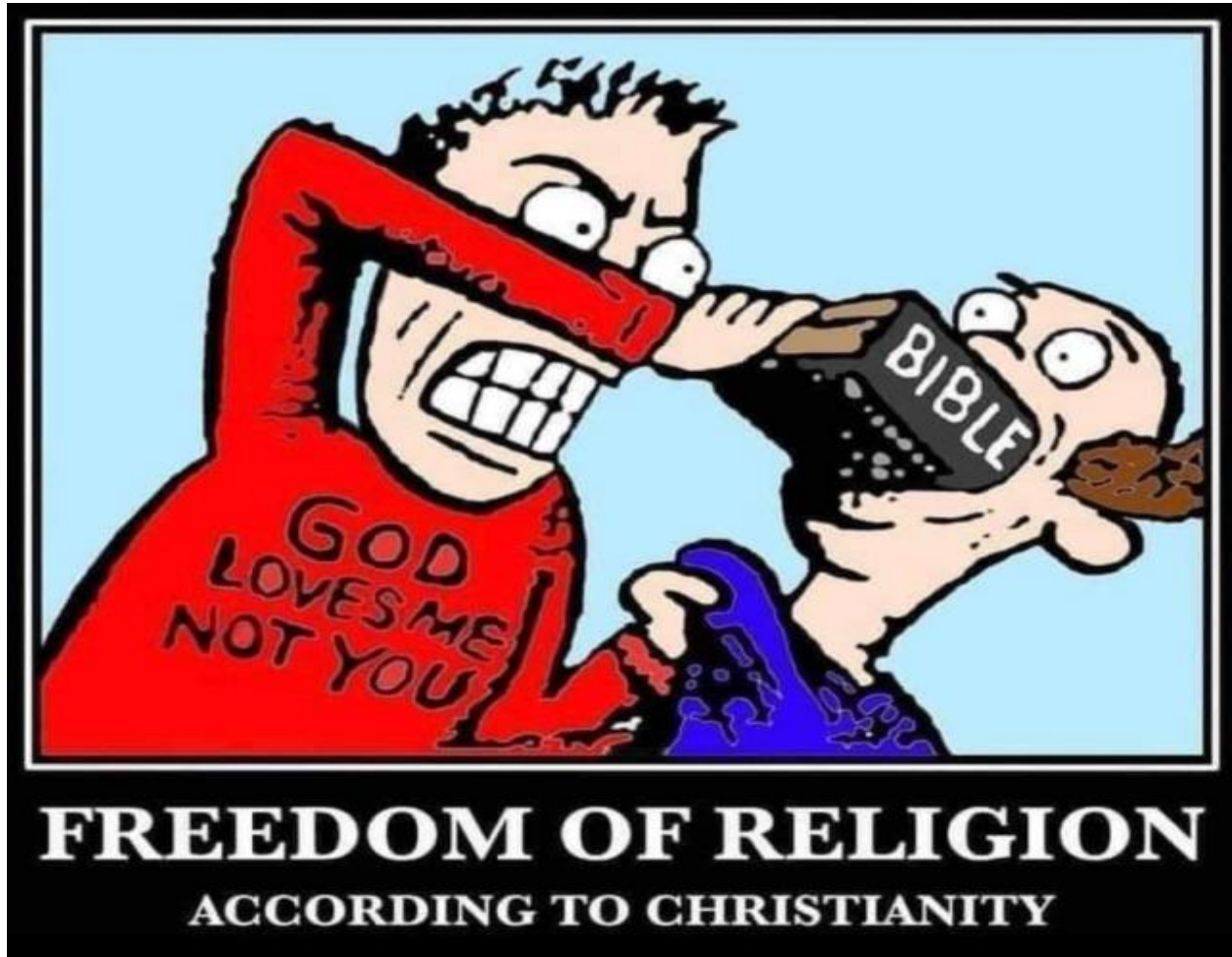


THE JOURNAL

MAY / JUNE 2024 VOL. 9, NO. 3



What Tyrants Want – The beginning of the end of Sociology – p. 25

Killer Joe! – A SOTU synopsis by Max's Dad p. 39

What does God have to do with it? – A polio casualty's indignant response – p. 68

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.9, No.3

May / June 2024

In this issue:

Introduction	3
AOTC Members	7
Meetings & Events	8
Commentary	24
Articles	43
The Way We Were	67
Fiction & Poetry	76
Comedy Corner	82

**- Produced by the TC Secular Writers -*/*

awareonesofthetreasurecoast.com

INTRODUCTION

Is the Sky Falling?

I hate it when I feel prophetic. It is not that I feel psychic or that I have any prescient abilities. I have just been around enough to recognize the possibility that the shit may soon be hitting the fan. I learned in Viet Nam to read between the lines which is why I have such mixed feelings about the outcome of the presidential election on next November 5.

I feel kind of silly about my outlook on life back then. What I had been prepared for and what I had been indoctrinated with was not reality. After very little time, I had a feeling of betrayal. Although we were told we were the “really good guys”, I was devastated to realize that we were not quite the really good guys. War does not care if you think you are good or not.

War just eats and leaves wreckage. War is pain. War is rape. War is My Lai. War is the reality of what you did. Lots of my brothers in arms still suffer from the dichotomy of that unfortunate reality.

But, this country has a decision to make. It boils down to this: *who* is the electorate going to believe?

The decent old man, Joseph Robinette Biden? Or, the ubiquitous liar, fraud and old man, Donald John Trump? The MAGA-ites refuse to see the feet of clay of their savior. Can they ever be reached by reason? Will something wake them up (to be woke)?

But there it is. DJT is finally in a court of law for all to see. There will be proof. There will be evidence that their messiah is a fraud and their checkout stands’ journal of record, *The National Enquirer* is a cheat that has actively deceived them. Their other sources, the National Inquirers of broadcast media, *Fox News*, *Newsmax*, *One American News* (OAN). Its distance cousins of

corporate print media; The Washington Examiner, and The New York Times *et al* are also actively deceiving them. The blue sky of their rosy 'make America great again' is crumbling before their eyes.

All those disinformation stories about Democratic corruption were, at best, exaggerations and at worst, barefaced lies! Some people can argue that their accusations are gruesome projections of what they would want to do themselves.



Hillary eating babies in the basement of a D.C. pizza parlor ... a lie. Women aborting their already born babies, a lie. Caravans of brown skinned refugees invading Texas, an exaggeration approaching an abject lie. President Biden's crack-smoking, nakedly cavorting, drug addicted son Hunter, siphoning off billions of Ukrainian hryvni (*Ukrainian currency*), another lie.

Do we have “emails”? Do we have pictures? Do we have laptops? Rudy Giuliani held up his I-phone and declared that all the evidence was right there.

Oh yeah, prove it. Is all of this real? We don’t know who to believe and it feels scary not being able to trust anyone. Is “Q” really on our side or is that another diabolical disinformation source.

Should I believe the Microsoft Edge headlined story about where NFL free agents should land that was posted 22 hours ago as a new story but was originally written right after the Super Bowl.

It is all so confusing. It is all so bewildering. Could it be that there is something more sinister that is actively fomenting discontent? Making strife between the races? Exploiting language, ethnicity and class?

Abraham Lincoln was right; “You can fool some of the people all the time and fool all the people some of the time; but you cannot fool all the people all the time.” We are finally seeing the wanna-be faux emperor attired in rumpled, fart-stained suit of clothes. Something we always knew. But, the MAGA-ites, they didn’t know – or they didn’t want to believe.

I’d like to believe that. I want to believe that someday these people will come to their senses. But, that is the trusting, naive me. I think that at this time in my life, I am more the skeptic and shall cynically embrace the wisdom of P.T. Barnum, “No man ever went broke overestimating the ignorance of the American public.”

And no, OAN, Michael Cohen did not have an affair with Stormy Daniels! Goddamn, they’re getting desperate, aren’t they?

Virgil

“

No, I'm not throwing my atheism in anyone's face. I am however pushing back against religious people who throw their religion in everyone's face. Don't come to me and accuse me of throwing atheism in your face when it says, "In God We Trust" on our money. Don't tell me about throwing atheism in your face when you plaster your religion all over the place and ring your church bells every hour on the hour.

- Staks Rosch

AtheistRepublic.com

[Image:flickr/scotthudson](https://www.flickr.com/photos/scotthudson/)

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 tables and the fresh air at either Stuart's *Sandsprit Park* 3443 SE Saint Lucie Blvd, or *Flagler Park* (under the Roosevelt Bridge on the 1st Friday of the month), where we gather every Friday *around* 11:00 am to share ideas and challenge your mind – masks optional. Members are encouraged to share and spread what is becoming a very interesting magazine. Outside criticism and interesting contributions are welcomed. Everyone is welcome to join us at the Sunday 11 am Zoom meeting.

If you do not want the journal and wish to have your address removed, please email vmthorp@outlook.com for confirmation.

AOTC MEMBERS

Dan Vignau	Ed Zillioux
Marsha Banks	Bob Haskins
Ernie Breud	Barbara (Lange) Longo
Eddie Buitrago	Jim Longo
Ray Duryea	Jerry Shaw
Rick Burkhart	Sandra Burkhart
Roberta Synal	David Dorenzo
Paul Carlos	Lucy Thorp
Gloria Cosgrove	Virgil Thorp
Gale Baker	Linda Webb
Bert Mautz	Betty Tewksbury
Betty Kasoff	Mark Kasoff

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Meetings



Friday gatherings: First Friday of month at Flagler Park (under the Roosevelt Bridge). All other Fridays, *Summits at Sandsprit* – 11 am gathering in the sun and fresh air of Stuart's Sandsprit Park. BYOB.

Sunday Zoom – 11 am Zoom meeting. Contact Dan Vignau <vignaujdan@aol.com> to be included with the connection codes.



TC Secular Writers – We have returned to Jensen Beach at the *House of Brews* (3311 NW Main Ave, Jensen Beach, FL 34957) on every other Thursday evening at 6:30 pm.

Events



May 2024 National Barbecue Month

May 1 – May Day

Al-Qaeda founder, Osama bin Laden, killed. 2011,



May 2 – **Writer's Group @ Jensen House of Brews, 6:30 pm.**

May 2, 1945:
The US 82nd Airborne Division liberates Wöbbelin concentration camp finding 1000 dead prisoners, most of whom starved to death.

Photo: Citizens of Ludwigslust, Germany, inspect Wöbbelin concentration camp under orders of the 82nd Airborne Division. (US ARMY/National Archives)



May 2, 1945: The Soviet Union announces the capture of Berlin and Soviet soldiers hoist their red flag over the Reichstag building.

Photo: German Federal Archives

Dr. Benjamin Spock Born in 1903



May 3 – **Aware Ones at Flagler**

Park, 11 am.



Space Day – first Friday in May

May 4

Kentucky Derby Day – first Saturday in May

Star Wars Day



May 5 – **Aware Ones Zoom 11 am.**

Cinco de Mayo

May 6

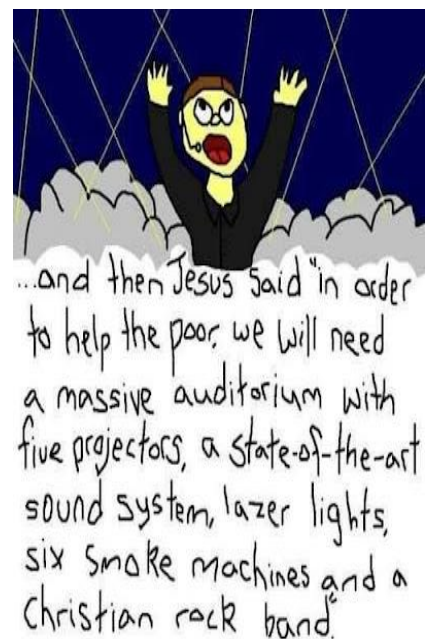
1937: Thirty-six people are killed when German airship LZ 129 *Hindenburg* explodes during its attempt to dock with its mooring at Lakehurst, New Jersey.

Photo: Universal Press/Getty

May 8 - V-E Day Times Square, New York City - May 8, 1945.

Photo: Michael Ochs Archive/Getty

May 10 – **Aware Ones at Sandspruit Park 11 am.**



May 12 – Aware Ones Zoom 11 am.

Mother's Day (second Sunday in May) Picture: My Nurse and I, 1937, Frida Kahlo

May 16 –  Writer's Group @ Jensen House of Brews, 6:30 pm.

National Mimosa Day

May 17 – Aware Ones at Sandsprit Park 11 am.

May 18 – Armed Forces Day – third Saturday of the month

I found \$20 bucks in the parking lot and thought to myself, What Would Jesus Do?

So, I turned it into wine.

May 19 – Aware Ones Zoom 11 am.

May 23 – Lucky Penny Day

1934: Famed fugitives known as "Bonnie and Clyde" are killed in a police ambush in Bienville Parish, Louisiana. A contingent of officers from Texas and Louisiana set up along the highway, waiting for Bonnie and Clyde to appear, and then unloaded a two-minute fusillade of 167 bullets at their car, killing the criminal couple.

1934 - Dr. Robert Moog (inventor of the Moog synthesizer) born.

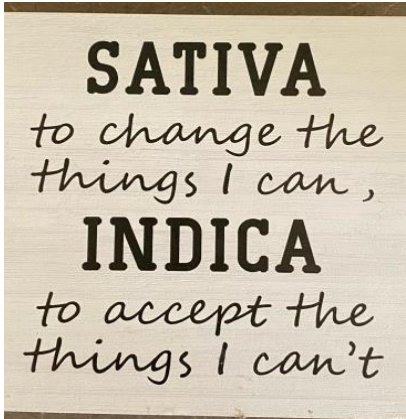
May 24 – Aware Ones at Sandsprit Park 11 am.

Crowds gather in Grand Central Station to watch the launch of the Project Mercury Aurora 7 piloted by Scott Carpenter who became the sixth human and fourth American in space. May 24, 1962.

1844 First Morse Code Message Sent from Washington DC to Baltimore..

May 26 – Aware Ones Zoom 11 am.

May 27 – Memorial Day last Monday of the month





1983: Mrs. Dorris Fielder embraces the tombstone of her deceased husband, Cecil Fielder, at Denver's Fort Logan cemetery. He was an Air Force veteran of World War II, the Korean Conflict and the Vietnam War. Photo: Anthony Suau - 1984 Pulitzer Prize in Feature Photography

Golden Gate Bridge Opens in 1937.

May 30 –  **Writer's Group @ Jensen House of Brews, 6:30 pm.**

International Jazz Day

2005: American student Natalee Holloway disappears while on a high school graduation trip to Aruba. Her disappearance caused a media sensation in the United States.



May 31 – **Aware Ones at Sandsprit Park 11 am.**

June 2024 Gay and Lesbian Pride Month

June 2 – **Aware Ones Zoom 11 am.**

Radio was Patented In 1896

June 4 – 1939: The MS St. Louis, a ship carrying 963 Jewish refugees, is denied permission to land in Florida, in the United States, after already being turned away from Cuba. Forced to return to Europe, more than 200 of its passengers later die in Nazi concentration camps.



June 4 - 5 1989: The Tiananmen Square protests are violently ended in Beijing by the People's Liberation Army, with at least 241 dead.



June 6 **D-Day, WWII**

First Drive-in Movie Theater Opens In New Jersey in 1933.

June 7 – **Aware Ones at Flagler Park, 11 am.** **National Doughnut Day**





June 8 – World Ocean Day

1968: RFK Funeral Train New York to Washington D.C. Photo: Paul Fusco/Magnum Photos

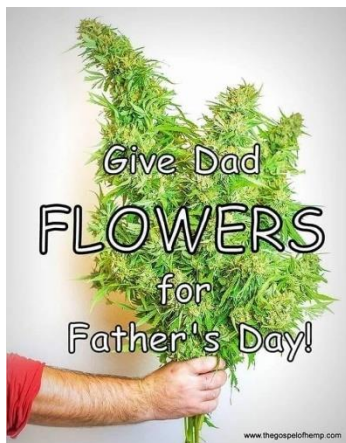
Frank Lloyd Wright Born in 1867.

June 9 – Aware Ones Zoom 11 am.

June 13 –  Writer's Group @ Jensen House of Brews, 6:30 pm.

For the record, you actually *are* entitled to the Social Security you've spent a lifetime paying into.

June 14 – Aware Ones at Sandsprit Park 11 am.



Flag Day

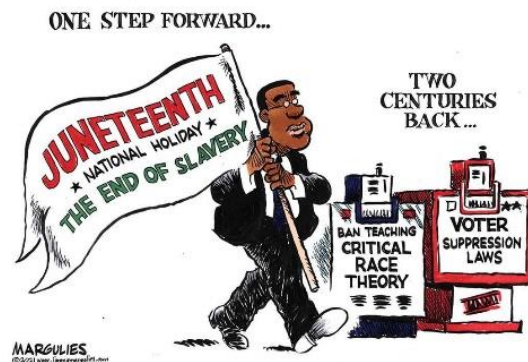
Sandpaper Invented by I. Fischer Jr. in 1834.

