaiting its input ... at the proper time.

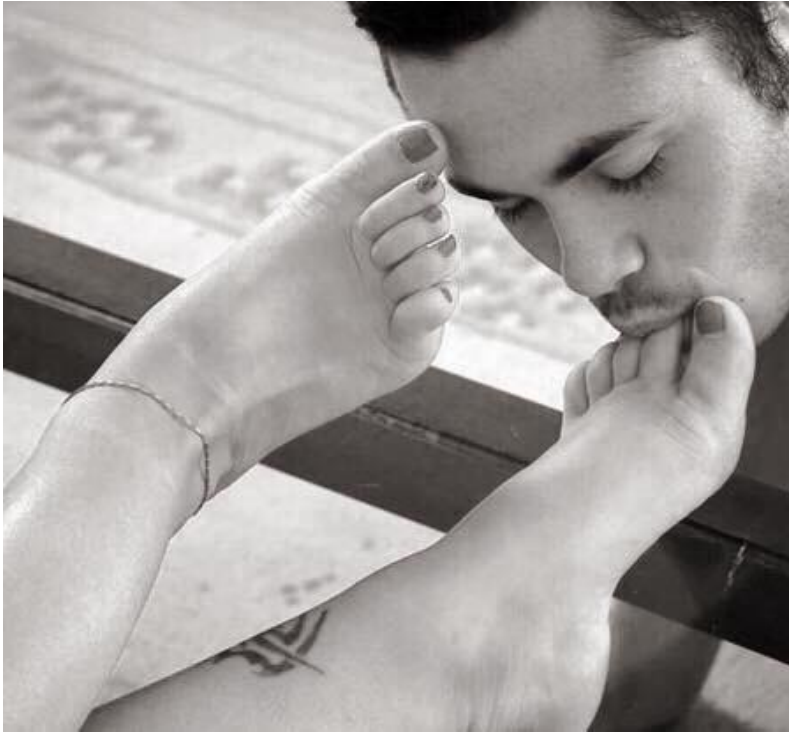
There are numerous angles, positions and

circumstances that can be used to broach this subject, but I prefer the natural, first-person, real-time and the actual feelings of that special erotic moment that signals the necessary body parts to stand ready for the ultimate climatic release.

Sexual arousal comes in many variations and intensities and every encounter with one, does not always produce the same outcome. As we all are aware, age – yes age – somewhat dictates the general overall sensitivity of the nerve endings involved in the orgasm. Let us take for example, the







young adult may experience nocturnal arousal and orgasm, this happens with just the brain as the lead drive. Then there is the brain in conjunction with the vital body parts engaged. Manual manipulation of the sex organs and breasts, thus

once again arousal heightens, until mind and body are satisfied.

The stimulus to arousal changes as we enter mid-life. The mental and physical distractions take their toll on the human psyche. The mind befuddled and tired does not perceive and process the once erotic signs and signals, to produce the ultimate satisfaction it once did; however, with a little extra effort the mind and body once again archives that all powerfully strong release called orgasm.

## It all must start with the old hang-ups buried,

The next seasons of life. (I break this time span into two distinct categories.) Let us first look at the "happily married" couple who has fallen into the rut-from-hell which compels this couple to follow the rigid ceremonial arousal route,

where a lot of fake orgasms occur due to the lack of spontaneous, authentically erotic, sexual arousal.

Then there are the individuals who find themselves either divorced or widowed and with some adjustments, luckily alive again, and with the full freedoms to explore and act on what once was an activity planned around the mundane responsibilities of parenthood.

## ... and a mindset that has no boundaries.

Yes, now the fun begins, or so it could with a little help. It all must start with the old hang-ups buried, and a mindset that has no boundaries. Once the mind spots a likely and desirable prospect for that “ultimate connection” and possible utopia, *let the fun begin*. A subtle wink, a brush of your hand on a pass by, or a slow licking of one’s lips might send the message that you are interested and available. Flirting will arouse the hunter as well as the hunted. Alcohol might help remove some inhibitions, but beware as it is also a depressant that could end the party before it begins.

If you swap phone numbers, the phone can become a new and exciting pathway; late night conversations intertwined with subtle innuendoes, coupled with lots of inquiries on both ends of the line always adds to the intrigue of that special first meeting.

If you are fortunate enough to have that first sexual encounter, take your time. Mere words or touching is perfect stimuli for sexual





arousal; that in turn seems to touch every inch of the body. The entire body then reacts with a burning desire that can only be quenched by natural, raw, no holds barred, pure unadulterated sex.

Culminating in an explosive orgasm that quiets for a while, both the mind and body.

Remember above all:  
"Life's journey is not

to arrive at the grave safely in a well preserved, under stimulated body, but rather to skid in sideways, shouting "Holy Shit...What a Ride!" (Hunter S. Thompson, *The Proud Highway: Saga of a Desperate Southern Gentleman*)



# Birthday Celebration *without* a Birthday Cake



By Yashi Nozawa

*Until after World War II, when the Japanese adopted various American customs, Japanese people did not celebrate their birthdays because of the traditional age counting system. When a baby is born, he or she is one year old, and the baby will become two years old on the next New Year's Day. It means that even a two-day old baby can be two years old if the baby was born on December 31<sup>st</sup>. So I, like many other Japanese children, did not celebrate my birthday during my childhood, however there was an exception; The Emperor's birthday.*

**W**hen I was in elementary school, we had four major Holidays; *Gan-tan* (New Year's Day), *Kigen-Setsu* (national foundation day), *Tenchou-Setsu* (birthday of the reigning Emperor) and *Meiji-Setsu* (birthday of Emperor Meiji). Among them the *Tenchou-Setsu* is probably the most important because it is directly related to a living God, *Kinjou-Heika* (who it was known as Hirohito among foreigners).

However, we were prohibited from calling the Emperor by

his name, so we had no idea what his name was. When a teacher has to quote the Emperor's saying, for instance, the teacher will say at first, "*kashikokumo* (reverend)" and pause; then all listeners will have to pay attention and straighten their bodies. Then the teacher continues, "Our beloved Emperor said..."

Around noon on April 18th, 1942 a couple of American bombers suddenly arrived in the sky over Tokyo, the capital city of the Japanese empire, and dropped a few bombs. The physical damage was minimal, but the psychological damage was considerable, especially among knowledgeable people.

The air defense of mainland Japan was supposed to be impenetrable because the vast geographical distance from any enemy-occupied lands. Authorities tried to minimize the impact of the bombing and almost no



follow-up news appeared in any newspaper.

However, the rumor mills were getting busy. Where did the planes come from?

*They came from the other direction of the Pacific Ocean.*

Then why were they American army bombers, not Navy ones?

*They had to come from the land.*

But the nearest Island to the East side of Japan is Midway Island about 4200 kilometers away. None of the American military aircraft had such a long range. The B17 Flying Fortress boasted a range of about 3000 kilometers (1860 miles), not even a one-way trip to Tokyo.

Navy planes can use an aircraft carrier, but they have a

much shorter range than army planes. Also, aircraft carriers cannot accommodate an army bomber because they require a longer runway for takeoff.

April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1942 was the first *Tenchou-Setsu* since the beginning of the war. As on any other national holiday we went to the school auditorium directly for the official ceremony instead of lining up on the school grounds for the morning ritual. All chairs had been removed from the auditorium. All students, 1st graders to 6th graders were



standing in their class lines. To indicate the position of a class line, at the front of the line, the teacher of the class stood at attention facing toward the pupils. All pupils also, stood in a line in the normal fashion; each

class in a single line with the smallest people at the front and the tallest one at the end.

At the eight o'clock bell, Mr. Sakura, who always acted as a master of ceremonies, stands up at the left side of the stage and shouts:

"Attention. The ceremony of the Emperor's birthday starts now. *Kyujou Yohai* (worship the Emperor's Palace)." He paused a few seconds while everybody paid attention and quieted down.

Then he issued a series of commands:

*Maware Migi!* (turn back with a right turn).

He checks that everybody faced the right direction then shouted:

*"Saikai rei!"* (bow deepest)."

And five seconds later, *"Naore"* (returned to normal)."



He makes sure nobody is bowing anymore, then, "*Maware Migi!* (turned back with a right turn)."

After a few seconds everybody faces the front.

Mr. Sakura called "*Kokka seisho!* (sing the national anthem)."