June 16 – Aware Ones Zoom 11 am.

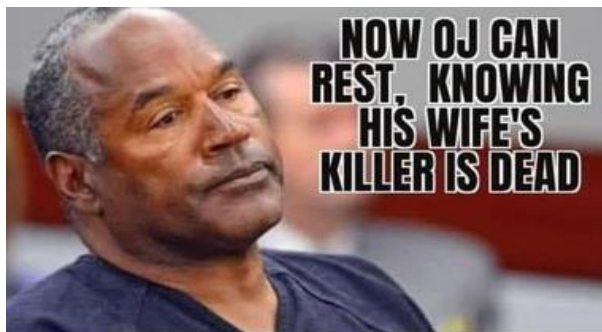
Father's Day – the third Sunday in June

June 19 Juneteenth

June 20 Summer Solstice



June 21 – Aware Ones at Sandsprit Park 11 am.



June 23 – Aware Ones Zoom 11 am.

June 27 –  **Writer's Group @ Jensen House of Brews, 6:30 pm.**

Helen Keller Born in 1880.

Melody for Happy Birthday Song Written in 1859.

June 28 – **Aware Ones at Sandspruit Park 11 am.**

June 30 – **Aware Ones Zoom 11 am.**

National Organization of Women Founded In 1966.

LIVES LIVED – LIVES LOST

March 2024

1

Chance Browne, 75, American cartoonist (Hi and Lois). He attended both Park College in Missouri and the School of Visual Arts in New York City.



2

James Arthur Beard (August 26, 1960 – March 2, 2024) was an American jazz pianist and keyboardist, composer, arranger and producer who worked with Steely Dan, Wayne Shorter, John McLaughlin, Pat Metheny, John Scofield, Mike Stern, Dennis Chambers, and Bob Berg, among others. First performing professionally in college alongside a bar band, Beard then became the pianist of McLaughlin's band, Mahavishnu Orchestra.



3

Ed Ott, 72, American baseball player (Pittsburgh Pirates, California Angels), World Series champion (1979).

- U. L. Washington, 70, American baseball player (Kansas City Royals, Montreal Expos, Pittsburgh Pirates), cancer



Imagine discovering a toddler playing with a loaded gun and taking it away
Then, later, you decide to give the loaded gun back to the toddler just to see what happens
Thats Re-Electing Trump
Cheryl C.



5

[Linda Balgord](#), 64, American stage actress and singer ([The Pirate Queen](#), [Cats](#), [The Phantom of the Opera](#)).

6

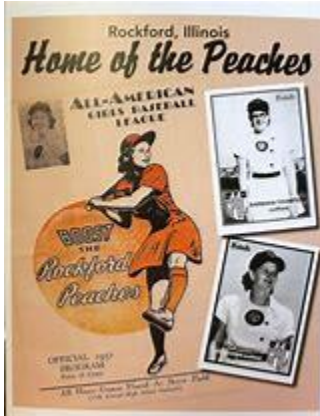
[Pigcasso](#), 7, South African painting pig, rheumatoid arthritis. Pigcasso is best known for being the first [non-human artist](#) to be given her own art exhibition, and for holding the record for most expensive artwork by an animal ever sold.



11

[Paul Alexander](#), 78, American lawyer and paralytic polio survivor, complications from COVID-19. The last man to live in an [iron lung](#), he contracted polio in 1952 at the age of six. Alexander earned a bachelor's degree and [Juris Doctor](#) at the [University of Texas at Austin](#), and was [admitted to the bar](#) in 1986.

- [Eric Carmen](#), 74, American musician ([Raspberries](#)), singer ("[Hungry Eyes](#)"), and songwriter ("[All by Myself](#)") he toured with [Ringo Starr & His All-Starr Band](#) before reforming the Raspberries in 2004.



- [Barbara Payne](#), 91, American baseball player ([Kalamazoo Lassies](#), [Battle Creek Belles](#), [Rockford Peaches](#)).

13

[Marcello Gandini](#), 85, Italian car designer ([Lamborghini Miura](#), [Lamborghini Countach](#), [Lamborghini Diablo](#)).



- [Philippe de Gaulle](#), 102, French admiral and politician, [senator](#) (1986–2004) He was the eldest, and last surviving, child of General [Charles de Gaulle](#), the first [president](#) of the [French Fifth Republic](#).



19

[Raymond Boulanger](#), 76, Canadian bush pilot and drug trafficker, cancer. Boulanger trafficked cocaine on behalf of [Pablo Escobar](#) and the [Medellín Cartel](#).

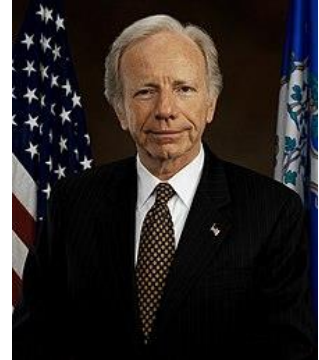
Boulanger began working with the Colombians in the 1970s. He trained numerous pilots and built landing strips in the jungle. During the 1980s, he worked with the [Central Intelligence Agency](#).



- [M. Emmet Walsh](#), 88, American actor ([Blade Runner](#), [Blood Simple](#), [Fletch](#)), cardiac arrest. Walsh specialized in playing villains who were blissfully oblivious to their villainy. He brought a "delightfully menacing presence" to his characters. He was a no-nonsense worker bee in the film industry. Walsh characterized himself as approaching "each job thinking it might be my last, so it better be the best work possible."

27

[Joe Lieberman](#), 82, American politician, member of the [U.S. Senate](#) (1989–2013), [Connecticut attorney general](#) (1983–1989) and member of the [Connecticut State Senate](#) (1971–1981), complications from a fall A former member of the [Democratic Party](#), he was its [nominee for vice president of the United States](#) in the [2000 U.S. presidential election](#).



29

[Gerry Conway](#), 76, English drummer and percussionist ([Jethro Tull](#), [Fairport Convention](#), [Cat Stevens](#)),

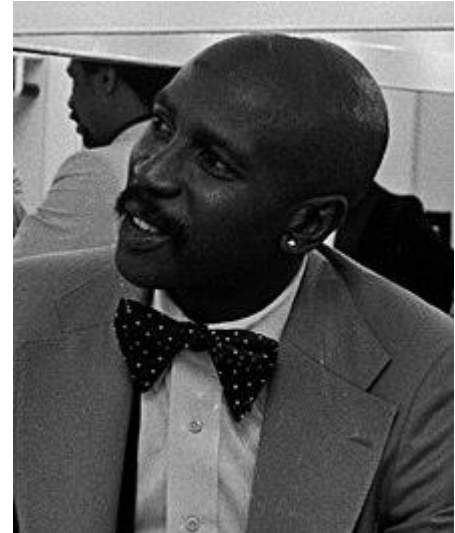
complications from motor neurone disease.

- [Louis Gossett Jr.](#), 87, American actor ([An Officer and a Gentleman](#), [Roots](#), [Iron Eagle](#)), [Oscar](#) winner (1982), complications from COPD. In 1982, for his role as [Gunnery Sergeant](#) Emil Foley in [An Officer and a Gentleman](#), he won the [Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor](#) and became the first African-American actor to win in this category.



31

[Barbara Rush](#), 97, American actress ([It Came from Outer Space](#), [Peyton Place](#), [All My Children](#)).



April

1

[Lou Conter](#), 102, American naval commander, last survivor of the sinking of the [USS Arizona](#), congestive heart failure.

- [Joe Flaherty](#), 82, American actor ([SCTV](#), [Freaks and Geeks](#), [Happy Gilmore](#)), writer, and comedian.



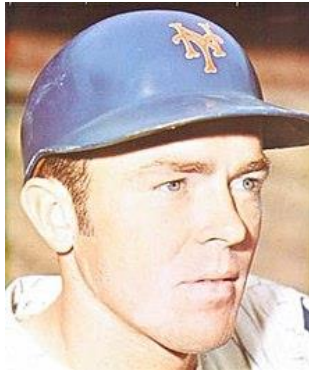


- [Mohammad Reza Zahedi](#), 63, Iranian military officer, commander of [NEHSA](#) (2005–2006) and [NEZSA](#) (2006–2008), [airstrike](#) Zahedi was killed by an [Israeli airstrike on the Iranian consulate in Syria](#). According to [The Guardian](#), he was most likely a critical figure in coordinating Iran's relationship with [Hezbollah](#) in Lebanon and [Bashar al-Assad](#) in Syria.



2

- [John Sinclair](#), 82, American poet, heart failure. a founding member of the [White Panther Party](#), a militantly [anti-racist](#) socialist group and counterpart of the [Black Panther Party](#). Arrested for distribution of [marijuana](#) in 1969, Sinclair was given ten years in prison.



7

- [Jerry Grote](#), 81, American baseball player ([New York Mets](#), [Los Angeles Dodgers](#), [Kansas City Royals](#)), World Series champion ([1969](#)), respiratory failure.



- [Clarence "Frogman" Henry](#), 87, American singer ("[Ain't Got No Home](#)", "[\(I Don't Know Why\) But I Do](#)", "[You Always Hurt the One You Love](#)").



- [REX](#), 76–77, American visual artist and illustrator closely associated with gay [fetish art](#) of 1970s and 1980s New York and San Francisco. REX was inducted into the [Leather](#)

[Hall of Fame](#) in 2022



- [Lori and George](#)

[Schappell](#), 62, American conjoined twins As a mark of individuality, and disliking the fact that their names rhymed, George first chose to go by the name Reba, after his favorite singer [Reba McEntire](#). By 2007, he had come out as a [trans man](#) and preferred to be publicly known as George. [Guinness World Records](#) noted that his [gender transition](#) made him and Lori the first set of conjoined twins to identify as different genders.





9

[Paolo Pininfarina](#), 65, Italian car designer, CEO of [Pininfarina](#) (since 2008).

•

[Vladimir Aksyonov](#), 89, Russian cosmonaut ([Soyuz 22](#), [Soyuz T-2](#))

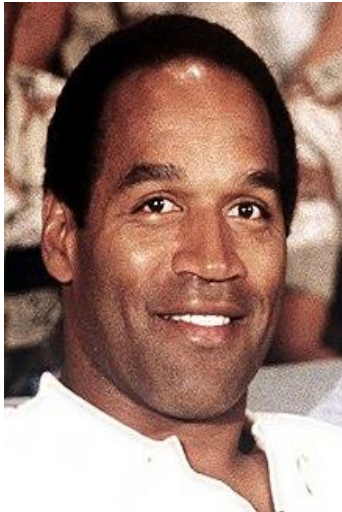


10

[Trina Robbins](#), 85, American comic book artist and writer ([It Ain't Me, Babe](#), [Wimmen's Comix](#), [Wonder Woman](#)) Robbins' first comics were printed in the [East Village Other](#) in 1966; she also contributed to the spin-off underground comic [Gothic Blimp Works](#) in 1969. That same year, she designed a one-piece costume for the [Warren Publishing](#) character [Vampirella](#) for artist [Frank Frazetta](#) in [Vampirella](#) #1 (September 1969)



• [O. J. Simpson](#), 76, American [Hall of Fame](#) football player ([Buffalo Bills](#)) and actor ([The Naked Gun](#), [The Towering Inferno](#)), [Heisman Trophy](#) winner (1968), prostate cancer. Regarded as one of the greatest [running backs](#) of all time, his professional success was overshadowed by [his trial and controversial acquittal](#) for the murders of his former wife [Nicole Brown](#) and her friend [Ron Goldman](#) in 1994.



11

[Akebono Tarō](#), 54, American-born Japanese sumo wrestler, professional wrestler ([AJPW](#), [NJPW](#)), and kickboxer ([K-1](#)), heart failure.



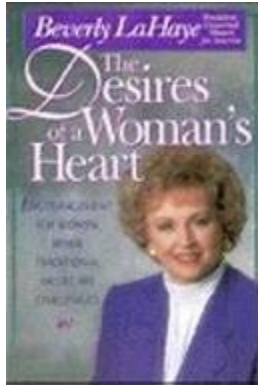
14

[Ken Holtzman](#), 78, American baseball player ([Chicago Cubs](#), [Oakland Athletics](#), [New York Yankees](#)), [World Series](#) champion (1972, 1973, 1974), heart disease.



The eclipse was a MAJOR letdown.

The Evangelicals are still here.



- [Beverly LaHue](#), 94, American Christian activist and author, founder of [Concerned Women for America](#)

15

[Whitey Herzog](#), 92, American [Hall of Fame](#) baseball player ([Washington Senators](#)), executive ([New York Mets](#)), and manager ([St. Louis Cardinals](#)), [World Series](#) champion ([1969](#), [1982](#)).



16

[Carl Erskine](#), 97, American baseball player ([Brooklyn/Los Angeles Dodgers](#)), World Series champion ([1955](#)), pneumonia.

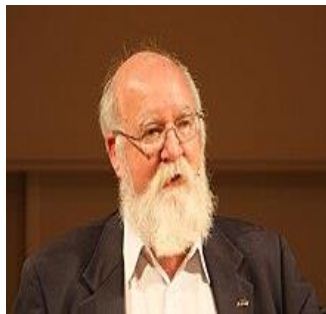


- [Bob Graham](#), 87, American politician, member of the [U.S. Senate](#) (1987–2005), [governor of Florida](#) (1979–1987).



18

[Dickey Betts](#), 80, American [Hall of Fame](#) musician ([The Allman Brothers Band](#)) and songwriter ("[Jessica](#)", "[Ramblin' Man](#)"), cancer and [COPD](#).



19

[Daniel Dennett](#), 82, American philosopher and author ([Brainstorms](#), [Darwin's Dangerous Idea](#), [From Bacteria to Bach and Back](#)), co-founder of [The Clergy Project](#), interstitial lung disease.



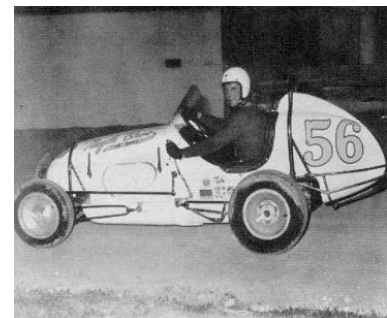
24

[Mike Pinder](#), 82, English [Hall of Fame](#) musician ([The Moody Blues](#)) and songwriter ("[The Best Way to Travel](#)", "[A Simple Game](#)").



29

[Wally Dallenbach Sr.](#), 87, American [Hall of Fame](#) racing driver.



Heroes



Asshole(s) of the Month



*Too close to call:
Republicans Race to
out-disgust each other*



Lauren Boebert Brutally Mocked by Republican at Congressional Dinner



Rep. Lisa McClain (R-MI) began her keynote address with: "Please keep your hands above the table and I know it's date night for some of you but no inappropriate touching. That includes you Lauren Boebert. No vaping either."

No seriously, this was essentially Lex Luthor's evil plan in *Superman Returns*.

In an interview at Harvard on March 8, **Jared Kushner**, a former property dealer, praised the potential of "[Gaza's waterfront property](#)," which he said "[could be very valuable](#)... if people would focus on building up livelihoods." He continued: "It's a little bit of an unfortunate situation there, but from Israel's perspective I would do my best to move the people out and then clean it up." He then went on to say he would "[just bulldoze something in the Negev](#)"—a desert region in southern Israel—and would "try to move people in there." What he described sure sounds an awful lot like [ethnic cleansing](#)! When asked whether he supports a two-state solution, or Palestinians having their own state, Kushner called it "a super bad idea," that would, he said, "essentially be rewarding an act of terror," implicating all Palestinians for the Hamas terrorist attack on October 7.





Take out the trash.



The Award for most Callous Male Chauvinist goes to

Fox Business analyst **Mark Simone** believes abortion prohibition is an inconvenience for women, and makes a stunningly stupid remark: Simone: If you had to travel to another state to get an abortion, it's not the worst thing in the world. Hopefully this is very rare occurrence in your life... Buying a bus ticket to go somewhere to get it is not the worst thing in the world.



Last but definitely not the least: South Dakota
Gov. Kristi Noem

The Lethal Dog Whistle

April 26, 2024 By: Primo Encarnación

Kristi Noem, y'all.

I saw a headline where Kristi Noem is a dog-killer and I thought, "Huh! Someone must think she's about to become a VP candidate, to leak this dirt on her now." Then I read the story and saw I was almost right.

That someone is Kristi, and she ratted on her own damn self.

Kristi has come out with a campaign autobiography, as one does, every so often. In it, she talks about how she had a 14-month-old female wire-haired pointer that she "hated." It was "untrainable," "worthless" and "dangerous."

So, she decided to kill her.

And, once she decided to do that, she realized she also had an un-neutered goat she "hated." He was "mean," "nasty," "disgusting" and "musky."

She decided to off him, too.

So she dragged the dog into a gravel pit and killed it with a shotgun. Then she dragged the goat into the gravel pit, botched the hit, had to run back and get another shell, before delivering the head shot to the not-quite-mortally wounded goat.