He pulled out a conductor's baton from his inner pocket, held it high with his left hand. When he swung the baton to conduct, the organ started the music and we all sang our national anthem, "*Kimigayo ...* (the reign of our beloved Emperor will ...)"



When we finished the anthem, Mr. Sakura put back his baton and said, "*Goshin'ei haikon* (honor holy portraits)" and he retired from the stage.

Then the principal with a frock coat and white gloves slowly walked to the center of the stage. At the center of the stage, a temporary shrine stood, a cabinet about 3-foot-high sitting on a purple cloth draped over a 5-foot-high wooden stand. The principal bowed deeply at first; then he opened the right-side door of the cabinet with his gloved hand and then the left side door, just like a New England style storm shutter. Once both doors were opened, 2-foot-high portraits of the Emperor and his Empress side-by-side became visible. However, the illumination did not reach the inside of the cabinet, so we could not see details of the portraits.

While we were trying to see the portraits, Mr. Sakura roared, "Saikerei! (bow we have to bow further the details of the

Immediately command, to normal)," he *Tenchou Setsu*

(Chorus of the Emperor's birthday celebration)." We all sang, "Kyou no yokihi wa ... (today is a joyful day ...)" with Mr. Sakura conducting, accompanied by organ music.

When we finished the song, Mr. Sakura said, "Kyouiku Chokuga raudoku" (reading of the Education Prescript) and he retired from the stage.

The principal returned to the center of the stage and stood facing us. The vice principal, who also wore a frock coat and white gloves, appeared while holding a purple cloth covered tray high above his head. He walked slowly toward the principal. When he reached the principal, he received the tray and placed it on the table in front of him. He carefully removed the purple cloth from the tray and delicately folded it and placed it on the table.

On the tray, there was a black lacquer covered box, 3-by-3 inches wide and high and 12-inches-long, secured by a purple rope at the center. He gracefully untied the rope and opened the box. The box contained a roll of paper. He carefully unrolled the paper sideways. (Japanese scrolls always open sideways, different from the western way because the Japanese language was written top to bottom on a sheet of paper.) The principal cleared his throat with a



after the "Naore! (return screamed. *shouka gasshou*



small cough and started to read the sacred Prescript on Education issued by Emperor Meiji, "*Chin omouni...*" (I, Emperor ponders ...)

It was an important moment for us. We had to hold our breath and make sure not to smile or show any emotion because it was the infamous phrase of "Penis thinks ..."  
Anyone who showed a sign of a smirk or a giggle and we would be in big trouble.

When the principal finished reading the education prescript, he carefully rolled the scroll, put it back in the box, re-tied the purple rope, placed the box in the tray and covered it with the purple cloth. Then the vice principal re-appeared to receive the tray from the principal and carried it backstage.

**M**r. Sakura also re-appeared and yelled, "*Banzai sans shou!*" (three cheers for the Emperor)."

He raised both hands at the same time and shouted, "*Ten'nou Heika Banzai!* (Long live the Emperor)."

We all raised both hands and and shouted, *Banzai* (Long live)!"

Mr. Sakura: "*Banzai!*"

We: "*Banzai!*"

Mr. Sakura: "*Banzai!*"

We: "*Banzai!*"



Then Mr. Sakura declared, "this concludes the celebration of the Emperor's birthday. Now all returned to your own classrooms."

Starting from 1st graders, we quietly and in an orderly fashion, walked out of the auditorium in single file.



When we arrived in our classroom, we were disappointed. In the previous year we had seen a big pile of packages of birthday cakes on the teacher's desk. There was nothing this year.

I know I said birthday cakes, but they were not a real birthday cake. They were not in any sense like a western birthday cake or even close to a cupcake. They were a pair of white and pink mini- muffin size sugar cookies. But these were the only birthday cakes we knew, and we savored them at that time.

Soon Mr. Sakura showed up and told us, "I know all of you are disappointed. There is no birthday cake this year. We are fighting with a tough enemy and we have to win this war. To win, we may have to sacrifice ourselves and help soldiers and sailors in their fighting efforts. You remember that only a few days ago American bombers visited us.

"We have been winning and we have relaxed our attention. Then the enemy sneaked in. We cannot relax until we win the war.

"But do not worry, I heard unofficial news that Admiral Yamamoto, our hero of Pearl Harbor, promised the Emperor that the Japanese Navy would revenge the American air raids and the revenge will be so strong that America might abandoned the war.

"It is unofficial news I heard from a reliable source, but still an unofficial one. You should not repeat it to anybody. Just expect good news in the near future. Think this way; our sacrifices of Emperor's birthday cakes will help to win the war sooner. So, we should not complain of the lack of cakes."

I thought Mr. Sakura was odd; if we could not tell any other people of the news, why was he telling us? But I

remembered that there were several occasions when he told us a news story based on rumors. He seemed to have an urge to tell these rumors to somebody, but fellow teachers might not have believed him, so he was telling these rumors to us, a captive audience.

*Our sacrifices of Emperor's birthday cakes will help to win the war sooner. So, we should not complain of the lack of cakes.*

When I had any questions about the war situation, I asked my wise friend, Goinkyō. A few days later, the opportunity arrived. I eagerly asked Goinkyō, "I heard a rumor that Admiral Yamamoto promised the Emperor that the Japanese Navy would produce a big win in the near future. What do you think of that story?"

Goinkyō pondered for a moment and said, "I don't know what Admiral Yamamoto said to the Emperor, but I know the source of the rumor. One of our news analysts wrote an article on the April 18th air raid. It said that these American bombers probably came from Midway Island which is about 4200 kilometers from Tokyo. The best-known American aircraft's longest range is 3000 kilometers, so, they need some innovation to reach Tokyo. The innovation could be such as one intermediate stop made of a floating dock or an extra-large fuel pod to extend the range of the existing bombers. So, if we occupied Midway Island, there will be no more future air raids.

"Furthermore, if the Imperial Navy tried to occupy Midway,

the American Navy will desperately try to defend the island with an all-out effort since the island is the American base closest to the Japanese mainland. So, the naval battle around Midway Island could become the decisive battle which determines the outcome of this war. Now – before the recovery of the American fleet from the Pearl harbor damage – is the most favorable time for the Imperial Navy to win this crucial battle.”

Goinkyo continued, “I don't know whether the Japanese Imperial Navy adopted this advice or not, but it is well



known that Admiral Yamamoto has been proposing Midway occupation for a long time. Around the Navy base at Yokosuka, the rumor that the next big target is Midway Island is widespread and generally believed. Usually the Navy is secretive about the next target but this time the rumor seems intentional. It implies that the Imperial Navy is trying to lure the American Navy to Midway and Admiral Yamamoto wants the final battle with the American Navy around Midway Island. It seems the most plausible analysis. Admiral Yamamoto knows that the Navy cannot fight too long and he wants to end the war as soon as possible while



our Navy is still strong enough. He believes that the American Navy will recover within a year or so, then the Imperial Navy will have much less chance to win. So, my conclusion is that if there is a big naval battle around Midway, then it will be the decisive battle."

I said, "Thank you, Goinkyo. Do you think we will win?"

"I hate to predict the outcome. the odds are not too good for us, because the Japanese Imperial Navy is very good with such a surprise good with a well- When the Americans will be well prepared.



attack, but not too prepared enemy. come to Midway, they

I was confused, Mr. Sakura thinks it will be a big win, but Goinkyo is pessimistic. I hope the missed Emperor's birthday cakes help us win the battle.