She noticed some workers had seen her do it. But one what-are-you-gonna-do-about-it glare later, and they prudently turned away. So the body count stayed at two, none human.

In any other America, this would be political suicide.

But in this America, when you're angling to become Vice Dictator, one flabby, demented, over-amped aderall snort away from the Big Chair...

She speaks of being willing to "do the unpleasant job that needed to be done" – to dispatch the worthless, the dangerous, the nasty and disgusting that she hated. The kind of labels authoritarians like to fling around about "The Other."

That's just the kind of someone the MAGA mob is looking for.



Atheist Quotes

"When I told the people of Northern Ireland that I was an atheist, a woman in the audience stood up and said, 'Yes, but is it the God of the Catholics or the God of the Protestants in whom you don't believe?'"

~Quentin Crisp

No More Make Believe

"We should measure the prosperity of a nation not by the number of millionaires, but by the absence of poverty, the prevalence of health, the efficiency of the public schools, and the number of people who can [and] do read worthwhile books."

W. E. B. Du Bois



COMMENTARY



Jackson Hinkle  

@jacksonhinkle

Subscribe



Childhood in occupied Palestine...



What Tyrants Want



*The beginning of the end
of Sociology*

By J. Dan Vignau

Tyrants want to rule us. They want to tell us what we are allowed to think. They, to quote Speaker Mike Johnson, want good little workers, as he said about his views on abortion laws.

"Abortion takes a baby's life — a person — made in God's image," Johnson tweeted in Jan. 2022 as he expressed his hope that the Supreme Court would overturn Roe v. Wade.

Ron DeSantis wants to stop teaching our children Sociology. Why? Because they might learn to think for themselves.

He also wants to ban books that encourage learning how to think and to reason. Just remember, hundreds of years ago Martin Luther warned (*in his flatulence*) that, "reason is the enemy of faith."

"Sociology has been hijacked by left-wing activists and no longer serves its intended purpose as a general knowledge course for students. Under [me], Florida's higher education system will focus on preparing students for high-demand, high-wage jobs, not woke ideology."

When Ronald Reagan was elected Governor of California, one of his early missions was to get rid of what was known as *Radical Sociologists*, the left-wing of the Sociological study of Criminology, not to be confused with Criminal Justice. He began

with the firing of Angela Davis, who still became an acclaimed San Diego State University Sociology Professor.

Davis had declared herself a communist and Reagan, a fervent anti-communist, was appalled. Students and faculty came to Davis's defense, but Reagan prevailed. On June 19, 1970, he issued a memorandum declaring that:

"Angela Davis, Professor of Philosophy, will no longer be a part of the UCLA staff. As the head of the Board of Regents, I, no the board, will not tolerate any Communist activities at any state institution. Communists are an endangerment to this wonderful system of government that we all share and are proud of."



Following this first step, Reagan and his McCarthy lovers went to war against all rationalism.

"Within the covers of the Bible are the answers for all the problems men face." Or this one: "The most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the government and I'm here to help." – Ronald Wilson Reagan

Since this era, everything that offers explanations for poverty and crime, has been the victim of this propaganda machine.



Terms such as Marxism, Atheism, Unions, Liberal, Atheist, and anything that tries to explain society's ills other than categorizing people as, "Good or Bad; Lock up the Bad", was demonized. This is still going on to this day, as in DeSantis' War on Woke. Hey

people, that is war against awareness.

Banning books? War against Awareness!

So-called Radical Sociology, a sub-genre of Critical Thinking, simply tried to collect data to show that one cause of the ills in society is, as Marx claimed, the unequal distribution of wealth which has arisen from allowing the owners of the means of production, *i.e.* factories, financiers, and businesses, to grotesquely favor industry, at the expense of workers.

*"Censorship and the suppression of reading materials are rarely about family values and almost always about control; About who is snapping the whip, who is saying no, and who is saying go. Censorship's bottom line is this: if the novel Christine offends me, I don't want just to make sure it's kept from my kid; I want to make sure it's kept from your kid, as well, and all the kids. This bit of intellectual arrogance, undemocratic and as old as time, is best expressed this way: 'If it's bad for me and my family, it's bad for everyone's family.' — **Stephen King***

Well, our would-be owners want nothing to do with that idea, and they have unlimited funds to brainwash the populace.

*"Yet when books are run out of school classrooms and even out of school libraries as a result of this idea, I'm never much disturbed not as a citizen, not as a writer, not even as a schoolteacher ... which I used to be. What I tell kids is, 'Don't get mad, get even. Don't spend time waving signs or carrying petitions around the neighborhood. Instead, run, don't walk, to the nearest non-school library or to the local bookstore and get whatever it was that they banned.' Read whatever they're trying to keep out of your eyes and your brain, because that's exactly what you need to know." — **Stephen King***

This could be an interesting topic and could lead us to the knowledge of why certain individuals have been blacklisted, fired, and otherwise harassed, and yes even murdered, all to further the exploitation of working-class people.



Religious chaplains don't belong in public schools



By JOCELYN WILLIAMSON



A concerning piece of legislation is poised to further blur the line between state and church in Florida's public and charter schools. [HB 931](#) is being debated in Tallahassee. If passed, it would permit school boards to allow volunteer chaplains into our public schools.

Authors of the bill want every school board member across the state to vote on a chaplain policy. It will be a sort of "religious test" to be taken in front of constituents. Vote "Yes" if you love God. Vote "No" and you could be accused of being anti-religious by your political opponent and their supporters.

As a non-Christian mother of a Central Florida public school graduate, I am not only concerned about the religious privilege a school chaplaincy would provide, but also for the welfare of students with mental health issues, or just the day-to-day challenges of being a kid in the world. Could our kids, religious or otherwise, be told to "pray away" their problems or get a special invite to the next youth night at a church, synagogue, temple, or mosque so they can "get right with God"?

Proponents of the bill contend that chaplains would serve a secular purpose by providing “support, services, and programs” to students. I should not be the only person questioning the appropriateness of religious leaders filling a secular role that trained counselors and licensed mental health professionals should fill, thus preventing clergy from imposing their religious beliefs on impressionable students.

“Unchurched” kids from ages 4 to 14 are common targets for religious conversion, and public-school chaplaincies will be seen as another opportunity for what is often referred to as “campus ministry.” In Central Florida, evangelists already have after-school programs for elementary schools, athletic program ministries, and Christian clubs for middle and high school students. The organizations that stand up and support these programs openly acknowledge their goals are to reach everyone’s child without regard to the child’s or parent’s faith perspective.

The introduction of religious school chaplains will establish a school-sanctioned, exclusionary, faith-based system that fails to address the needs of a diverse student population. Mental health professionals and counselors, on the other hand, are educated, often certified, and required by school board policies and procedures to assist students in a non-biased manner without regard to the religious perspective of the professional or the student.

For chaplains who try to take into account the religious perspective of students, the only way to do so is to ask about religion or belief in a higher power. Such inquisitions are intrusive and inappropriate in a public-school setting. This flawed bill disregards the religious diversity of students and may very well cause a well-meaning school board or principal to end up in court.

Which school board will be the test case and have to explain to The Satanic Temple why their ordained Minister of Satan is not welcome? While I am unconcerned about Satanists who don’t

believe in Satan, what about a cult leader? Both of these chaplain candidates might have legal standing if refused by the school. This bill opens our schoolhouse doors to anyone who wants to be a chaplain. No professional certification or universally accepted credential is required. You don't even have to have a religious affiliation. I actually like that part, though.

Anyone who can pass a background check can be a public-school chaplain — even people you want nowhere near your kids. HB 931 and its companion in the Senate (CS/SB 1044) pose a significant threat to our kids' religious freedoms. Legislators should prioritize the rights of students and parents above clergy members, some of whom already consider Florida public schools their mission fields.



Jocelyn Williamson is Co-founder of the Central Florida Freethought Community, President of the Florida Humanist Association, and serves on the Traditions Council for the Interfaith Council of Central Florida.



Things I See

and Thoughts That Pop into My Head

By James Longo

Ukraine is running out of ammunition. Warsaw is building bomb shelters. Moldova signed a defense cooperation treaty with France. Russia keeps threatening to use nuclear weapons and war with NATO. And I am feeling nervous as a Christian Scientist with appendicitis.

If the constants in the universe were different like the way atoms act within an electromagnetic field, the universe as we know it and us in it would not exist. Some would suggest this suggests intelligent design. I like Einstein's thoughts on determinism, "God does not play dice with the universe."

Personally, when dealing with creators and intelligent design. I haven't seen that much intelligence and any I have seen seem pretty random. Maybe the pre-universe had 10 to the power of

how many sputters before the Big Bang. Thank goodness the universe figured it out. What is your opinion of ignorance and apathy in the universe today? I don't know and I don't care. I have my own small inconsequential life to worry about.

Came across thoughts on prayer. Why pray? If it is God's Plan. What makes you think your prayers can alter God's plan? What kind of God could or would alter his plan at the request of one individual? Isn't it a little presumptuous of the one who prays that he could sway an all-powerful being? But it feels so good when I do it. So does masturbation, but it doesn't change that you are doing it by yourself.



Speaking of randomness, the best-determining factor for paroling convicts was, *how many hours since the judge last ate*. The next determining factor in getting paroled was, *was it the parolee's birthday*. Judges were more lenient if it was their birthday. These two factors were also true, with getting a loan, or a job.

When I was a practicing Nishon Shoshu Buddhist, we chanted the mystical law of cause and effect. If you wanted good things to happen you did good things, and good things would happen, if you did good things and bad things happened, you didn't do enough good things. The problem with this way of thinking was

we didn't take in all the variables. How could you know all the variables? Who knew I needed to bring cookies to my job interview? As a side note, anytime I met someone at a restaurant for a job interview, I got the job. Things that make you go *hmmm*.

But do we have free will? If you look at mystical law cause and effect. You cause your effects, but what about what happened before that effect, and the one before that, how about back to the womb? Did your mother smoke while she was pregnant with you, determine who you are due to the nicotine affecting your development. You are the net effect of all your previous decisions, if it wasn't your biology, then it was your environment.

Let's say this is true. How do you punish a criminal? How can they take responsibility for their actions? Wasn't it the sum of all your circumstances? I'm sorry we are going to have to punish you anyway. Not for you but maybe we can affect someone else. Holy crap, all law enforcement is for deterrence.

Stop the would-be dictator now, so we won't have to deal with the one after that.





This week in Misogyny by Lucinda Lugeons

One of the big lessons of the twenty-first century in America has been that our national commitment to democracy came from two distinct groups. One was the group who believed in majority rule as a moral imperative. The other was a group that was fine with that as long as the majority kept saying what they wanted to hear. But with an increasingly diverse electorate and increasingly empowered women, that latter group hasn't been hearing what they want as much, and they're fucking done with this democracy shit.

And I've got another great example of that via Jacklyn, who sent us this story at Scathing News at Gmail dotcom. Thanks Jacklyn. So anyway, so as you all know, Republicans have a HUGE problem when it comes to abortion. Since the Supreme Pontifical Court of the United States of Jesus revoked our right to reproductive autonomy, Republicans have lost every single

election where the question of abortion rights has been put to the people — even in deep red states. Because *overwhelmingly*, the majority in this country don't think we should force women into motherhood.

And as much as mainstream Republicans are trying to just pivot away from this subject, it keeps coming up. Like earlier this month when the Arizona State Supreme Court upheld an abortion restriction from eighteen-sixty-fucking-four. Just really hard to sell "our views haven't updated since before the Civil War ended" to the undecided voters. So it looks like a lot of Republicans are switching to a new tactic: Pretending they're the pro-abortion ones.

Here's William Jones who authored the 1864 Arizona abortion bill.

Some fun facts:

He abandoned his first wife and their children in Missouri.

His second wife was a 12 year old Mexican girl. >
He abducted her and after a complaint submitted his resignation to President Buchanan before he was fired.

In 1864 (age 49) he married his 3rd wife, a 15 year old girl he abandoned in 1865 when he moved to Hawaii.

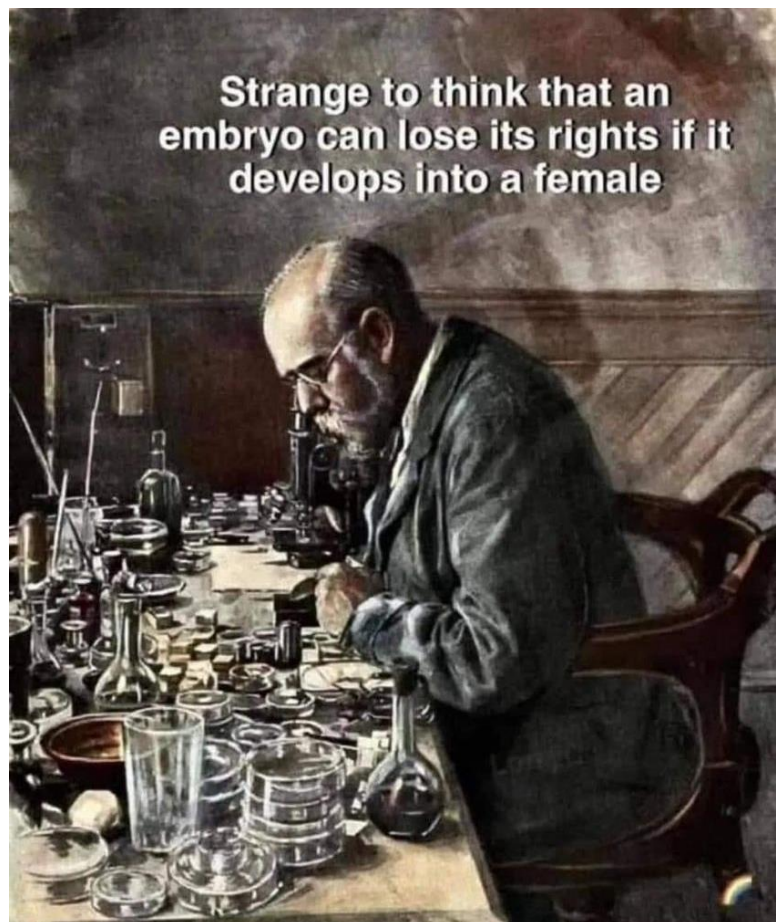
This is the guy who wrote the law that millions of Arizona women will be forced to obey.

There are now multiple examples of this fucked up strategy in action. Like in Nebraska, where pro-choice are pushing for a ballot initiative that would enshrine abortion rights into the state constitution until the point of viability. So anti-abortion groups are pushing for their *own* ballot initiative that would enshrine

abortion rights *up to 12 weeks*. Which matches the 12 week ban that Republicans in the state have already enacted. In other words, they're trying to trick pro-choice voters into enshrining *their abortion ban* into the Constitution by pretending it's a pro-abortion bill.

And they're not the only ones doing it. For another example, we have to look no further than 1864. As you can imagine, the right to abortion is suddenly quite the hot button issue in Arizona politics. A leaked strategy document that NBC reported on shows that the plan of Republicans there is to propose a ballot initiative that would protect abortion up to 15 weeks but undermine it with a bunch of restrictions that would ultimately make the law toothless. It's basically the same strategy that cut rate studios use to trick grandmother into buying a movie called "Finding Norman." Except instead of preventing a happy birthday, they're revoking people's basic human rights.

And when you think about it, what greater admission could you possibly want that these people are against democracy? ...well, other than making it illegal to give water to people waiting in line to vote. The point is that by doing this, they're admitting their ideas *don't* have majority support. And more than that, they're admitting that they don't give a shit.



The Scathing Atheist

PLEASE AND THANK YOU

By Bert Mautz



Mother was absolutely vigilant in her insistence on our remembering the pleasantries of our "Please and Thank You's." Insisting we express appreciation lest we offend, or "Hurt the feelings," of the provider/gift giver. The carryover into our adult and subsequent senior years is a testament to the effectiveness, the unavoidable imprinting of her incessant reminders. However, mother was not as frank about the bounds and limits of polite discourse.

"Fine thank you, and how are you?" Regardless of the circumstances or one's immediate condition we respond, "We're good and hope you are as well."



I particularly, am fond of the doctors' secretary greeting me with that automatic and reflexive "How are you this morning?"

To which I've the unstoppable urge to remind, "That's why I'm here. To find out, how I am." (*I do not speak the words I want to scream, "you f*ing*

dummy!)

Hospitalized last summer with a flu infection, invariably, the various nurses, technicians, and doctors would come into my room and greet me with that reflexive, "How are you?"