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# FreeFlo 2019

by Virgil Thorp



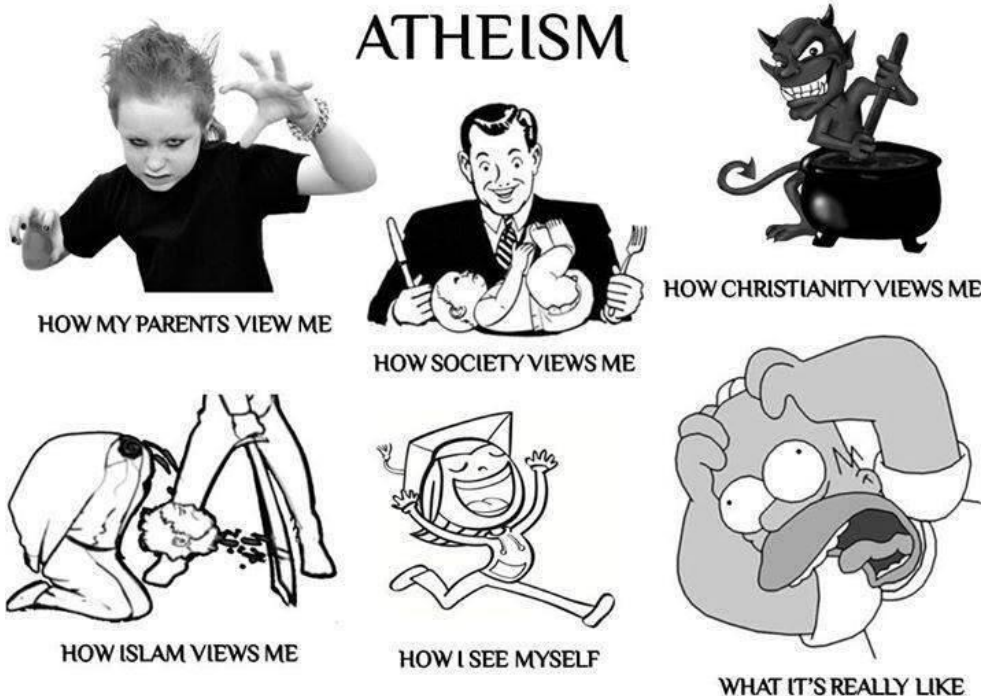
It is great to be around so many freethinking individuals and at Orlando's FreeFlo weekend they are all around you like a friendly snug cocoon. For first timers, it is very much like

metamorphing from shy worm into a beautiful social butterfly. The thoughts you have kept hidden can come out and be spoken aloud without the fear of being silenced. You find you can breathe without an ugly MAGA hat around.

I was wearing the t-shirt from my first Freeflo conference in 2015 for the trip and as I was walked past the valet parking stand in front of the Holiday Inn, another car pulled up with several people I didn't know but who waved at me enthusiastically. Maybe they had been lost and their joy was in finally arriving at the destination. Maybe I had met them at a previous convention but couldn't remember in my dotage. Couldn't have been me, or my t-shirt, could it? I waved back and tried to smile without appearing too demented.

We started running into Treasure Coasters right away. Alex and Carlos from Pt. St. Lucie we had met at TC Atheists at Panera and at TC Humanists at Nexus. Ray and Eddie from (our own) Aware Ones and TC Atheists joined the four of us for a drink at the lobby bar. Even Ken(t) who I had not seen

for  
nearly  
a year  
was  
there  
in his



*Atheist Republic*

homemade Treasure Coast Atheists t-shirt. Joe and Raisa couldn't make it Friday but had told me they'd were going to the Saturday events (which they did). We attempted to get a single table for the Saturday night banquet but as all stubborn rugged individuals do, we went separate ways and ended up all over the hall but that just gave us an opportunity to get to know more people.

Friday evening kicked off with a cocktail and costume dance. *Dia de los Muertos* was a dominate theme with several very accurate Mexican, Day of the Dead, costumes and intricate makeup jobs. I went as a Treasure Coast beach bum which is my normal attire but won no awards because Lucy had made me shave so I wasn't quite authentic. Although the cash bar prices were steep, the hor d-oeuvres were excellent.



Many of the conference's speakers were there to mix and Matt Dillahunty got the dance floor full with a line dance favorite that I don't know the title of but they were moving to the left, they were moving to the right, they went two steps back and then turned

perpendicular. Shake it baby, shake it to the music and the dance was very much like a

military close order drill and I admired the dancers on their unity although I fully expected someone to go to the right when everyone else went to the left and the floor would be littered with aching bodies. That's why I kept my comfortable seat.



Our own Eddie and Ray, being professional dancers and instructors, were two of the most popular dancers with the



ladies. The ladies were standing in line to dance with Eddie and he showed why with twirling and spinning his partners with expert care. Very good. But just watching tired me out and we left early to get enough energy for a full day Saturday.

Jocelyn Williamson, President of the Florida Humanist



Association had her welcoming greeting and introduced Congressman Carlos Guillermo Smith from the Orlando district 49 who shared with us how he came out of the closet to embrace his atheism and homosexuality and how important it is for freethinkers to stick together and form new alliances.

The Thinking Atheist, Seth Andrews started the morning session with an insightful speech on how he “(I) Sold My Soul on Twitter.” The audience recognized many of the situations he described with humor and stark reality and ended with a standing ovation.

Sarah Gillooly came next; *Church-State Separation in the Trump Era & What You can Do about it*. After a break Dr. Sikivu Hutchinson spoke about *Feminism, Freethought and the 99%*.

Transgender rights were dissected by Gina Duncan, a totally passable MTF individual with her talk titled; *Transgender Dynamics in Today’s Society*. Following Gina, Dr. Anjan Chackravartty discussed *The Many Confusions of Science Skepticism*. Center for Inquiry’s Berth Vasquez and member of the Teacher Institute for Evolutionary Sciences spoke about her encounters with anti-evolutionists attempting to sanctify creation science in classrooms.



Amy Monsky  
alternative program  
of skeptics who  
religious  
summer camps for  
"Get 'em young the  
says, why don't



promoted an  
for the children  
want to avoid  
indoctrination in  
youth, Camp 42.  
catholic church  
we?"

Dr. Daniel  
of Aerospace,  
Space Sciences at the Florida Institute of Technology,  
informed us on the perils of speaking up as an atheist in the  
current hostile academia climate with the final session.

Batcheldor, head  
Physics and



All through the sessions I'm jotting  
down notes as best as I can scribble. I  
only hope I can decipher them later.  
One thing I can read is that next year  
I'm bringing a roll of stickers to  
distribute that other attendees can  
apply to their rooms' Gideon Bible that  
says, "if this book seems inadequate,  
try logging on to Americans United dot  
com" or fill in your organization. I thought about bringing  
the Bible from my room and have the Unholy Trinity of  
Dillahunty, Andrews and Ra sign the inside cover and leave it  
for the next Christian who needed to pick up the tainted  
book.

Batcheldor's talk note says, "Moon landing, triumph of  
science; Vietnam, tragedy of innocence; Worse tragedy –  
equating zombies and aliens with evolution. Science is a  
work of failure, finding if a proposal is wrong. Who says we  
can't also apply the scientific method to faith and religion?"



We ended the day with a pretty good banquet considering it was catered food and the same expensive booze but the entertainment was first rate beginning with the Orlando Gay Chorus

Ensemble who tailored their program for us freethinkers harmonizing with an evolutionary version of Mendelsohn's Hallelujah Chorus, "Evolution, evolution, evo-olu-u-u-ution." Devin Seibold, a riotous comedian and high school teacher who must have a waiting list for his classes, kept us all laughing with tales of his adventures as a modern educator. We ended a full day with Dr. Dan Batcheldor's Super-duper Science Trivia contest which was both fun and humbling with the realization of what trivia is no longer found in the dark, damp recesses of our dusty minds.



Sunday's full program began with The Atheist Experience of Austin, TX's, Matt Dillahunty. Matt had once studied to be a Baptist preacher and he had the audience nodding and shouting just like a revival only sans the supreme being. He was followed by Freedom From Religion Foundation attorney, Monica Miller who brought us up to date with their battles against religious infringement into state government and education.

University of Tampa professor, Dr. Ryan Cragun added the thoughtful *Have You Got Anything Without Theism?* Brandon



Haught, author, science teacher and founder of Florida Citizens for Science recounted his struggles with providing untainted instructions to his students. Debbie Goddard, Vice-president of programs of the American Atheists spoke next about *the Science of Change: (and) Evidence-based Activism*.

I'm taking notes furiously now. I just added an important character to my play in progress, *God is Divine*, which has the transvestite Divine as the disgusted chorus as evangelicals fawn over and stroke and jerk off the orange president as the money changers plunder the temple. It is unnerving that Christian freedom now equates with Christian domination. Kelly Ann Conway is a rehearsed rebuttal robot bloviating with no hesitations, no pauses, no stutters, only constant rebuke without end. Oh, I know I don't want to be the rapee but do I want to be a rapist instead? Will that be my only option, mmm.

My play's guilty preacher has regrets. He's now being berated like a Japanese salaryman and confessing his humiliations like a guilty prostitute who has just grasped religion. "I'm not worthy. I've done terrible things. I deserve punishment. Please God, may I have another?" Whack, whack, whack. "Thank you, Jesus!"

Lastly, the largest and meanest looking member of atheism's Unholy Trinity, Aron Ra (the other two being Seth Andrews and Matt Dillahunty) summed up what we had all been



concerned about regarding our political situation and what can happen if we don't vote in 2020. F-ing scary.

We finished up with a group photo, said our good-byes, admonish everyone to drive safely and hustled home. Worn out, yes. Happy, yes. Satisfied, no.

Although much of the concerns for atheists like myself were covered with thoroughness and wisdom, no one wanted to go to the area that is so bothering about atheist schisms that have occurred over the last several years that threaten to destroy any unity.

I didn't want to go to the right while everyone else seemed so happy going left. I know I didn't feel right asking Matt Dillahunty about his being sued by Dave Silverman and the lawsuits between Richard Carrier and P.Z. Myers. Tawdry scandals of sexual harassment involving free thinking luminaries like Lawrence Kraus, Neil deGrasse Tyson in addition to Silverman have erupted to cover the rest of us like explosive diarrhea. I wanted to know why the Atheist Community of Austin, parent organization of the Atheist Experience show had a rift between members that was so volcanic over transgender issues that many bedrock members quit, and the organization was removed from Freethought blogs.com.



Maybe Freeflo was not the place to discuss these things? Freeflo is not Skepticon or some of the other variations of progressive free thought conferences with a much younger and sexually active crowd. But, FreeFlo had a transgender Mistress of

Ceremonies, the conference was very "gay" friendly, I never saw anything in anyway untoward about sexual harassment.



Did some people hook up? I'm sure they did but it was no swingers' convention and that is something I know more than a little bit about. But I do know that somewhere, sometime, these things need to get worked out because we need to be united, not suing and shunning one another.



Nevertheless, my mind gets stimulated by events like this and I want to do it again in 2021. I love the FreeFLO experience. It is well designed, well run and has a wealth of information, activities and vendor exhibits. Part of the proceeds fund two \$1,000 scholarships for secular undergraduate students to encourage the recipients to participate in secular activism during their academic career. Every penny of my costs – except for the excessive price for a bottle of beer – was well worth the expense. I believe every attendee thought it was a rewarding, atheistic, secular experience.



# LETTERS

## Dear Senator Warren:

I am writing you because I want to make certain that you are aware of some current research in Sociology and Psychology. I worry that due to your busy schedule, while doing great work for our wonderful American Democracy, you might have missed some interesting information and research pertaining to the phenomenon of co-opting into one's mind a sense of familial Native American heritage, just as I was brought up to do and to believe.



My Mother was born in Tellico Plains Tennessee. Her forbearers had lived way up in the mountains, in a place called Stratton Meadows, until sometime after it became The Cherokee National Forest in 1920.



Since the early 1700's, generations of settlers of this area had lived concurrently with mostly what we now call Cherokees. The Stratton Meadows environ is the beginning of an area far enough up into the mountains that some of its residents debated whether they lived in Tennessee or North Carolina, although it was mostly a matter of conversation. It did not really matter at all in which state one lived. Mountain people were just that, mountain people, and not necessarily Tennesseans or North

Carolinians.

My maternal Great Grandfather was born there, but moved to the foothills of Vonore, Tennessee to farm. When his still young first wife died, according to family legend during a later childbirth, he remarried and raised a second set of children.

It is not hard to guess the religious and inheritance implications of this union, with such questions as to which children would inherit the farm, and which wife will be buried with him? Which will he be with in Heaven? Will he even be allowed in Heaven, or will he go to Hell for remarrying? There was a complete split within the family, with his children and my great-grandmother's siblings never speaking for many decades, until my Mother decided to do something about this feud.

From my Grandmother's Tellico Plaines' house, Mom called, my "Aunt" Blonnie, Grandmother Maggie's half-sister from this second marriage. She lived a short drive away in Madisonville.

Handing the phone to Maggie, Mom said, "Someone wants to speak with you." Cautiously taking the phone, Grandmother said, "Who is this?" Presumably, a voice answered, "It's Blonnie; who is this?" The answer was, "Maggie", followed by a silent, but glaring hang-up. Thus, went the only known dialogue between the two sides of the family from the 1940's until now.



The reason I mention this is because my ancestors became friendly with both sides, those who had lived with the Cherokees, and the flatlanders on the farm. My Mom, Dad, Sisters and I spent a few Easters on this 600-acre, self-sufficient, non-pesticide, non-fertilizer, and non-infernal combustion implement using farm. As children, we would also occasionally visit our Great Grandmother, Granny, in Tellico Plaines. She told elaborate tales about life with the "Indians", where the two cultures lived, nearly side by side, in cabins and houses, trading with each other and getting along just "Like peas in a pod." She would sarcastically add, "Before the government kicked us out of our homesteads." Astoundingly, decades later the Vonore farm was taken for the Tellico Dam project.

Due to religious convictions, Granny's family did not admit to having a relationship with our sinfully, twice-married Vonore patriarch. Instead, we were told that my Grandmother had been left by the Cherokees as an infant on Granny's doorstep to be raised by her children, (my "second marriage 'aunt' and 'uncle'"), because her sinful father had had relations with a heathen "Indian", and the Cherokee did not want the bastard child either.

In any case, we were most certainly at least one eighth Cherokee from Granny's side, and probably more from our Dad's mother, Mamote, who had run away from picking cotton in North Georgia, at the age of eleven. She actually looked very "Indian." Birth records show that she must have been pregnant. Having personally at least witnessed attempted, incestuous goings on, I would surmise that she was not a willing sexual partner, whether from the cotton



fields or from home. We never found out much more, but growing up, we did revel in our claim to be part Cherokee, as did many of my East Tennessee childhood friends. Being part "Indian" was seen as a badge of honor, complete with the blood brother ritual, as shown on TV. Generations of purely Anglo white boys made this claim, if for no other reason than to fit into a laudable East Tennessee ancestry scheme. Future generations perpetuated these claims.

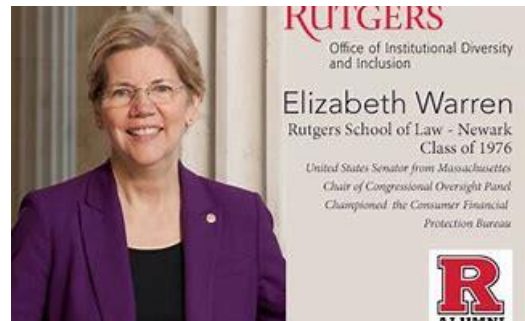
But Alas! Technology!



When DNA evaluation became readily available to the public, we sent a sample of mine to National Geographic for their ongoing genome tracking study, soon discovering the paths that my and my sisters'

now Scots-Irish genes had taken in their migration from Africa to Northern Great Britain. My Y chromosomes had ambled pretty much directly to Scotland and Ireland, but our X chromosomes had detoured through Nordic areas, thus explaining how some of us have blond hair.

But not one speck of Indian DNA in our chromosomes! Now, some Psychologists and Sociologists have found this to be an interesting, ancestral identification to study. Many of them posit that, by clinging onto the claims of having indigenous bloodlines, we might alleviate our guilt for being a part of the generations of



genocidal maniacs who exterminated the Original People, people who had settled North and South America over 10,000 years ago, the Original "Americans". I can't help but wonder if many current, black acting white people are doing the same, as if such an identity might somehow alleviate their familial association with slavery and oppression.

We European settlers not only destroyed the hunters and gatherers of the mountains, but the nomadic hunters of the Great Plains. We totally obliterated their cultures, not the least of which were the expansive, great Aztec and Incan societies, proclaiming that our supreme being gave us the manifest destiny to murder anyone who deters us from our quest for resources, especially anyone who is not purely "white", or who has a divergent belief system, or horrors, BOTH! Does constant war in the Middle East come to mind?

Adam Smith would roll over in his grave watching people continue to expand the base of monopoly oligarchy and capitalism. However, when he wrote "The Wealth of Nations", resources and territory seemed boundless, nearly infinite. All we needed was to make more people to keep the inevitable expansion going, but of course, only for people like us, our god's chosen race, but I digress.