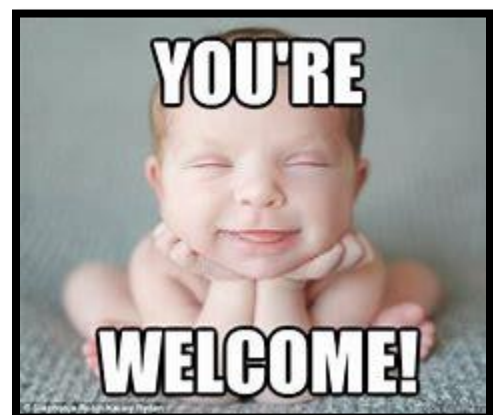
The hospital inpatient experience is so dreadful, I lost all patience and responded with, "Shitty, and you?" And then would continue to go on with, "Stupid question. I'm lying here in a goddamn hospital bed!" (*Did I say that aloud ... or under my breath?*)

There in, is the answer. Being polite in our casual discourse is to be dishonest. "How are you?" is not a question, it is a reflexive greeting, expecting an equally automatic and *insincere* response.

The curse of a design education is to be constantly confronted with bad design and being compelled to provide the polite compliments of enjoying and appreciating the new godawful sofa, her skirt with horizontal stripes, hideous streetscape of the "Little boxes made of ticky-tacky," neighborhoods.

It is obvious, I cannot expect friends and family to share the peculiarities of my own tastes and preferences. These personal tastes are known by some of these friends and family with the result of not asking for my opinion, occasionally avoiding my pronouncements. I want to be liked, to exude a cordial demeanor, so I outright lie about the attractiveness of those horizontal stripes encircling her ample posterior.

Idiomatic expressions, essential to peaceful human interaction? "How are you?" is not a question. These words may sound like a question, but are reflexively intended as an inconsequential greeting, repeated in numerous social situations, oblivious to actual circumstances.



Friday, March 8, 2024

Killer Joe!

By Max's Dad

Sleepy Joe became the Scranton Slugger last night. Dodging and countering, handling the Republican hecklers like a professional standup comedian, speaking for 68 minutes without a breath. Senile my ass. Cognitively impaired my ass. Joe is sharp and determined and ready to take on the Florida Fraud in a phone booth if necessary.



In fact, he was so on target, the Republicans were taken aback. Thus, the talking point became instead of Dementia Joe, he became Drug Addict Joe. What's he on? Did he let Hunter coke him up? In fact, down at Bed Bug A Lago, the Defendant said in full caps as usual, "THE DRUGS ARE WEARING OFF!" Now I have no idea if the Mar A Lago Moron meant he needed more Adderall, was shouting out to Captain Doctor Ronny Jackson to refill his prescription, or simply had a senior moment.

Joe Biden won the night right at the beginning. No, not because he joked he should leave, but walking down the aisle shaking hands he suddenly came upon the sight of a red hatted clown named Marge. Marge was dressed like a carnival barker running a con on the rubes. Red MAGA hat, Say Her Name button, red jacket over a white t shirt, Marge tried for attention so hard that Biden looked at her and reacted like he just saw a clown which of course he did. A whoaaaaa look, and she turned back into a loudmouth pumpkin knowing she lost that one. It was over. Disarming the screeching baboon from NW Georgia ain't easy for much younger people since she just keeps screaming, but Old Joe took her ammo away and shoved it up her ass.

Fightin Joe took on the GOP and without naming him once, Trump (which I'm sure really triggered the old rapey bastard). Ukraine, drug prices, tax cuts for billionaires, the border bill the House GOP killed, democracy, NATO, Putin, MAGA, Jan 6th, Israel, Gaza, and abortion. Looking straight the Supreme Court Trump hacks, he addressed presidential immunity and Roe V Wade. The Republicans screeched he "threatened" the Court. Oh, my stars, he's senile, no he's a thug, no he's on drugs, no no no. GOP heads exploded.

Scrappy Joe ended the speech with an age joke that even cracked up Lindsey Graham (and I saw you grin, Mike Lee).

Now the hecklers. [Wisconsin House drunk and teenager harasser](#), Derrik Van Orden screamed "lies". Ok not real clever, but classy as always. Then came Marge, [who hollered "Say Her Name"](#), in reference to Laken Riley, an unfortunate young woman murdered by some guy who was here illegally in Georgia. Comic Joe said her name, offered his condolences, and offered to speak with the family. Large Marge was put in the corner with a dunce cap replacing her red MAGA hat. Some maniac in the gallery screeched about Afghanistan. And Lane Duck Lauren Boebert was surprisingly silent much to everybody's relief.

It was a great speech. It disarmed the old sleepy Joe crowd. They got nuthin.

Then came the GOP response. Some Senator from Alabama named Katie Britt, [live from her kitchen](#) back in Bama. Looking like a middle school chick running for class president, smiling a lot, pretending to get emotional. losing her breath, real Tracey Flick shit. Britt was atrocious with her audition for the lead in the GOP musical. Over the top. Bad actor. I was hollering like a theater director watching some kid trying too hard, thank you, we'll be in touch and rolling my eyes. But she kept going. Get the fucking hook for chrissakes. Britt was the worst responder since [Marco Rubio about drowned himself](#). But she's purty and looks about 18 and Republicans think that wins arguments. Sorry

folks, she's a dunce. But at least she truly can claim to be the smartest Senator from Alabama since Tuberville exists. The whole kitchen thing was also appropriate since that's where MAGA thinks all women should stay.

Way to go, Killer Joe. You kicked MAGA, the House GOP, and SCOTUS right in the nuts. They may never recover.

And oh yeah Mike Johnson. We all saw you applauding underneath your desk at times. We all saw you attempt to keep that smug look on your face for 68 minutes. It's all an act. We know that you probably won't survive the Speakership long. But for chrissakes, show some guts once in a while. Don't go down a wimpy lil' homophobic Christian Nationalist. Go down fighting. Like Joe showed you. maxdad.blogspot.com



A COMPARISON



Donald Trump is 77 years old.

So:

When human rights are taken away,
when the earth is scorched from
climate change; when women die
from illegal clothes-hanger abortions;
when children are forced to work in
dangerous jobs; when people go

hungry because the wealth is distributed among only the very
rich; when America is overrun with Anarchists and Russia
becomes the prime superpower.

He considers his life expectancy and
figures he won't be around to deal with
the consequences and says, "Who
cares?"

Joe Biden is 81 years old.

He considers his life expectancy and
knows he will not be around to
deal with those consequences either
and he "still cares!"



Provided by Gale Baker

ARTICLES





"Is it better to be lucky than smart?" Jack asked standing in his kitchen drinking coffee.

"Is it better to be smart than beautiful?" Jill retorted coming into the kitchen to get more coffee.

"Isn't beauty just a form of luck," Jack said raising his eyebrows.

"But beauty is only skin deep," Jill said.

In unison, they said, "But ugly is to the bone."

"Physical beauty is fleeting," Jack said.

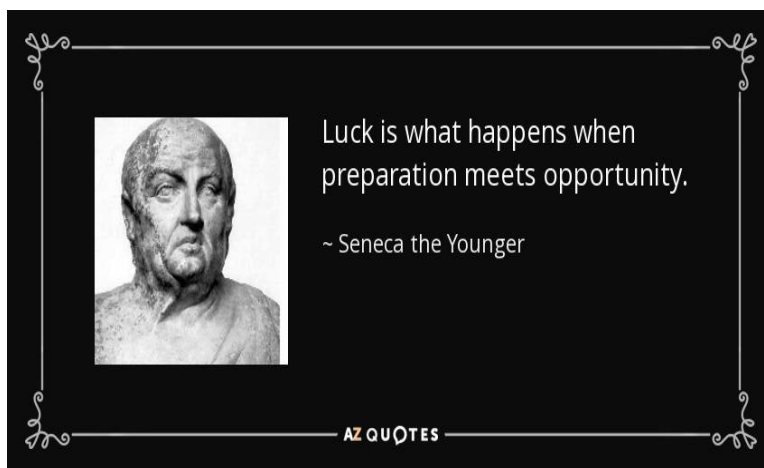
"But so isn't luck," Jill said.

"According to Edison, genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration,"

"According to Seneca, luck is when preparation meets opportunity," Jack said.

"According to those two quotes, luck and genius both require work."

"I am going to call Bullshit on those two quotes," Jack said slamming down his coffee cup.



"Why?" Jill said raising an eyebrow.

"For starters, Seneca was a Senator, born into a prestigious house in Rome. He was a Nepo-Baby."

"And Edison?"

"His first invention the ticker tape machine, was truly inspiration, and perspiration but after that, he hired very bright people to do most of the trials and grunt work."

"He still had the one percent inspiration he just hired people to do the ninety-nine percent perspiration after that."

"When he became a tycoon, he wasn't the kind inventor he marketed himself as," Jack said.

"Business is competitive, you got to be a little bit of an ass to succeed."

"So why isn't the quote, one percent inspiration, seventy-four percent perspiration, and twenty-five percent asshole."

"I don't know, because nobody calls themselves assholes," Jill said with a smirk, shaking her head.

"Touche'," Jack said bowing to her point.

"Is being smart a form of being lucky?" Jill asked.

"I think that is a pretty good point, life has so many variables, from being born healthy, to being properly educated, to meeting the right people, to making the right choices, to thinking the correct way to succeed, to being smart enough to navigate all those things."

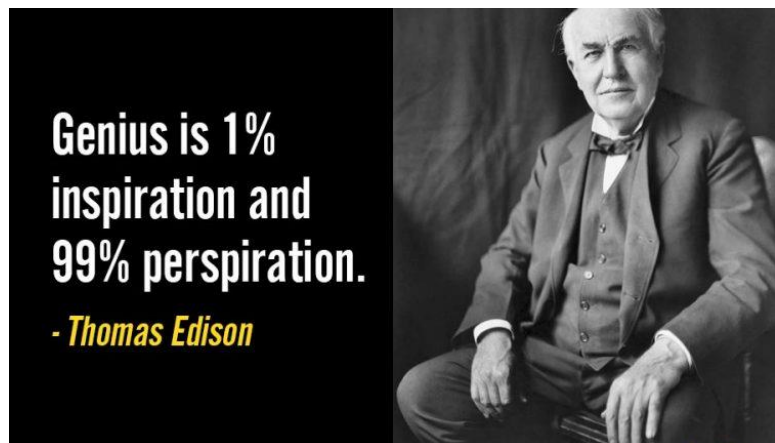
"I guess it is better to be lucky than smart?"

"It is," Jack said taking a satisfied sip of his coffee.

"Are you lucky?"

"I've been lucky since the day I met you."

"How's that? Jill asked smiling from ear to ear.



"Well, the day I met you. You told me you were extremely lucky, and that if I wanted good luck, I should hang out with you."

"And you believed me?" Jill said laughing hysterically.

"Yeah, and it worked. Why are you laughing so hard?"

"I have terrible luck, and I was just bullshitting you, and you believed me,"

"How has life been for you?" Jack asked.

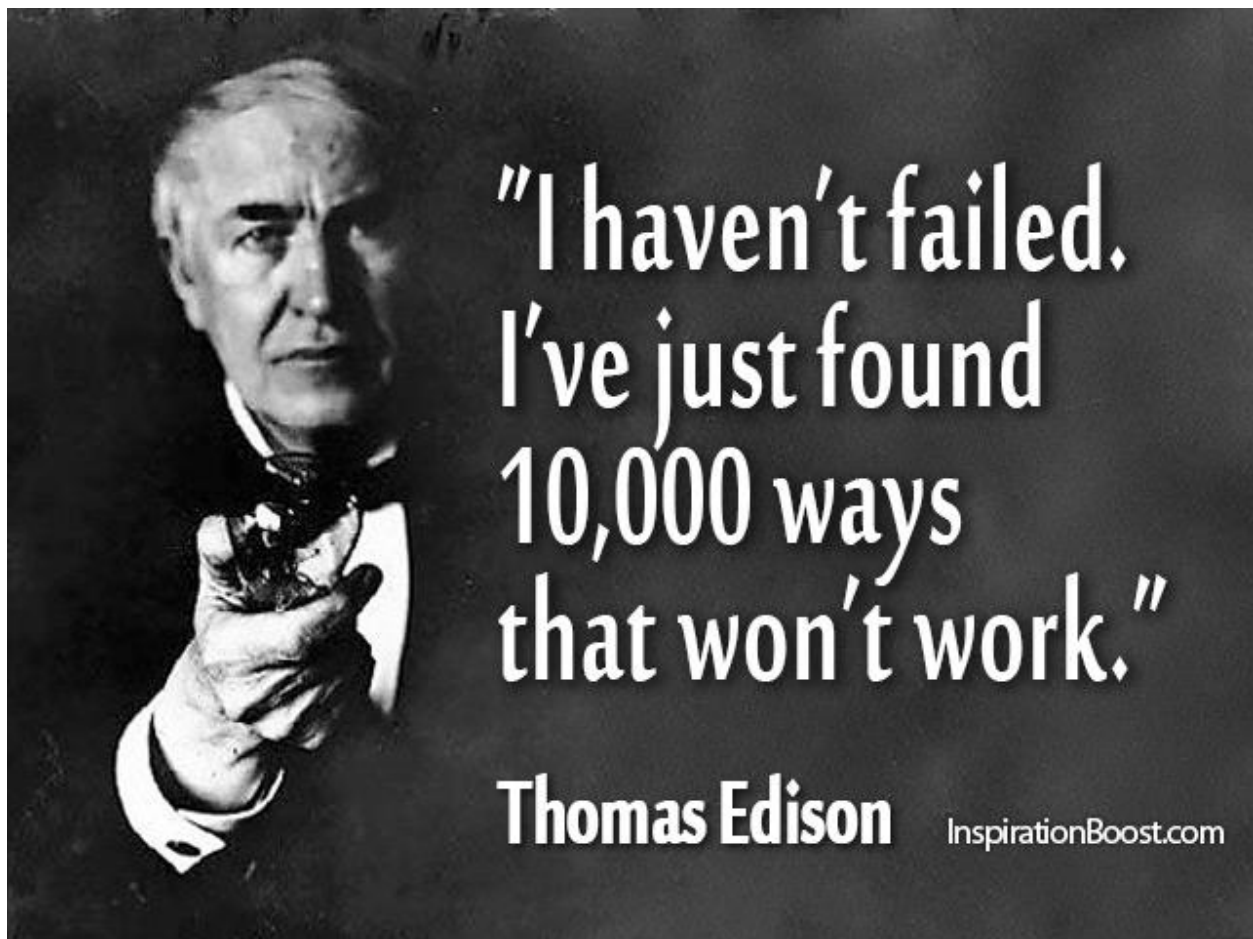
"Okay I guess, but I wouldn't call it lucky."

"I guess it all in your perspective."

"Yeah, perspective."

And they both took sips of their coffees with a far-off look in their eyes.

Then they came out of their trances and said in unison, "Yeah good luck with that," and they went off in different directions smiling.



Fuck those fucking theists

By Noah Lugeons

I finally harpooned my great white whale. I've driven over four thousand miles in my adult life in search of a total eclipse, and I finally saw one. I looked into the heavens, and they winked at me.

And I know a lot of people don't get it. They don't understand why this matters so damn much to me that I'm willing to drive thousands of miles for it. But I'd like to think those people just don't understand what a glorious thing it is. If we lived in a Star Trek Universe with interstellar travel and dozens of other

intelligent species, the way we'd sell earth as a galactic tourist destination is our eclipses. They're truly incredible.

I said as much on Facebook, and a lot of people dismissed it. They have eclipses on every planet with a moon, after all. And some planets have a lot of moons. And hell, if you're in a spaceship, couldn't you just park your spaceship between a moon and a star whenever you wanted to? But those arguments underestimate the rarity of a terrestrial eclipse. For that, you need a moon that's the same relative size as the parent star, you need an atmosphere to bring out all the glorious colors, and you need life to freak the fuck out when it's suddenly night in the middle of the day.

See, long before you get totality, you start edging. The skies start to get darker, but not in a way that you're familiar with from storms or evening. It's a unique darkness that bathes the world in a filter somewhere between sepia and black and white. And then the temperature starts to drop, and quickly. Some ten degrees in as many minutes. We were in northern Vermont for this one, so we started off in T-shirts and spent totality in sweaters and a jacket. It was too early in the year for crickets, but they'll start chirping. Birds will freak the fuck out. Roosters will crow. And you'll see sunset creeping up on you from every horizon. Then, if you're positioned in the right place (and you can bet your asses we were positioned in the right place), you can see the moon's shadow racing along the ground towards you at fifteen hundred miles an hour. And then the moon just clicks into place.

And there's no ambiguity here. There's no moment where you're like "is that totality or is that just ninety-nine percent?" The moon clicks in like a fucking lego and the whole world changes around you. Up until then, I was wearing special glasses that block out 99% of the light, but now, for the only time in my life, I laid my naked eyes on the sun. I stood there in the shadow of the moon, staring up at this black circle, wreathed in thin strands of

writhing, white fire, laid against this purple-black hue that I'd never seen before.

And I feel small. And I feel significant. And I feel the glorious burden of consciousness; of being one of those rare bits of matter that gets to comprehend beauty. And I feel a rush of communal reverence as I share this profound moment with a hundred random strangers in this field, and a hundred more in the next field, and the thousands and millions stretching all the way back to Mexico. And I feel a rush of ancestral reverence as innate terror and wonderment link me to the millions and billions of past witnesses, stretching all the way back to the Miocene.