It seems that knowing that your immediate ancestors were bloodthirsty, genocidal maniacs can be disconcerting. The realization that your forbearers exterminated millions of innocent people and entire cultures, even if in god's name, is certainly not something to brag about, but something to be terribly ashamed of, akin to a history of Nazi or Klan membership. How could one deal with the cognitive dissonance of being a god fearing, god-chosen, family

person, while being a descendent of one of the most murderous cultures in history?

Well, here is how: Through our manufactured



identification with the oppressed Original People, and through our claim of sharing at least a part of their genetic heritage, we can relate to their horror and demise, rather than feel that we are indeed the personification of the evil culture that fomented these atrocities.

Unfortunately, at least in many ways, the science of DNA has ended this charade of genealogy, our own special ego defense mechanism. We can no longer inadvertently continue to lie to ourselves and to our children. We have seen the evil. It is in our mirrors. We are the exterminators of vast cultures of indigenous peoples, like it or not!

Senator Warren, we know you meant well in your identification with Native Americans. It was not your error, but the error of a culture of ego rationalization for the alleviation of the dissonance of self-hatred.

We must eradicate our own ignorance. We must continue to shame the evil out of the many still misinformed people, who when asked, still cling to the belief that the manifest destiny of any so-called superior race or religion is to create a homogeneous theocracy of hate.



Please, Senator Warren; Please get elected.

Sincerely,  
J Dan Vignau



.....  
*AOTC Journal reprints with permission, Joe Beck's letter to the editor from the Thanksgiving edition of the TC Palm newspapers.*

## Much to be grateful for



Secular Americans have much to be grateful for this holiday season. Non-theistic members of the military are now allowed to wear ID tags that identify themselves as humanists or athe-



ists, a right which was denied American soldiers who fought in our two World Wars.

**M**artin and Indian River counties have been allowing members of the secular (non-religious) community of Humanists, Atheists and Agnostics to deliver invocations at public meetings for years, and more Florida counties are implementing a similar policy of inclusion.

**W**hile the general public and most elected officials support treating members of minority religions and those who are non-religious equally, an aggressive minority of religious leaders and politicians are imposing their religious interpretations on others. They use the term "religious freedom" to justify business owners and medical staff refusing services to members of the LGBT community, deny women the right to legal medical procedures, and refuse to allow Humanist chaplains in the military.

**P**romoting equality for the secular community is the goal of Humanists of the Treasure Coast, a not-for-profit organization that I founded in 2009. We make progress when we unite to demand justice.

**I**n the words of Martin Luther King Jr., "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." He was wise enough to suggest that if we want to experience progress toward justice, we need to become involved in fighting for equality, not just for ourselves but for everyone in the human family.

Let's join forces this holiday season to promote equal treatment for all. When we experience differences of opinion, let us commit ourselves to resolving our differences under the banners of mutual respect and the Golden Rule of treating others as we wish to be treated.



**Joe Beck, Jensen Beach**

**Founder, Humanists of the Treasure Coast**

**Editor's note: HUMTC is celebrating the tenth anniversary of its founding this year.**

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*Today's quote from AOTC member, Dan Vignau:*

"I want a goddamn strong statement on marijuana. I mean, one on marijuana that just tears the ass out if them. Funny thing, every one of the bastards out for legalizing marijuana is Jewish. What the Christ is the matter with the Jews? What is the matter with them?"

■ Richard Nixon, from his tapes.

# Advice to President Trump

Dear Donald,

I had an epiphany after watching the Lincoln Center Salutes last night and offer this advice. Tomorrow, instead of watching Fox News, watch Sesame Street.

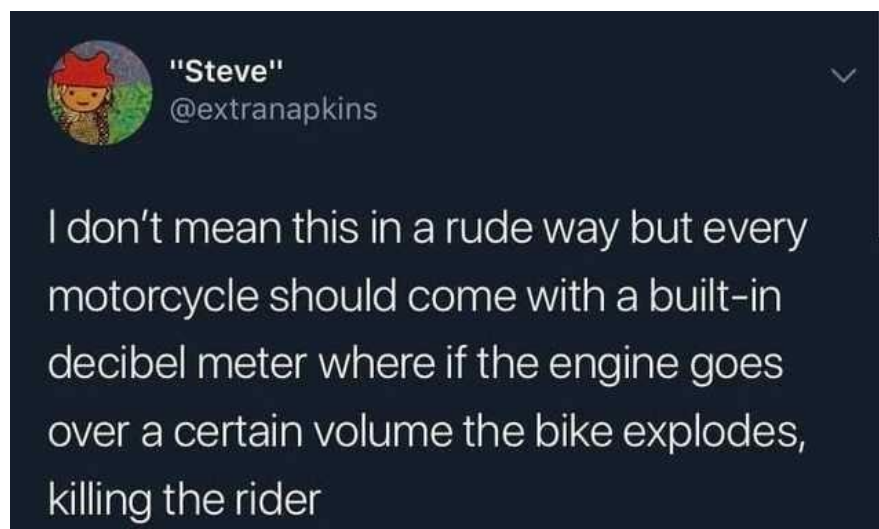
There is so much to learn there; like the A-B-C's of Humanity, the 1-2-3's of Compassion, and the importance of kindness to others. It is a great education tool. Please use it.

I know you're a slow learner, but stick with it and like any Kindergartener, you too can learn.

(With all sincerity),

Gail Baker

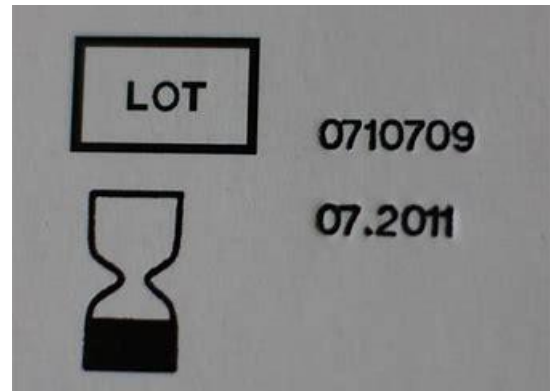
*p.s. Folks - please rescue me if I wind up at a Black Site.*



## COMEDY

# Expiration Date

By Jim Longo



Sitting at the nursing home with my father, one of the nurses said, "It is not as if they stamp an expiration date on our butts when we are born. We are not salad dressing."

On the way back to the lab it got me thinking. "What if we had enough information to predict a death date," Jack said to his post doc Jill.

"Life is too complex. There are just too many variables, genetics, environment, behavior, hell, walking across the street," Jill said, in her white coat, hands in her pocket.

"How do insurance companies do it?"

"They are not predicting the future. They are taking data and calculating the likelihood of the average person's demise."



"And they take that to the bank?" Jack asked.

"And make good money doing it."

"The nurse is wrong; we actually have an expiration date stamped on our butts we just can't see it."

"Jack, what are you talking about?"

"Most life ending events are caused by either chronic diseases, acute diseases or trauma."

"Okay I'll buy that," Jill said

"We can't do much about trauma. Accidents will happen."

"Okay, so what?"

"You think there are too many variables, but diseases come down to genetics and environment/ behavior."

"Maybe chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, or even cancer, but how about acute diseases, like pneumonia, UTI's, viruses?"

"All diseases have a genetic and environmental component, and by analyzing these extensively, we should be able to predict within a reasonable margin of error death dates."

"What are you proposing?"

Jack took a breath, "If we look closely at a person's genetic make-up, we should be able to predict what genetic traits will breakdown in any given person's environment/behavior."

"Do you know how much data you are talking about?" Jill asked.

"Do you know how much access a large number of people



need to give us to make this happen?"

"People are too paranoid. They will never do it. Besides do people really want to know when they are going to die?"

"Wouldn't you?" Jack asked.

"I don't know. It would be pretty a daunting piece of knowledge."

"I think it would motivate me," Jack said. "It could be pretty depressing if it was going to be too soon, if you don't have enough time to do what you want to do."

"You are forgetting one variable that probably would throw a monkey wrench in your predicting death dates."

"What's that?" Jack asked.

"Fear and change," Jill said.

"How is that?"

"Okay you do all this research and make your predictions. A person sees your prediction and changes his behavior, thus screwing with the data."

"Great, we'd be a force for good. We'd improve people's health outcomes. We'd increase their life expectancy. Wait a year and test them again and give them a new date."

"I can see the lawsuit coming a mile away."

"What do you mean?" Jack asked.

"If I lived my life as if I was going to die on 'X' date, and I'm still here. I've used or given away all my money. You'd need to support me plus damages."

"If you are looking for unintended consequences, the life

insurance industry would probably want to keep it proprietary. They would make even more of killing than they do now."

"Do you want to do it?" Jill asked.



"Let's write up a grant proposal and shop it around?"

"How long are you going to shop it around for?"

"Let me get this straight, a proposal about dates of death needs a date of death. You're treating my proposal like salad dressing."

They both laughed and got to work.

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## The Week Before Christmas

By Ed Zillioux

**'Tis** the week before Christmas and I find myself in Walmart's looking for a plunger for my toilet. It's crazy in here. Everyone pushing/shoving around with either a silly vacant smile or an "I'm-going-fucking-out-of-my-mind" expression. Christmas music blaring. I hear it but the words get all bumbled up to match the moment: "It's beginning to look a lot like an orgasm in a crowded bus station."



And so it goes. Where the hell is the toilet department? I'd ask but there's nobody around to ask. There's never anyone around to ask. That's a Walmart feature. I try to move to the



back of the store, but I can't get through the aisle which is completely blocked by a 300-pound woman with two hollering kids. I fall back, trying to reassess my bearings, but it's like being trapped in a human zoo completely devoid of landmarks, let alone the cardinal points of a compass.



What joy do these people really get? Is

this simply an obligatory ritual? You get a gift for Sam; Sam gets a gift for you. Whether they are of equal value is not lost on either recipient. Do they show knowledge of the other's likes/dislikes? Does it even matter? The job is done for another year. Wham bam, thank you ma'am.

But I digress, a dangerous preoccupation when you're about to be trampled in a shopping stampede. Got to stay focused. I'll try an end run around to the right. Oh shit! Now I'm in the grocery department. No toilet plungers here.

I need to sit down – but where? Ah – I've stumbled into the shoe department, must be a bench here – Yes! All I need is five minutes of deep breathing and concentrating on peaceful thoughts to blot out the chaos surrounding me. I collapse on the bench and close my eyes. The noise of a thousand shoppers doesn't go away but it coalesces into a steady hum – sort of like white noise on steroids. But I can feel myself beginning to relax when...

"Pardon me sir, can I sit down so I can try on these here shoes?"

I answer, "Sure," without opening my eyes.



"But sir, there's no room for me unless you get up. I won't be but a minute."

Reverie shattered, I stagger to my feet and forge ahead across a wide but crowded aisle into fishing gear. It turns out that fishing gear seems to be the ideal gift for at least one person on every Christmas shopping list. But I find a spot in front of the fishing rods where I can just stand and gaze.

*I can't get through the aisle which is completely blocked by a 300-pound woman with two hollering kids.*

Did you know there's something oddly calming about a fishing rod? I've felt this way ever since my boyhood when I used to paddle up backwaters and spend an afternoon of quietude with my rod and bait and a book, and it didn't matter whether I caught a fish or not. My eyes wandered from rod to rod and



fell upon a Shakespeare Ugly Stik Carbon Casting Rod. I couldn't believe it! I would never have expected to find a rod of this exquisite caliber here in a Walmart. What a treat! I reached up to touch it, to hold it, to feel its lightness and balance. And then just as I was about to grasp it, a beefy arm shot across in front of me and it was snatched away.

"Hey look Billy, this must be a real good pole judgin' from the sticker price. Daddy's sure'nuf gonna like this."

NO! NO! I wanted to scream. *YOU DON'T DESERVE THAT, YOU FUCKING PHILISTINE!* But I held back and kept my rage to myself.

It was gone. Gone. I had to get away from there, find my toilet plunger and get the hell out of this megastore. I pushed my way through the mass of shoppers. Two aisles down and I saw her. An attendant! Someone from whom I could ask directions. She was mobbed of course, but I was persistent and finally was able to ask, "Could you please, please just tell me where the toilet department is?" From the way she looked at me I guess she thought I was deranged or at least desperate.

"Sure," she said in a patronizing manner, "Just take the next aisle to the right, follow it all the way to the end and it will be right in front of you."

"Oh thank you, thank you," I replied, and I was on my way. I turned right at the next aisle and went all the way to the end. But there was nothing there. Nothing that is except the restrooms. "OH NO! OH SHIT!" I screamed out loud. "SHE SENT ME TO THE FUCKING RESTROOMS!"



That attracted some attention that I didn't want but I couldn't help it. I looked wildly around and went on a vocal tirade. "ALL I WANT IS TO GET OUT OF HERE!! TO HELL WITH THE PLUNGER! I JUST WANT OUT OF HERE! WHERE ARE THE EXITS? CAN ANYONE TELL ME WHERE THE EXITS ARE?!!"

No one answered, they just stared at me. I was on my own. I turned around and managed to run or what passed as a run, given the maddening throng of shoppers. I ran all the way in one direction until I came to a wall and looking left, I see a door. I'm saved, I thought desperately. I ran to it and pushed it open.

*"Did you find everything you were looking for sir?"*

*That's when I lost it.*

"OH SHIT!" I said again. "NOW I'M IN THE GARDEN DEPARTMENT!!!" I back up and continue running along the wall until I finally see a bank of cashiers. And there's the exits!

Like a diver coming up for air, I dove toward them. A checker, standing by the exit, steps in front of me and asks, "Did you find everything you were looking for sir?" That's when I lost it. I went on full attack mode.

"NO, GOD DAMN IT! DO YOU SEE ME CARRYING ANYTHING? MAYBE YOU THINK I'M STEALING SOMETHING?!! I DON'T WANT A FUCKING THING FROM THIS STORE!! GET OUT OF MY WAY!!!"

By this time two security guards reach me and pin my arms behind me. Sirens and blue flashing lights materialize outside the doors adding to the spectacle. Two cops come in and one puts me in handcuffs and starts patting me down. I say irrationally, "Hey what are you doing? All I want is to get out of here and go home."

The cop finished patting me down and came around in front of me. He said, "Let me give you some advice. You better just keep your mouth shut and maybe you'll be home for



Christmas. Or maybe not. Right now, you're heading down to the station and we're gonna book you for disorderly conduct and creating a public nuisance at a

minimum. You got a car here?"

"Yes."

"Give me the keys. Where is it parked?"

"I don't know. I always lose my car in parking lots."

"Okay," he says in an exasperated tone. "What's the make, year, model and color and any identifying marks or stickers?"



"It's a 2008 silver Jeep Grand Cherokee with an Obama bumper sticker and atheist stickers on the back hatch."

For that I get a hateful glance and he tells his buddy, "Put him in the back of my squad car." Then he added, "And leave the cuffs on." That meant I had to sit on the cuffs that were holding my hands behind my back. I guess that's my penance for being an atheist.

And that's how I got an uncomfortable ride to the police station, thinking maybe spending a quiet Christmas in jail wouldn't be all that bad.

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# A Sunny, Philosophical Day in the Park

with Either/Or, The Kiss of Death and Herman  
Nietzsche



I think,  
therefore  
I am –  
Rene  
Descartes

*On the other hand ...*

To be is to be  
perceived –  
Bishop Berkeley





They smile  
with  
concurrent  
agreement

*Enter Herman Nietzsche"*

"Oh Lord,  
The troubles  
I's seen..."







"There is  
nothing  
but ex-  
perience"  
– A.J. Ayer

### *Exit Nietzsche*

"To-ra-lou, to-ra-  
lay, a rolling stone  
gathers no moss  
they say. Sing  
along, like the  
birds, it's a  
wonderful song, but  
it's all about tur..."