And because the phrase “fuck those fucking Christians” is never that far from my mind, as I stood there drinking in the experience I traveled so far to have, I couldn't help but think to myself “Fuck those

fucking theists. How *dare* they try to pretend that they have a monopoly on awe.” Here I am contemplating the astronomical lottery we won to have such a perfect combination of lunar satellite and parent star, trying to look through the eyes of our pre-sapien forebears, marveling at the chain of brilliant deductions that allowed us to predict these motherfuckers to begin with, and where are they? Hiding from the fucking sun. Dreading the human sacrifices that the eclipse will kick off as it ushers in the goddamn end times. Putting up snarky Facebook posts about how you'll all be sorry when they get raptured later today.

I mean, for Christians, Yahweh made the sun, he made the moon, it only makes sense that he'd make them the same apparent size. In that case, eclipses are no more remarkable than a willow tree or a snowflake. They're simply a god making the logical choice when it comes to relative moon size. But they're



also, for some fucking reason, imbued with ominous portent. What's God trying to say with this eclipse? What dreadful message do the skies hold? So not only are they looking at a relatively unexceptional occurrence, but they're poisoning the experience with nonsensical panic.

Add to that the fact that even at its best, the natural world can never live up to the shit they make up. I mean, I think you'd be hard pressed to find a person more impressed with a total eclipse than myself, but even I have to admit it would pale in comparison to a single glimpse of an eternal paradise bathed in the glory of the universe's creator. Hell, in their book, God made the sun stand still just to help out with a military campaign. If you ask the Catholics, he made it dance around in a way that only a few thousand Portuguese people could see barely a century ago. So, cool as they might be, eclipses probably don't make the top five of shit God does with his sun.

So here I am, marveling at the most incredible sight I've ever seen, free from the taint of irrational fear, teleological passivity, and magical comparisons. And I can fully experience awe, without even having to make shit up to be in awe of.



The Scathing Atheist

Division

by Ed Zillioux



Trumpism is not new. Trump and his enablers are merely a present-day embodiment of the dregs of our civil war. 150 years after the surrender of Robert E. Lee to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox, the division in our country is directly traceable to the denials of the South that it lost the war or, at the very least, that the wrong side won. The indignation at Appomattox spawned a dichotomy of segregationists versus integrationists which permeated the Jim Crow era and is still strikingly evident in the conservatism versus liberalism of the current political landscape as reflected in our hopelessly polarized two-party system.

The trucks we see today flying huge trump banners often in tandem with confederate flags, a pairing frequently repeated on

residential properties long beyond the confirmation of the Biden-Harris victory, mirror the resurrection of the antebellum South's refusal to accept or even admit that they had lost the war.

Trump's chanting, "I won, I won, I won!" at a rally in Valdosta, GA is much more challenging, more threatening, more frightening than the delusional blabbering of a poor loser.

Although Biden won the popular vote by over 81,000,000 (7 million more than trump's 74 million votes) it's critically important to consider the fanaticism among many of these 74 million Americans. This is the "Trump base" -- and they are armed. Trump has tweeted that the only way he could lose would be if the election was "rigged" and, he continued, if that happened "there would be fighting in the streets". This also includes threats of a second civil war, or as he has most recently proclaimed, "a bloodbath."

As a nation, we never fully got over the divisions of the Civil War. I have written before of the parallels I see between Trump and Hitler. But it is hard to find such parallels between Germans in the aftermath of the Second World War and Americans in the aftermath of the Civil War. Only in the last three years has there been any real initiative toward the removal of statues of the confederate generals and other "heroes" of the Confederacy. Yet, while many otherwise neutral Americans are still aghast at the removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee or Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, it is impossible to find a commemorative statue of Adolf Hitler or Herman Goering in Germany. Nevertheless, each would equally commemorate "a heritage of evil" in the words of Michael Gorra, who has written about this comparison.

it may seem to some a stretch, or even blasphemous to compare the evils of the Holocaust with the evils that underlie the cause that the Confederacy sought to preserve. The Civil War was fought for the [dubious] right to keep humans in slavery. To sustain the 400 year long transatlantic slave trade, which,



although over a much longer period, killed many more people than the 13 million Jews plus 11,000,000 from other groups that were victims of the Holocaust.

it seems odd to me that the animosity that now exists between those who glorify the Confederacy, known at the time and through all of the following years as "the Lost Cause", and those who passionately support the democracy of the United States of America, while, from the moment of surrender, any such personal animosity is not found in the historic record of the event. It was a time when opponents ceased to be enemies. There was sadness and disappointment at the defeat of the Confederate armies, of course, but there was acceptance and nobility among their leaders.

Consider the following exchange:

"The terms of the surrender were recorded in a document handwritten by Grant's adjutant Eli S. Parker, a Native American of the Seneca tribe, and completed around 4:00 PM, April 9th.

Lee upon discovering Parker to be a Seneca, remarked "it is good to have one real American here."

Parker replied, "Sir, we are all Americans."



As Lee left the courthouse and rode away, Grant's men began cheering in celebration, but Grant immediately ordered them to stop. He said, "the Confederates are now our countrymen, and we do not want to exalt over their downfall."

There are many other examples of the chivalry that characterized the transition from war to peace including the very lenient terms of surrender themselves. In addition, Lee's men would not be imprisoned or prosecuted for treason. Officers were allowed to keep their sidearms, horses, and personal baggage. Grant also allowed the defeated men to take home their horses and mules to carry out the spring planting and provided Lee with the supply of food rations for his starving army; Lee said it would have a very happy effect among the men and do much toward reconciling the country. Lee never forgot Grant's magnanimity during the

surrender, and for the rest of his life would not tolerate an unkind word about Grant in his presence.

So, what happened? Why is the country not yet reconciled to the defeat of the Confederacy? Why is the Confederate flag now a symbol of racism and of Trumpism? Will the calm but resolute approach of Joe Biden, backed by the strong support of Kamala Harris, be sufficient to render Trump's base ineffectual over the broad scope of what is to follow? Will democracy ultimately prevail? Will Trump himself become a footnote in the history of this?

We shall see.

**Never in recorded history has a
four year old found his father's
loaded book and accidentally
killed his younger sister.**

But we ban books.

the bull goose loony of asshole culture

gregfallis.com

The Trump re-election campaign is basically a defense of Asshole Culture. It's clearly NOT a traditional presidential campaign. It consists almost entirely of Trump shouting various iterations of the Asshole Culture credo (if 'credo' means what I think it means).



The Asshole Credo? I'm glad you asked.

I do/do not want to do this thing. I don't care if it helps/hurts other people. You can't make me do or not do this thing. I will go way the fuck out of my way to create a disturbance sufficient to make others miserable in order to do/not do/stop other people from doing this thing. I am Asshole, hear me roar.

I wrote about Asshole Culture back in 2021, detailing how my understanding of the Republican Party shifted from seeing them as a Fuckwit Collective to advocates of Asshole Culture. I used to believe they did cruel stupid shit because they were too stupid to grasp that what they were doing was cruel. It became clear to me that many of them did cruel stupid shit because they're cruel. Not just cruel, but performatively cruel. In your face cruel. Visibly and vocally cruel, without any fear of consequence.

Trump is campaigning on the theme of A Celebration of Asshole Culture. His claim of Absolute Immunity is grounded in Asshole Culture. His mockery of Joe Biden's stutter, his deliberately insulting language about judges and prosecutors, his honoring of the January 6th Insurrectionists, his racist comments about immigrants, his contention that he's the victim of reverse racism, his hateful depiction of E. Jean Carroll, his absurd gestures toward Christianity, all of his blatant lies — these are all manifestations of Asshole Culture.

And Trump? He's the bull goose loony of Asshole Culture.

Trump's entire presidential campaign is, down at the cellular level, based on the idea that he should be able to fart in church and enjoy the discomfort of other churchgoers without any consequence. Own the libs, insult eggheads, denigrate experts, mock the disabled, taunt minorities, malign women, intimidate those who disagree with you, fuck your feelings — these are the centerpieces of Asshole Culture.



Policies? Trump doesn't need them. He doesn't want them. He doesn't understand them. He just wants to do whatever the fuck he wants to do at any particular moment. He insists on his right to be the supreme asshole.

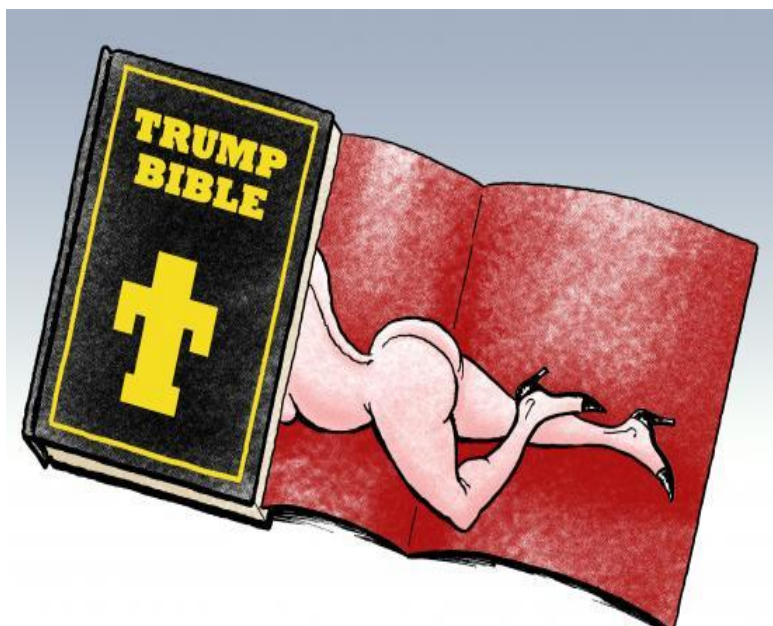
That's the open secret of his political success. Trump's followers wish they could be as much an asshole as Trump is. They wish they could be as openly objectionable, as blatantly abhorrent as Trump is, and escape responsibility for it as much as he has. They don't care that he's a liar, a crook, a cheat, a hypocrite, an asshole; they just want him to be able to get away with it. Because then maybe they can do the same. Did he cheat on his taxes? Did he cheat on his wives? Did he pay hush money to porn stars? Did he try to steal an election? Fuck yeah!

It shouldn't come as a surprise that Asshole Culture is rooted in patriarchy.



NOTE: We must burn the patriarchy. Burn it to the ground, gather the ashes, piss on them, douse them in oil and set them on fire again. Burn the patriarchy, then drive a stake directly through the ashes where its heart used to be, and then set fire to the stake. Burn the fucker one more time. And keep burning it, over and over. Burn it for generations. Nuke it from orbit. Then have tea and pastries.

SHARE THIS:



**Donald
Trump sucks
at being
Jesus
By Virgil Thorp**

Okay, the bullshit has overflowed the dike and flooded the airport. Former president Donald J. Trump put on his piety makeup and started selling Lee Greenwood bibles for 59.95 and compared himself to Jesus.

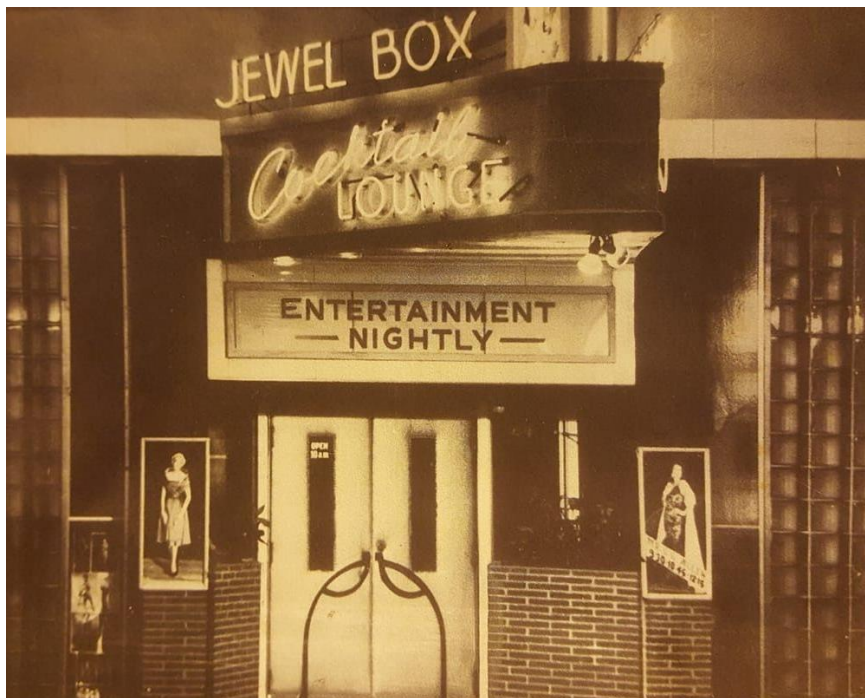
I just fucking want to vomit. If my dead, Christian mother could, she would vomit too. At least, I hope she would. My mom fervently believed the bible. She staunchly believed it was a great truth. She zealously believed that one day, Jesus was going to come back and judge us all. The bad people would go to hell and the good people would go to heaven. All a person had to do was to believe, be baptized and follow the ten commandments. That's not that fanatical ... is it?

I deeply loved my mother, but I thought she was a little over the top on religious things.

I vividly recall one telling incident when I was a mere toddler yet an absorbent sponge with big ears. My father had been hired by a very wealthy man to tutor the man's stepson on how to operate a grocery store successfully. Dad's salary and benefits for this service were outrageously generous for the time and he could not pass it up. The stepson and his wife invited my parents out for a

night on the town to celebrate, dinner and a show, maybe a nightcap at a local cabaret. This fun-loving couple were recent college graduates and considered themselves urbane and sophisticated. After dinner it was agreed that since the evening was still young, visiting a couple of nightclubs would add some amusement and zest to a wonderful future affiliation.

Now, I must tell you, my mother was a country girl. Raised on a farm. Went for years with no indoor plumbing. Everything proper, everything straight-laced. A god-fearing environment. Sure, she saw animals copulating – had to, she was on a farm – there were the roosters and the hens, the sows and the boars, the bulls and



the heifers ... but it was all heterosexual. You know, the Noah story, two of every kind. Male and female. If there were any mistaken attractions and a bull mounted another bull, well, they were just dumb animals, you know and the confused bull was

sent to the abattoir* the next month. Which, if you think about it, is a perfect metaphor for the dissatisfaction of an omniscient supreme being.

Yes, my mother followed the commandments diligently. She had no other gods than the father, the son and the holy ghost. She went to church every Sunday. She honored her father, and she honored her mother. She wouldn't kill and she wouldn't steal. She abhorred people who bore false witness. She could admire

without coveting. For many years, I was certain I was an immaculate conception. So, the idea of sex and subsequent adultery never occurred in our house.



It was the following morning after their dinner and the excursion to the city's nightclubs and my mother was distraught. The younger couple wanted to share their hilarious experience at the racy, new club in town called, the Jewel Box. The notorious Jewel Box. Sodom and Gomorrah. Chicks with dicks Jewel Box. The Jewel Box of the "All-male Revue" where effeminate men sashayed across the stage in slinky women's clothing, lip-synced to Judy Garland, told ribald, off-color jokes about sex and worshipping vulgarity. And made exuberant fun of uptight society.

God, I wish I had been there. But, this is where the little kid with big ears comes in:

Mother lamented, double face-palming as she and father sat at the breakfast table the following morning. "What if we had been at that sinful club and Jesus had returned for the final judgement?" Her voice nearly a shriek! She was certain they had



committed a mortal sin just by walking through the door. There was nothing more serious and mom feared for her eternal soul.

Of course, father had seen much more rowdy entertainment when he was in Paris during WWII – or, you know, *“how you gonna keep ‘em down on the farm, after they’ve seen Paree!”* – and he was doing his best to calm her. I can almost hear him pragmatically explaining, “Now, now, Helen. I know how upset you were. It was just a *little* racy. But remember, Fred gave us a super deal for me to show his son how to run a grocery store. This is our ticket for the future. I really don’t think god will hold it against you.” *Or, no harm done and we don’t want to fuck this opportunity up.*



Mother swallowed hard, prayed for forgiveness



the next ten Sundays in a row and allowed the younger couple their trespasses. Of course, she never went back to the Jewel Box.