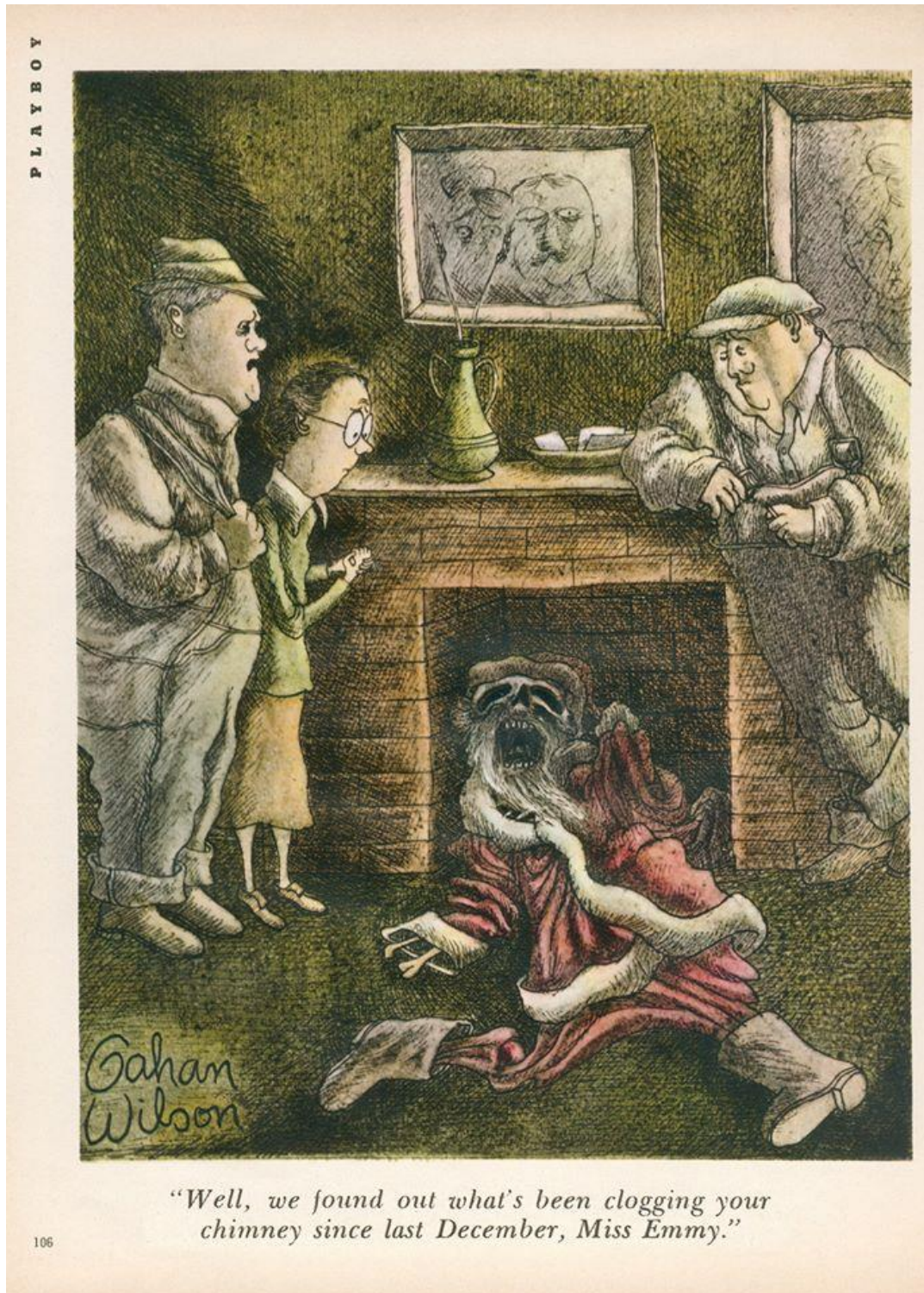
"On the other  
hand ..."

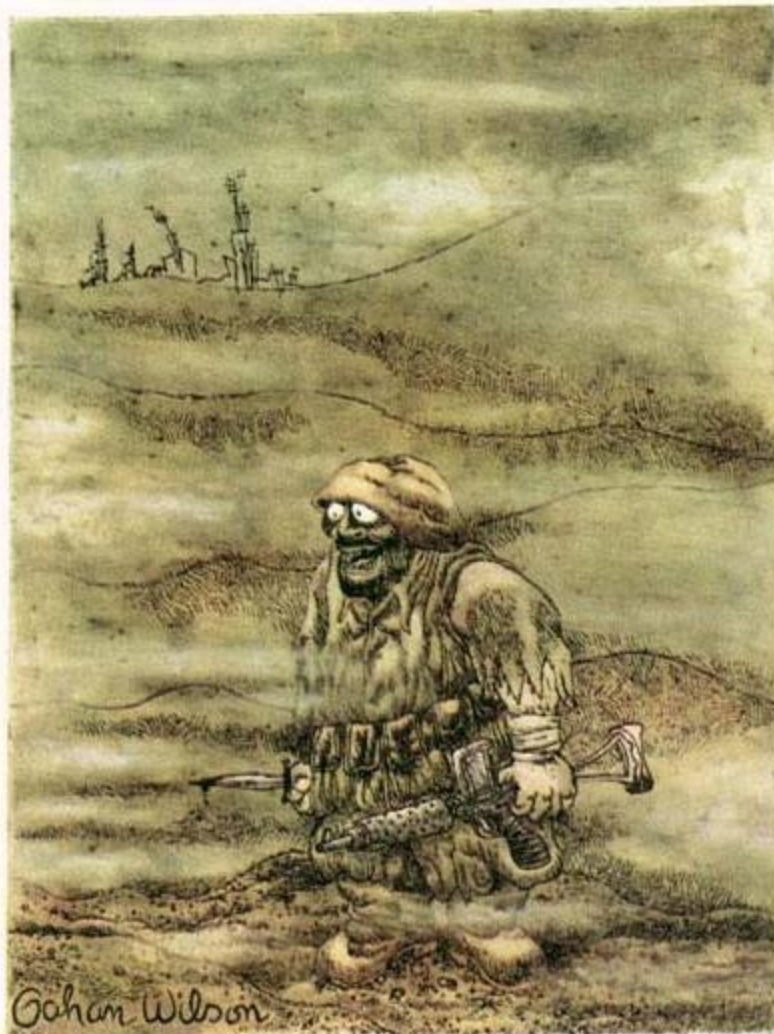
"Who the fuck  
knows?"