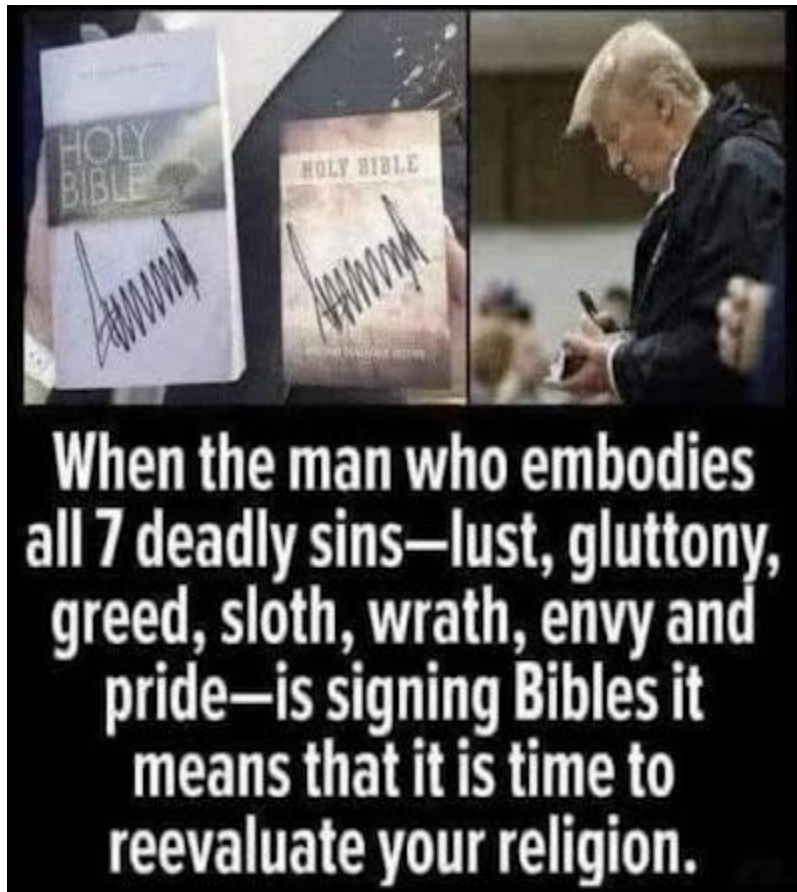
I wish my mother was still alive today so I could ask her if, as a Christian woman, she would vote for the disgusting, self-serving

anti-Christ, liar who wipes his ass on her faith and sells bibles for 59.95 for president. My mother was a very good woman and beloved by all who knew her. I believe she would check off all ten of the commandments she held so dearly, hold her breath and vote for the Roman Catholic gentleman who practices authentic Christianity.

*ab·at·toir

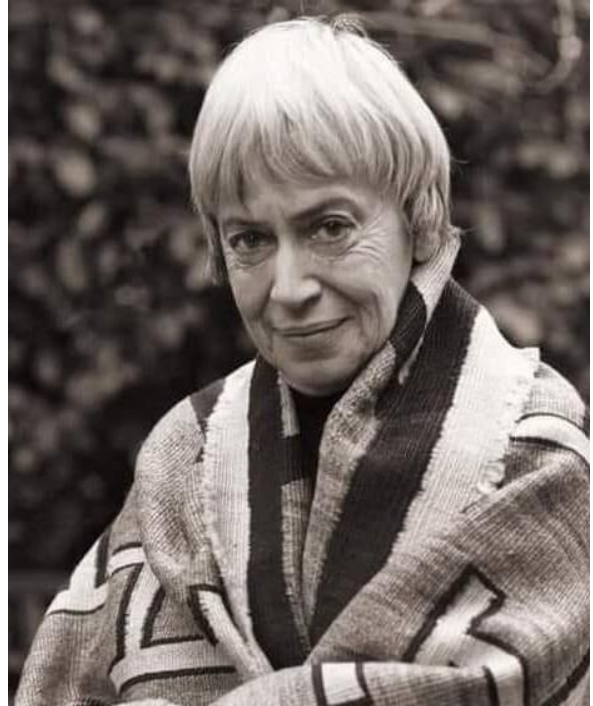
[ˈabəˌtwär] *noun*

BRITISH ENGLISH a slaughterhouse: "exporters are circumventing laws requiring all livestock to be delivered to approved abattoirs"



What is it like to be 20 and Pregnant?

By Ursula K. Le Guin



They asked me to tell you what it was like to be twenty and pregnant in 1950 and when you tell your boyfriend you're pregnant, he tells you about a friend of his in the army whose girl told him she was pregnant, so he got all his buddies to come and say, "We all f*cked her, so who knows who the father is?" And he laughs at the good joke....

What was it like, if you were planning to go to graduate school and get a degree and earn a living so you could support yourself and do the work you loved—what it was like to be a senior at Radcliffe and pregnant and if you bore this child, this child which the law demanded you bear and would then call "unlawful," "illegitimate," this child whose father denied it ... What was it like?

It's like this: if I had dropped out of college, thrown away my education, depended on my parents ... if I had done all that, which is what the anti-abortion people want me to have done, I would have borne a child for them, ... the authorities, the theorists, the fundamentalists; I would have born a child for them, their child.

But I would not have born my own first child, or second child, or third child. My children.

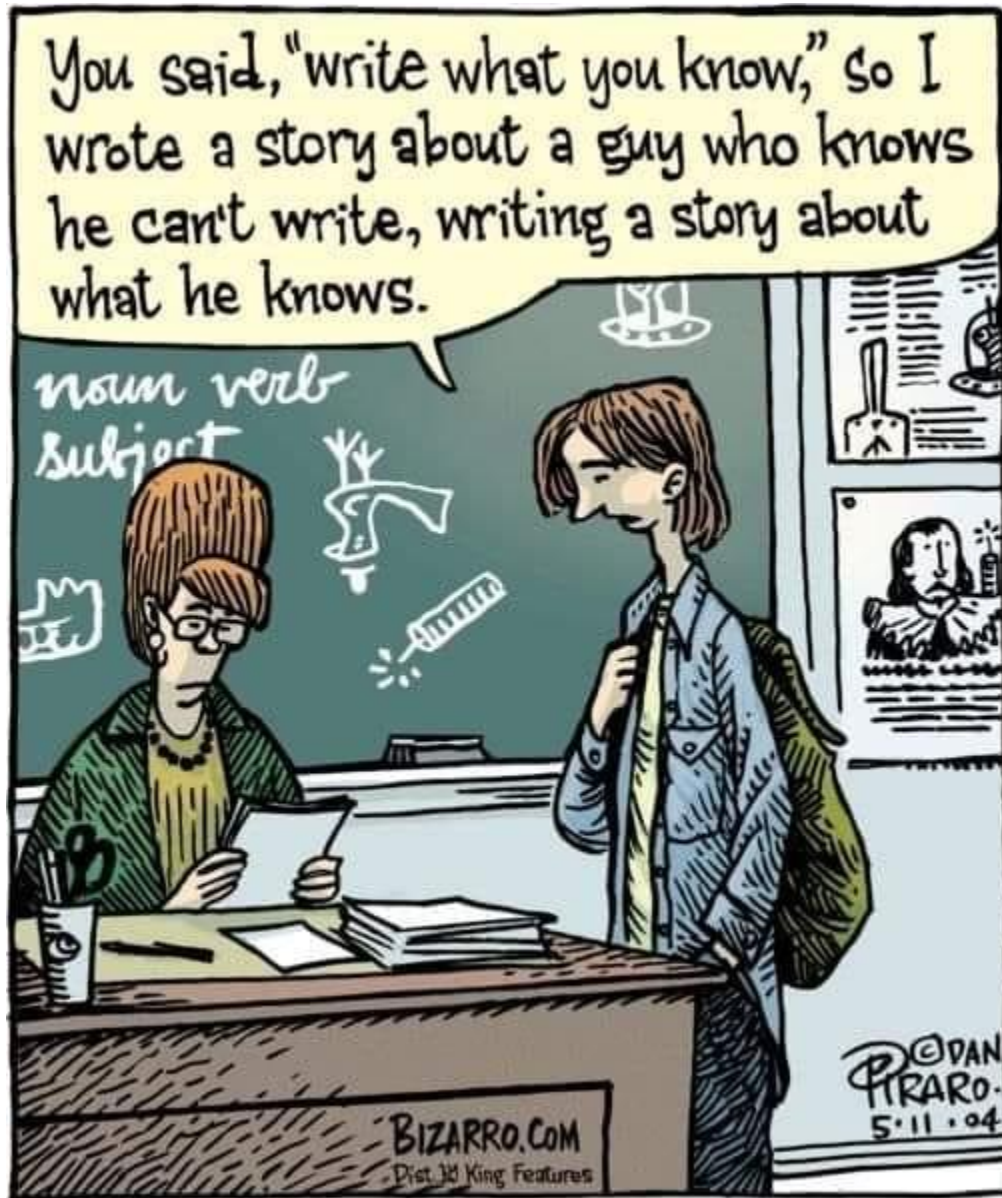
The life of that fetus would have prevented, would have aborted, three other fetuses ... the three wanted children, the three I had with my husband—whom, if I had not aborted the unwanted one, I would never have met ... I would have been an “unwed mother” of a three-year-old in California, without work, with half an education, living off her parents....

But it is the children I have to come back to, my children Elisabeth, Caroline, Theodore, my joy, my pride, my loves. If I had not broken the law and aborted that life nobody wanted, they would have been aborted by a cruel, bigoted, and senseless law. They would never have been born. This thought I cannot bear. What was it like, in the Dark Ages when abortion was a crime, for the girl whose dad couldn't borrow cash, as my dad could? What was it like for the girl who couldn't even tell her dad, because he would go crazy with shame and rage? Who couldn't tell her mother? Who had to go alone to that filthy room and put herself body and soul into the hands of a professional criminal? – because that is what every doctor who did an abortion was, whether he was an extortionist or an idealist.

You know what it was like for her. You know and I know; that is why we are here. We are not going back to the Dark Ages. We are not going to let anybody in this country have that kind of power over any girl or woman. There are great powers, outside the government and in it, trying to legislate the return of darkness. We are not great powers. But we are the light. Nobody can put us out. May all of you shine very bright and steady, today and always.

It's nice to know women will always have access to a free abortion so long as they get pregnant by a married Republican congressman.

THE WAY WE WERE



What Does God Have to do With It?

By Bert Mautz



As a ten-year-old being treated for polio's impact on my boy's body (*read that as polio's damage*) my parents felt the necessity/urgency that their church provide its blessings of healing upon their son. This process includes the application of sacred oil, followed by the healing blessing itself conducted by priesthood holders. The child's understanding was literal, anticipating feeling better, getting off this bed, and back to normal. (*"Haven't I been anointed?"*)

My Mormon family entreats their god's involvement in virtually every aspect of their lives. When events or conditions have a

positive outcome, what they prayed would happen, god gets the credit. God never is blamed for less than hoped for, prayed for occurs. Seldom does the postmortem conclude the less than desired outcome for the beneficiary was due to the failure of the recipient, his/her worthiness get addressed. Life goes on.

The ten-year-old listened to the prayers being said, the outcome of his healing being described, and waited for improvements to occur. Three gospels said it could happen (*Matthew 9:1–8, Mark 2:1–12, and Luke 5:17–26*), why not this kid? Why not me?

The hot tank therapies continued twice daily. The discomfort of a body having become a human pretzel was undeterred. What did this mean in the mind of the ten-year-old? "God wasn't helping me because I wasn't worthy, that I am bad boy?"



Religion is never transactional. The devoted pray for blessings that seldom occur. The unlikely granting of prayers desire is merely coincidental. The twenty-foot putt that just happens to go in the cup, compared to the countless long putts that don't drop. It could be argued that we being rational, have expectations for the doctor's

prescribing the antibiotic for the influenza infection. If the scrip doesn't provide the desired cure, we're back on the phone asking the doctor for another scrip/cure.

Nobody's perfect, but the ten-year-old lying in the hospital bed, believed he wasn't a bad kid; behaved in school, practiced the piano every day, didn't mistreat his little brother and sister, obeyed his father and constantly correcting mother. What did he do so wrong that god would let this happen? None of this made sense to the simple cause and effect logic of a boy.

Who is god anyway? What does god do for us, or to us? Does he even care? What if there isn't a god watching us? What do we know about god really? The hydro treatments are working, even if painful, so let's keep doing them. That makes sense. That is transactional. Eventually, or maybe inevitably the search for a payoff, a blessing for which god would, deservedly, be given the credit. Never occurred.

"He had a good life. Overcame obstacles. He worked for it." They would say, "Thank god for your good life, your countless blessing."

To which that boy, now old man replies, "My life is guided by transactional events and relationships. Many have helped me along the way too whom I have tried to reciprocate. What's god got to do with it?"





Leit Motif

— *Following the Thread, Wherever it Might Lead*
By Virgil Thorp

It all came together 24 years ago. The left side and the right side of my family adjourned to the Lake of the Ozarks for a family reunion and while there were no fireworks, the die was cast and the inevitable was set in motion. In the prescient words of

the erstwhile saint, Ron White, "*you cannot fix stupid.*"

I was sitting across from my wife at breakfast one recent morning and got this thought: "When did you know you were attracted to girls?"

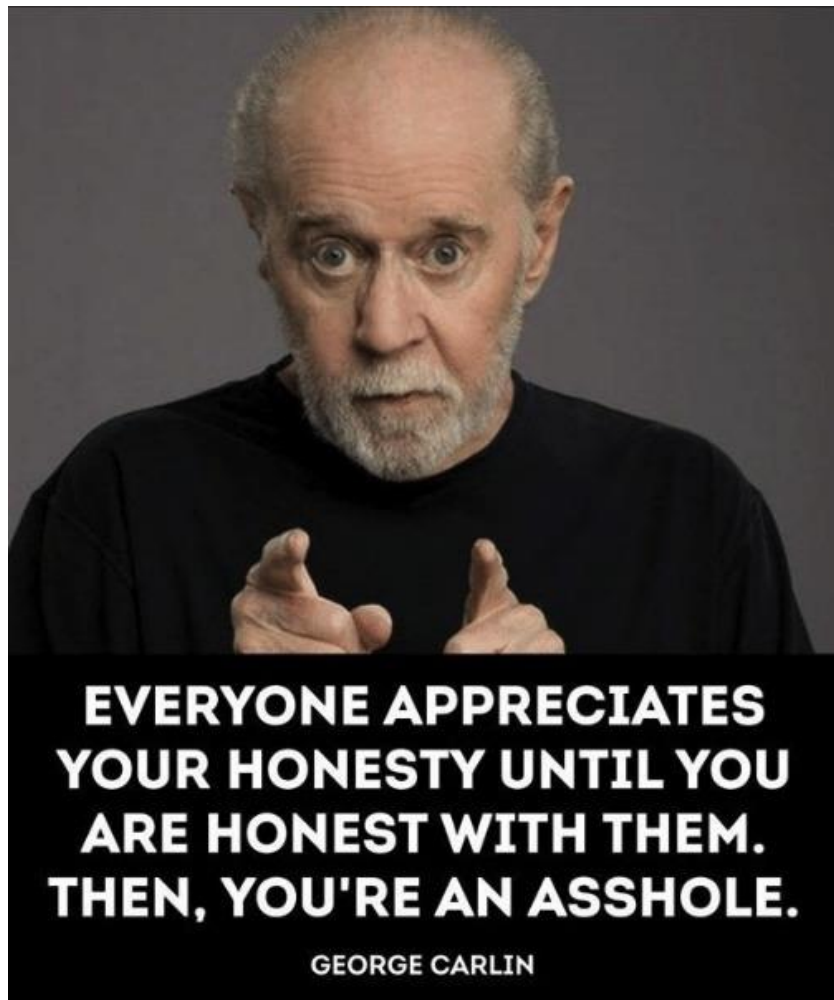
Although that seems like a no-brainer, that was not meant for me. Oh no. I have a niece and one of her daughters is attracted to girls. Actually, more than simply attracted to girls, she married one. For some reason I felt she was the one person in my family I could get an honest answer from.

I wondered; What did she see in other girls that tripped her trigger? And when, in her development, did she become aware of it? Did she know that vacation trip? Did it cause her distress? Did it cause her shame? Would she be able to respond to my honest question without tears or slapping my face? Is it too creepy that an inquiring mind (like mine) wanted to know such intimate details in her relationships?

Well, it is a typical butch-dykie-lipstick lesbian relationship – if that is not too much of a stereotypical metaphor. Actually, I saw the wedding pictures and they do make a very cute lesbian couple. A Sappho-sexual couple if you will.

I did not spend any time with the girl as she grew up. The only time I recall being around her was at that family reunion at the Lake of the Ozarks that steamy August week. There were my folks (father Vee, stepmother Pee), of course, my step sister and her family (OCD husband DD and three perfectly spaced apart daughters RR, AA and the baby, LL –

charmers all!), my nephew SS and his wife, lower-case aa and their brood (born-again breeders) girls HH, BB and ?-mark, infant son SS in



diapers – with plans to make more ... but I never made their acquaintances. My niece (divorced single mom), her two girls, Bee and KY (the gay one) and lastly, me and my wife LL. I did not pay attention to most of these souls. They just did not interest me at the time and all I wanted was the hope that one day the cousins would grow up to become interesting and hopefully, happy people.