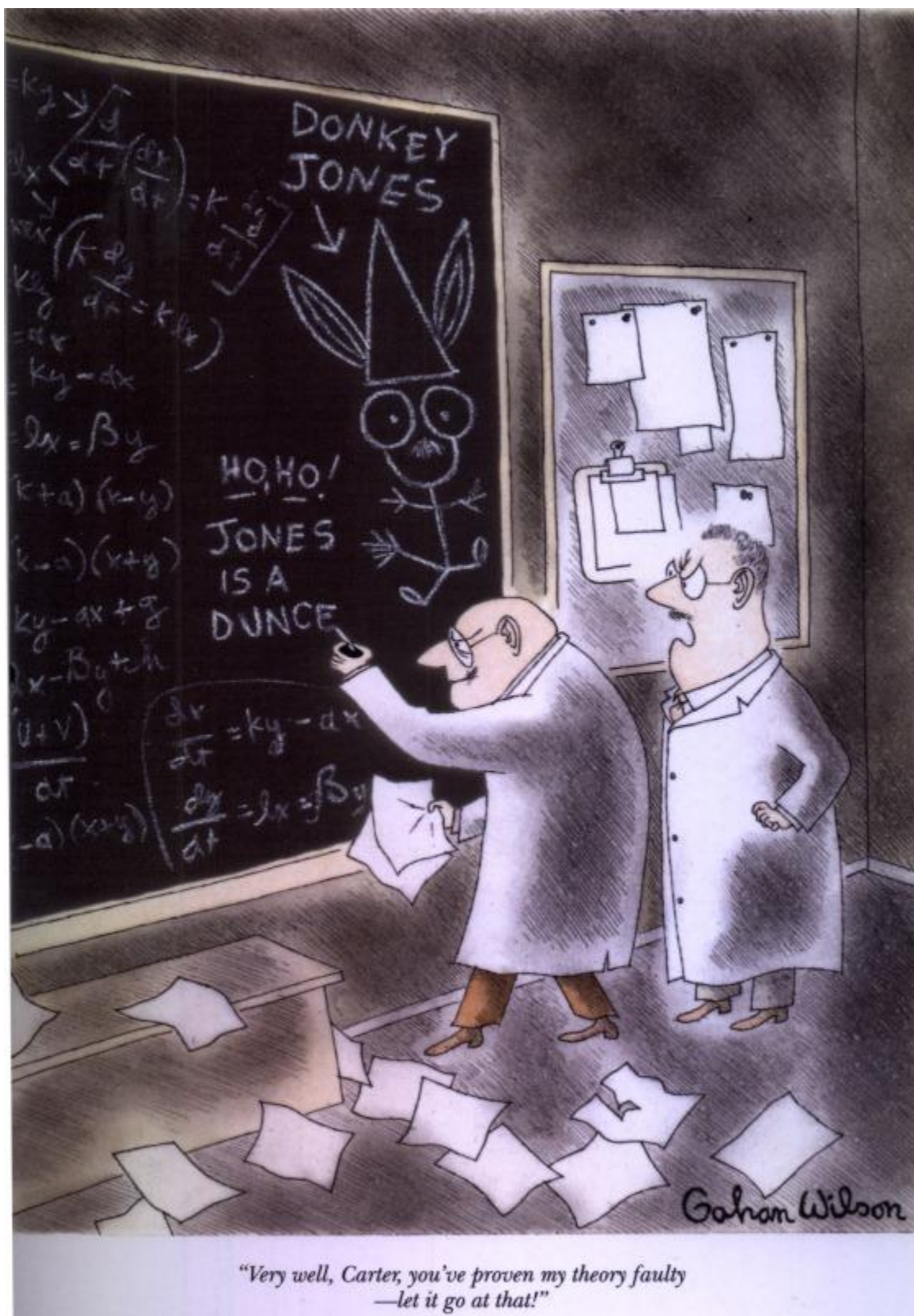
Three of Gahan Wilson's best

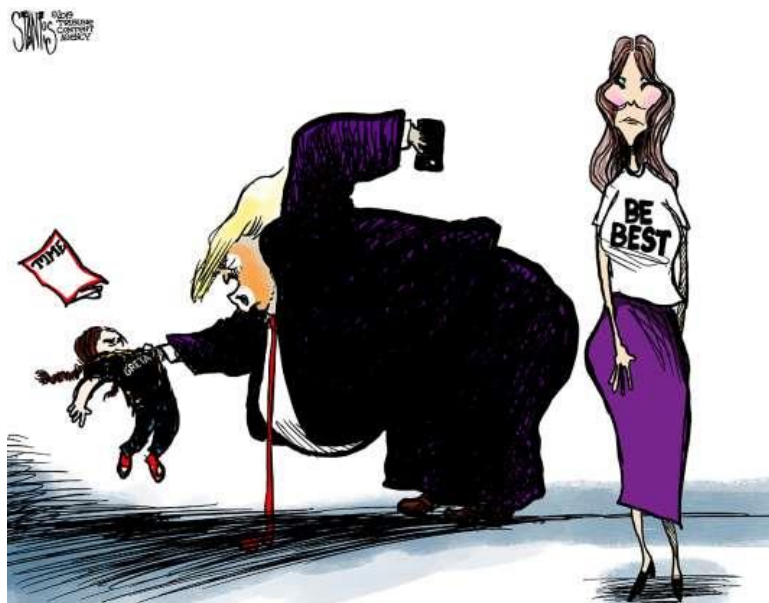




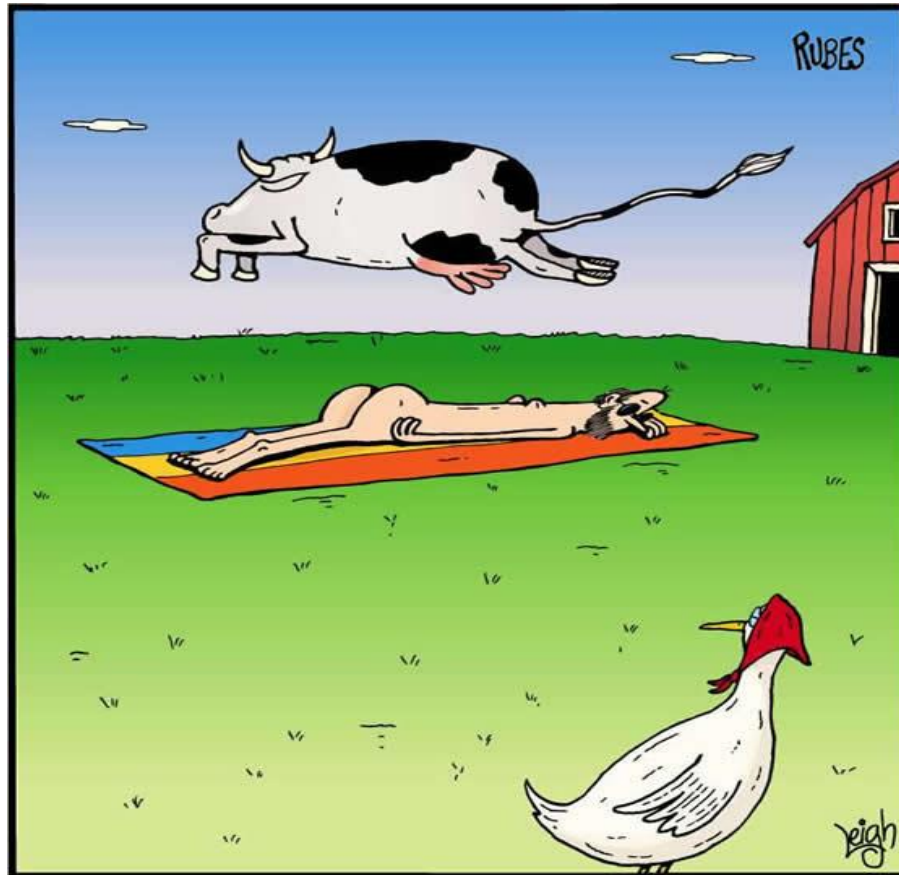
*"I think I won!"*





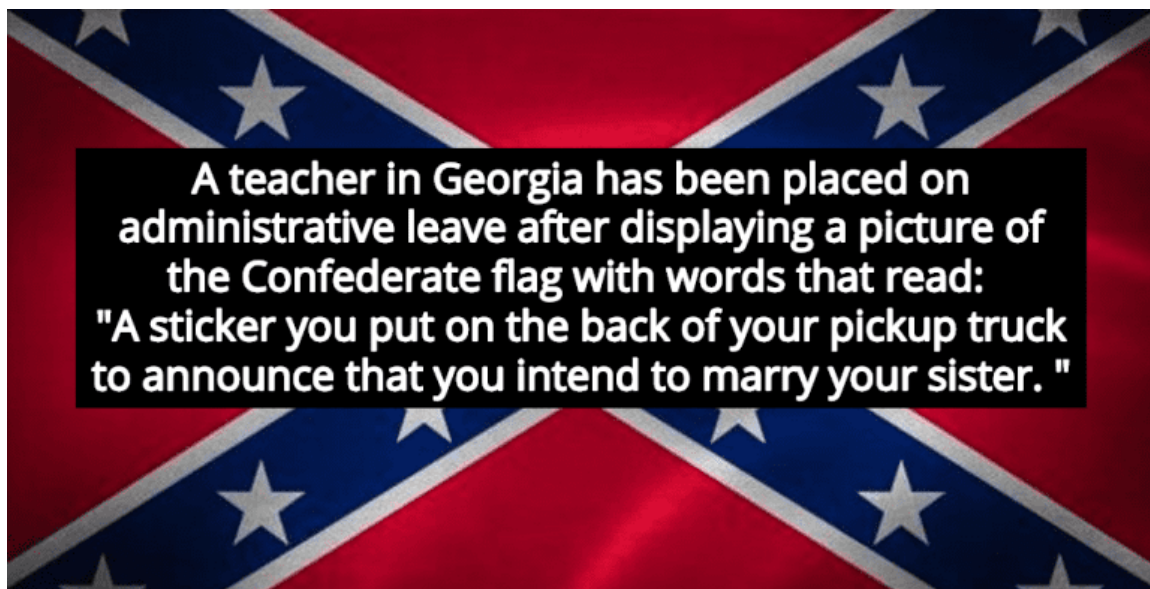






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For Mother Goose, inspiration struck at the most unexpected moments.



*Contributed by Dan Vignau*

# HYPOCRITICAL

## "NOT Offensive"

Posting about  
believing in a god

Saying prayer works

Asking atheists why  
they *DON'T* believe

Saying atheists  
are wrong

## "Offensive"

Posting about *NOT*  
believing in a god

Saying prayer does *NOT* work

Asking Christians why  
they believe

Saying Christians  
are wrong



# DOUBLE STANDARD



BE SEEING YOU