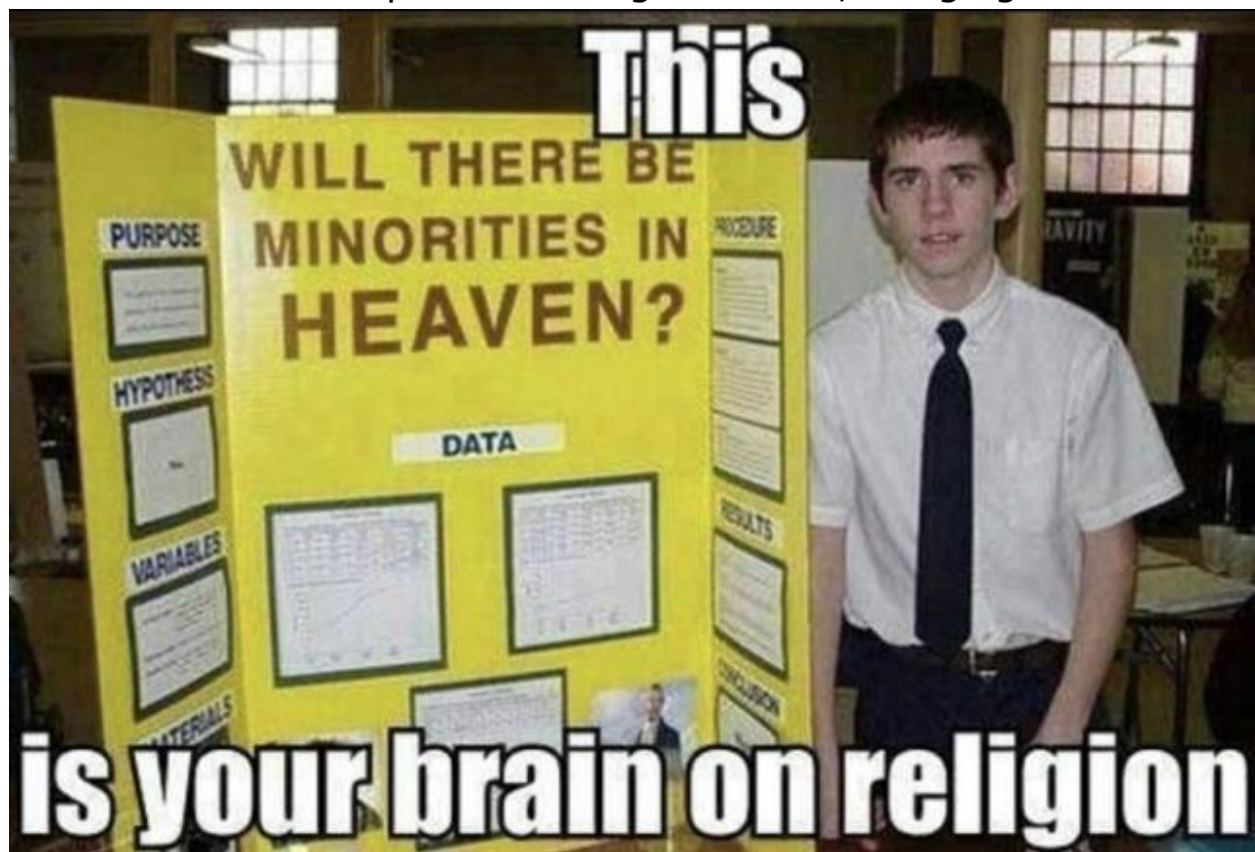
The one thing I did know, the children I didn't have would have thanked me because if LL and I had procreated, those cousins would have been of an age that would have forced them to be the babysitters for the entire reunion. I say to those unconceived and unborn, "You are welcome."

I had been estranged from the family by choice (the reason doesn't matter at all as I would later find out) but I knew my old man was getting older and his end was nearing and that was the main impetus for attending. He got strength from family, and I felt a compelling necessity to attend. Yet, I hardly paid any attention to the kiddies. My nephew's kids were in homeschool-holyland, thanking a god for this and praising a god for that. The little time I spent in their vicinity convinced me of their lack of education and I did my best to avoid them.

Short aside: my father had rented a pontoon boat for this occasion because it could accommodate so many bodies. They packed nearly all the kiddies onto it – I do not recall if there were enough floatation devices for everyone or not. For some obscure reason, my wife went with them and sort of kept an eye on the brood while in the back of the boat. With my OCD brother-in-law DD at the helm – I had refused to go on the boat and went golfing instead – the family excursion proceeded to drive around the inlet in crazy circles, cutting over increasingly high wakes which would launch the lighter kids off their seats and catapulting

them up in the air to shrieks and giggles. Ha-ha-ha, let's see how high they can go.

I know what you are thinking. What a dangerous and thoughtless thing my OCD brother-in-law was doing. Like all situations like this and as Ron White observed; stupidity reigned. Sure enough, the boat hit a wave at just the most opportune – or should I say, inopportune – angle and the nephew's youngest daughter, ?-mark was launched at an angle where she would have cleared the transom and gone straight into the foamy froth. Fortunately the wife LL realized the peril and caught ?-mark, bringing her back



into the boat before she was flipped into the murk.

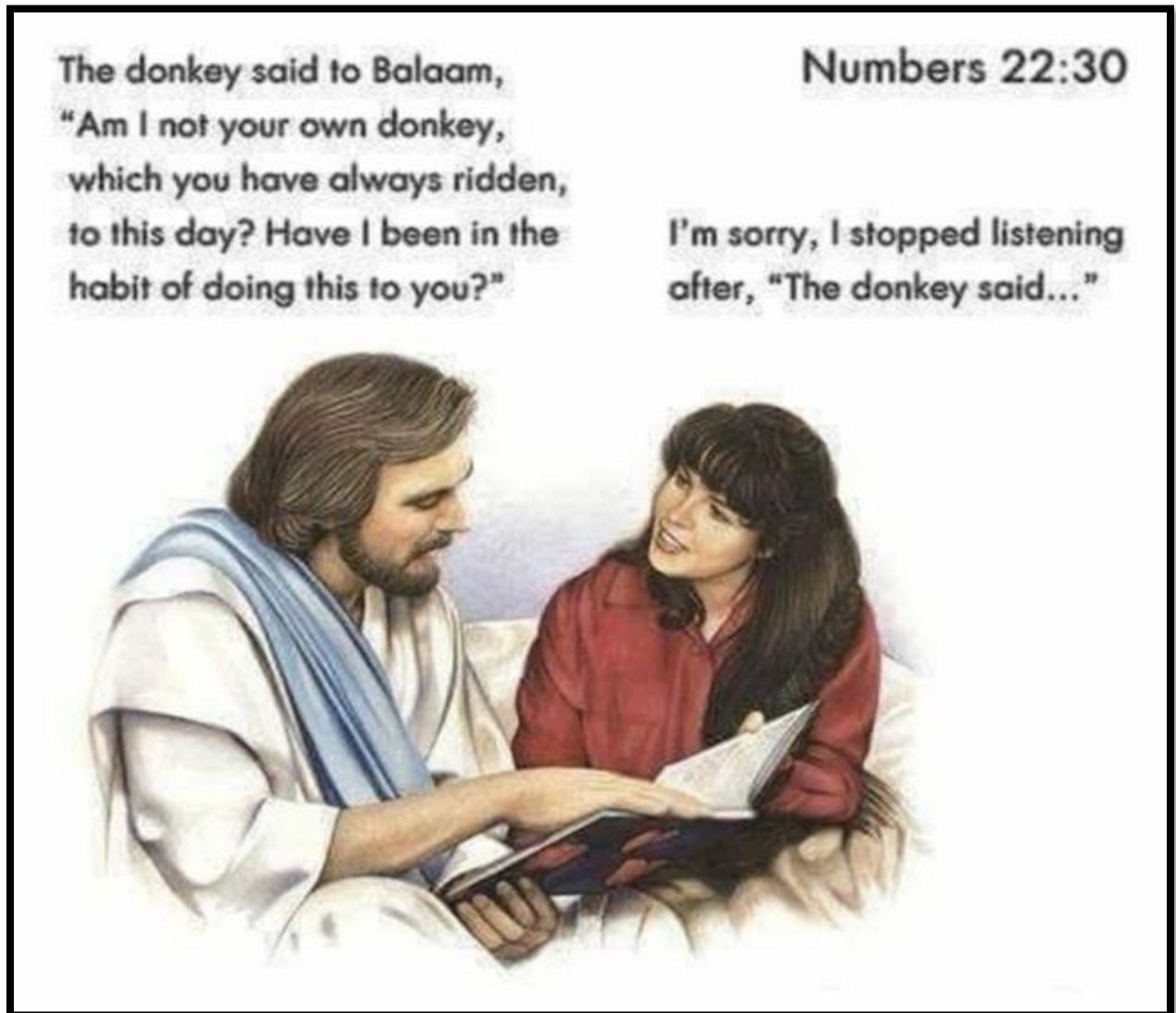
"Jesus saved me!" the grandniece, ?-mark proclaimed with a justification of glee as if the hand of god had reached down from heaven and snatched her from harm.

Which, of course, set off my wife who instantly corrected the little bugger. "Oh hell no, I saved you." LL said with appropriately

righteous indignation. At least LL had bit hard on her lower lip and had *not* said, "Oh fuck no! I fucking saved you, you fucking little shit!"

Sometimes, I believe, it is best to keep some questions to yourself.

And that is why I have cats.



FICTION & POETRY



**"In the very end,
civilizations perish because
they listen to their politicians
and not to their poets."**

Jonas Mekas

24 December 1922 - 23 January 2019 RIP

I, Too, Sing America

I, too, sing America.

*I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.*

*Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen;"
Then.*

*Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed –*

I, too, am America.

– Langston Hughes



misery loves



company

by james longo

"Don't think much these days," Jack said to Jill as they sat on the back porch drinking coffee and watching the squirrels attack the supposed squirrel-proof squirrel feeder.

"About what?"

"Anything,"

"Are you happy?"

"What do you mean by happy?"

"Okay, are you content?"

"I'm not miserable," Jack said taking a sip of coffee.

"You're not miserable, but oh that means you're miserable. You're only happy when you're miserable."

"That isn't true," Jack protested.

"Okay, when are you happiest?"

"When it's miserable and it stops being as miserable."

"Which means you are only happy when?"

"I don't know when I can see a miserable situation coming to an end?"

"Then what?"

"It ends, I am overjoyed, and I step into the next miserable situation, then get through that and I am overjoyed again."

"My little misery hound," Jill said.

"I'm never really miserable I sort of enjoy working through each situation."

"You just proved my point. You're happiest when you are being made miserable."

"I'm happy right now, just sitting here doing nothing," Jack said.

"You are not. Don't lie to me. This is driving you crazy. You can't stand sitting here doing nothing, waiting for me to start our day."

"So why do you insist we do this every morning for fifteen minutes if it drives me crazy?"

Jill smiled a Cheshire cat smile.

"You bitch," Jack said with a smile and got up to leave with his coffee.

"Oh honey, don't be like that come sit down with me until I finish my coffee.

Jack sat back down. Took a sip of his coffee, "Let me get this straight you insist we take coffee out here every morning when you know I hate it. So why do we do it?"

Jill giggled, "My little misery hound. The better question is, why do you do it? You could easily go inside at any moment. You nearly just did, but you don't why?"

Jack gave her a blank stare, then he stammered, "I don't know. I thought you liked it when I sat with you out here,"



Jill smiled a relaxed smile, "I do."

Jack went to say something. Jill gave him a look and a nod that said don't. They sat watching as two squirrels at once attacked the bird feeder, then chased each other across the backyard and halfway up a tree.

"You look tired. Do you want to go back to bed?" Jill said, raising her eyebrows twice.

"You know misery loves company," Jack said.

"I wouldn't have it any other way," Jill said, getting up and taking him by the hand.

I am Content to Live in the Mystery

By Henry Miller

I have a theory that the moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself.

I have tried this experiment a thousand times and I have never been disappointed.

The more I look at a thing, the more I see in it, and the more I see in it, the more I want to see. It is like peeling an onion.

There is always another layer, and another, and another. And each layer is more beautiful than the last.

This is the way I look at the world. I don't see it as a collection of objects, but as a vast and mysterious organism.

I see the beauty in the smallest things, and I find wonder in the most ordinary events. I am always looking for the hidden meaning, the secret message. I am always trying to understand the mystery of life.

I know that I will never understand everything, but that doesn't stop me from trying.

I am content to live in the mystery, to be surrounded by the unknown.

I am content to be a seeker, a pilgrim, a traveler on the road to nowhere.

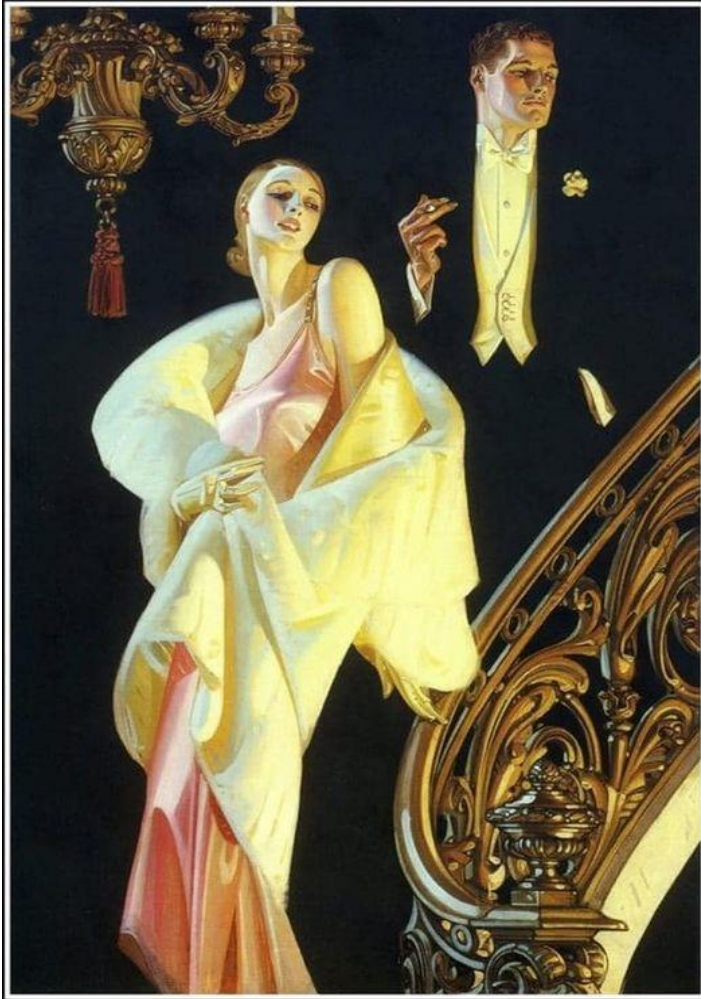


COMEDY CORNER

IF JESUS LOOKED LIKE THIS



**WOULD WHITE CONSERVATIVES
STILL BE CHRISTIANS?**



WATCHING COUPLES AT DINNER

By Bert Mautz

Feel an obligation to narrow this topic somewhat. Let's focus on seniors, upper class seniors, who happen to be dining out in better/upscale Florida restaurants.

Just this week encountered a glistening white Bentley

Convertible parked in that prestige spot near the entrance for all to see. *Whose car is that? Quarter of a million plus, easy. Will the owner be obvious?*

Surveyed the bar and dining room as we entered. No one particularly matching the car. Then was attracted to a couple on the porch by the borderline. Outrageous electric pink, very short dress she was wearing, big blond curls tossing in the breeze, bracelets halfway to her elbows, cantilevered eye lashes. While he could not have been a more ordinary *late middle-aged*



bachelor, all gray, pants and shirt utterly unremarkable for a beautiful spring day dining on the porch.

My sons would not let this go. Shadowed the couple out the door when they got up to leave and sure enough, it was *his white Bentley convertible*. Unclear on the relationship, but found how, yes, opposites could attract, or maybe a transactional/financial draw.



A reoccurring type are those couples of noticeable variations in vigor and often he is significantly the taller of the two. Turn the clock back fifty or sixty years, puts the couple in college. Let's use

stereotypes for the sake of example. He could have been an upper-class man, a basketball player. She, an impressionable freshman succumbed to "big man on campus," and a jock's impression/image and here they are decades later. He's stooped over, walks with unsteady hesitation/can barely walk. She's dying her hair, kept that enticing figure of her youth. She leads the now frail big man to their table. Yes, we do change, roles reversing over the decades.

The four gray beauties dining together are another type of couple in which all the husbands, judging by their attractive outfits, well-coiffed hair does, and jewels were likely successful in life, are gone. The ladies appear to be having a wonderful time, free at last, boisterously enjoying an uninhibited night out.



A type we find curious are the social/economic misfits. The tip-off is his sweat stained cap worn to the dinner table and never removed while she, by contrast, is dressed for dinner. This dissonance can cut both ways where she's in that torn jeans look, western shirt with copper rivets fashion and he's got on cargo shorts, flip flops, and Hawaiian shirt, a guys' evening out norm in south Florida. While not exactly seniors, the fashion statement conflicts are always fun. His will be the Florida standard shorts and flip flops, and she has decided to breeze into the dining room sexy. Whether her fashion, "look at me" statement is bright colors, lots of tanned skin, gauzy see through, or always appreciated cleavage.



And there are a few couples who match, who are a fit. Both are dressed to go to the same place. Both are of the same generation. Likely originals, meaning raised a family and are still together enjoying a few relaxed years. Can't help but notice they're holding hands, comfort with each other. Obviously, the arrangement, likely marriage, has worked out. Kinda envy them.



Time, Time, Time



By James Longo

Time, time, time, see what's become of me, while I look around for my possibilities, I was so hard to please. – Simon, and Garfunkel

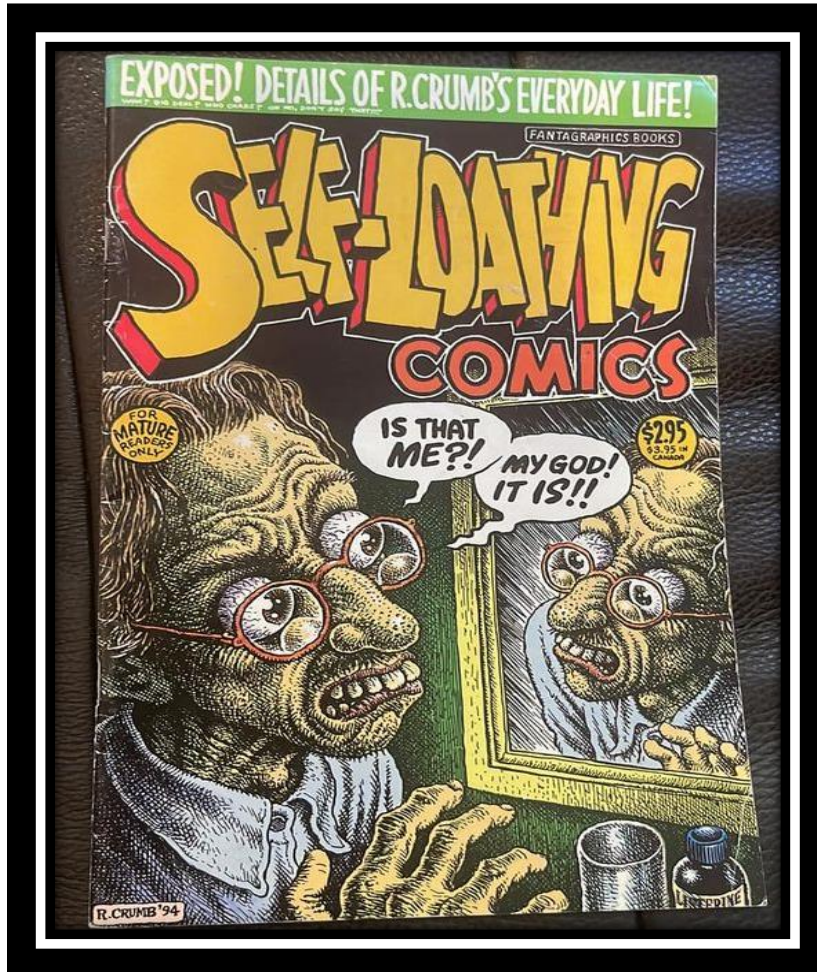
Or, It's my life and I'll do what I want – Eric Burdon

"OJ is dead, and it seems like yesterday he was out killing people," Jack said, looking at his newsfeed waiting to go to work for a short shift.

"Time flies," Jill replied, looking up from her computer to his right.

"Time flies then you are eaten by their larvae," Jack declared.

"Aren't you a morbid soul," Jill answered, with a chuckle.



"It's the truth."

"You're in a funk."

"Am I? According to you, I am always in a funk," Jack said firmly.

"Okay, more than usual, what's biting your ass?"

"Besides those future maggots," Jack asked with a tiny bit of sarcasm?

"Let me get this straight. You are morbid over mortality?"

"Not really mortality," Jack said squinting like he had just eaten something with a bad taste.

"Then what? I'm dying to know,"

"Let's hope not," Jack said with a smile.

"Stop being an asshat and tell me what's bothering you."

"It's sort of a montage of things."

"All right let's hear it," Jill said, her palms open.

"The gig is sooner or later going to end."

"Bullshit, you're always worried about this shit and someone always calls."

"It's not the gig ending. It's what do I do when it does?"



"The honey-do list," Jill said with a big grin and spreading her hands apart like the list is a big one.

"My sister says, I better do everything I want, because in ten years I won't be able to."

"What does your sister know?"

"She's ten years older than me."

"So, what do you want to do?"

"That's the thing, like every other time in my life, the possibilities are many, and my ability to decide is constipating."

"That's pretty crappy," Jill chuckled.

"Oh, ha, ha, ha," Jack said.

"Why don't you write down the things you can do and weigh the positives and negatives?"

"And do you know where I would end up? Doing exactly what I am doing now, which is exactly what I please."

"What's wrong with that?"

"Nothing I guess, but it doesn't feel right. I should be striving to be something. I should be striving to be more."

"What are you, an economy?" Jill said.

"Huh?" Jack glanced at Jill with a questioning look.

"Economies have to grow, if they don't grow, they fall into recession, and if they really don't grow, they fall into a depression. You are not an economy. Take a recess. Don't worry I'll keep you out of depression."

"I bet you would," Jack said rolling his eyes.

"Is that all that is bothering you?"

"Work is my social outlet, and when it ends, where am I going to interact with people? They say socializing is one of the keys to a long life."

"You'll find a way," Jill spoke confidently.

"Familiarity breeds contempt, and work is the perfect human interaction, three to five minutes on a particular subject, which is the customer and their problems. Any more than that we'd have to have a real conversation. And God forbid we do that!

"Is it familiarity that breeds contempt in you, or your familiarity that you fear will breed contempt in them?"

"And absence makes the heart grow fonder, look at the time. Time flies, off to work, got to go," And at that, Jack jumped up, grabbed his to-go cup of coffee and headed for the door.

"Wait, wait, wait!" Jill yelled, "we need to talk!"

But Jack was already out the door, into his car and halfway down the driveway by the time Jill got to the door.

Jill picked up her phone and texted, "This isn't over."

Jack saw it later, rolled his eyes, and sent her a smiley face.

She didn't respond.



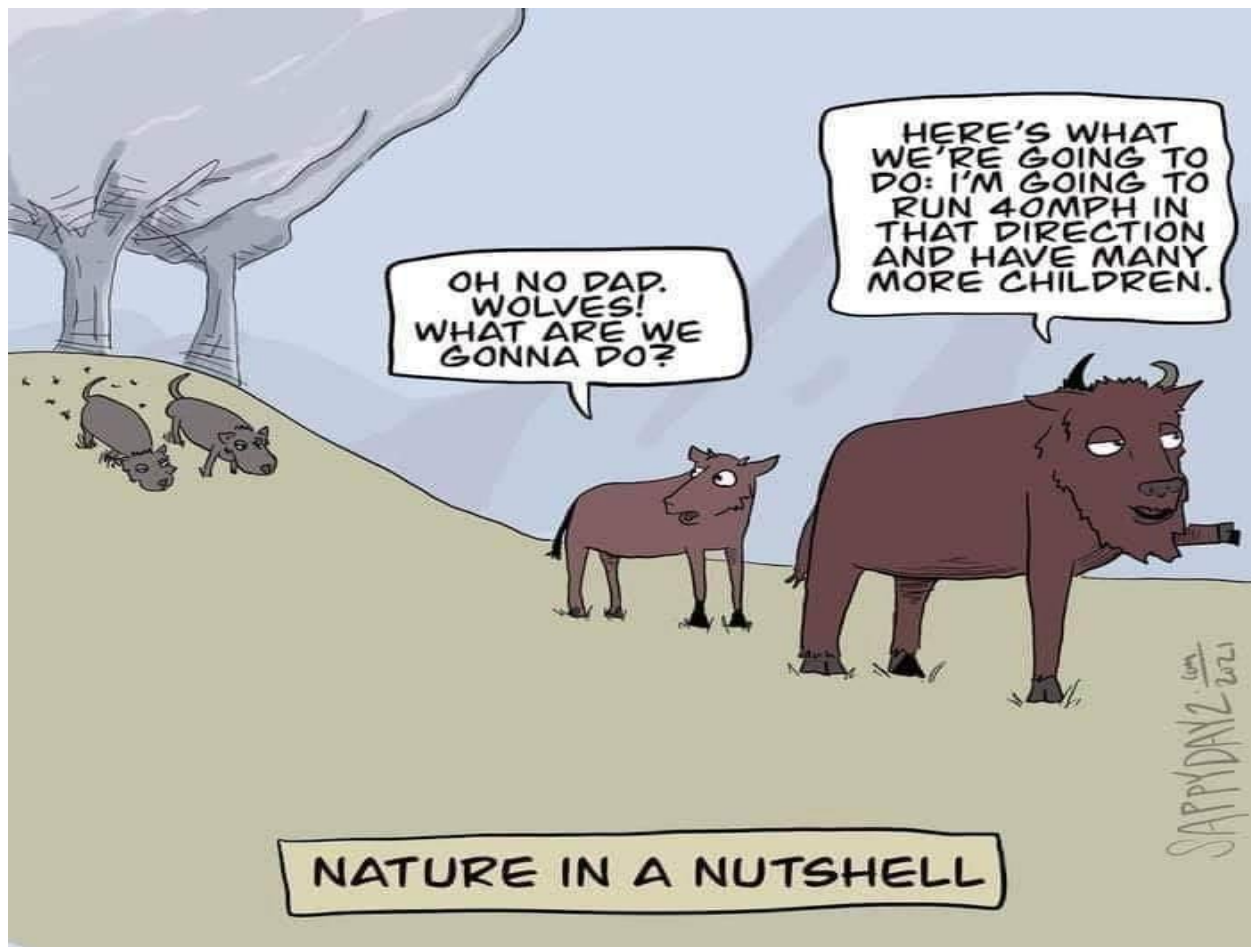
Time, Time, Time

*Funny how my memory skips
While looking over manuscripts
Of unpublished rhyme ...*

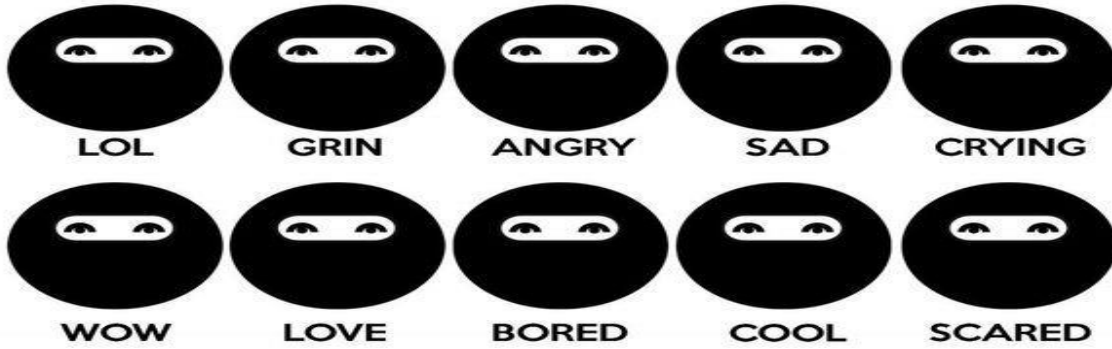
Paul Simon



My second attempt at making a protein shake. What am I doing wrong?



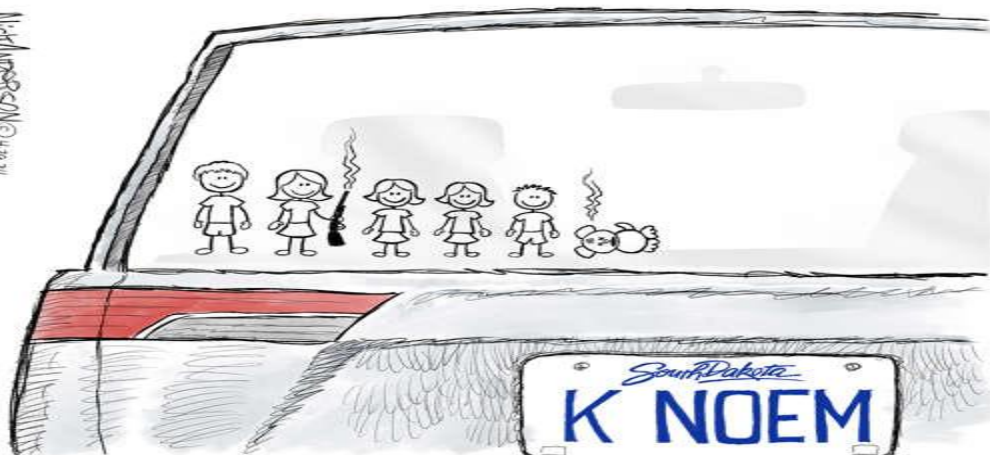
ISLAMIC EMOJI



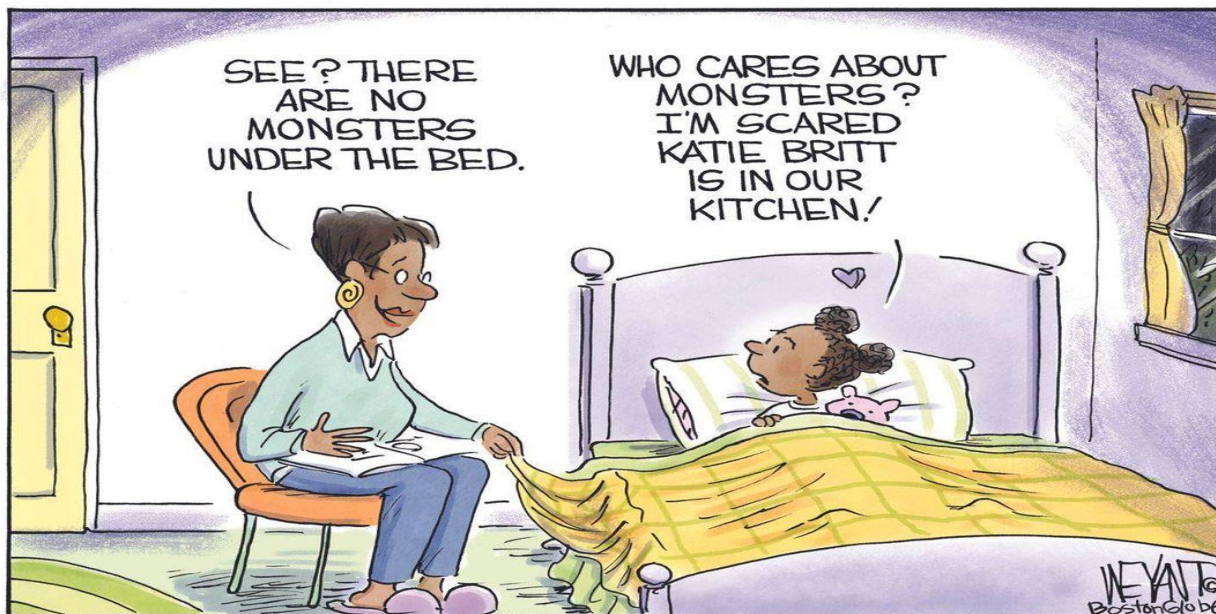
DEERING ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE
©2024 CREATORS.COM



NICHOLSON
121 NEWS TROBE





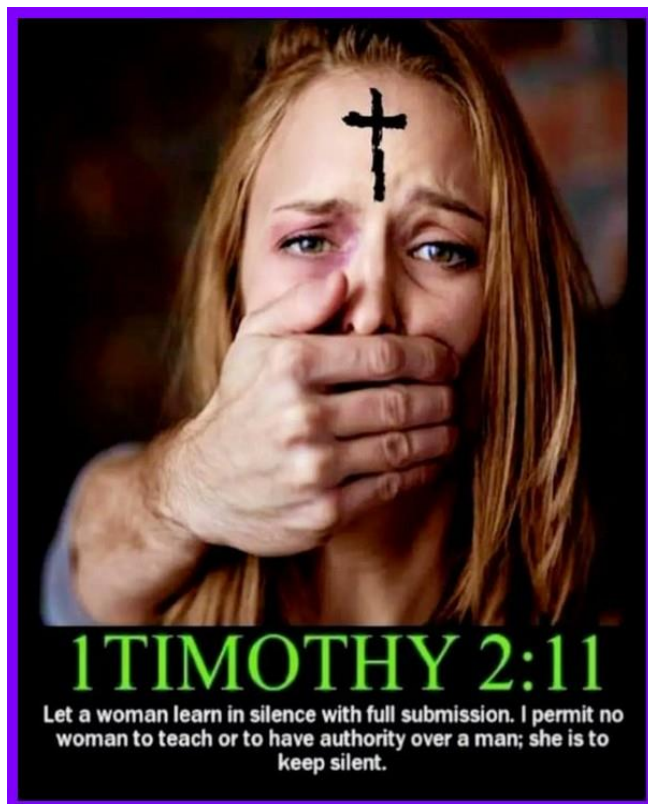
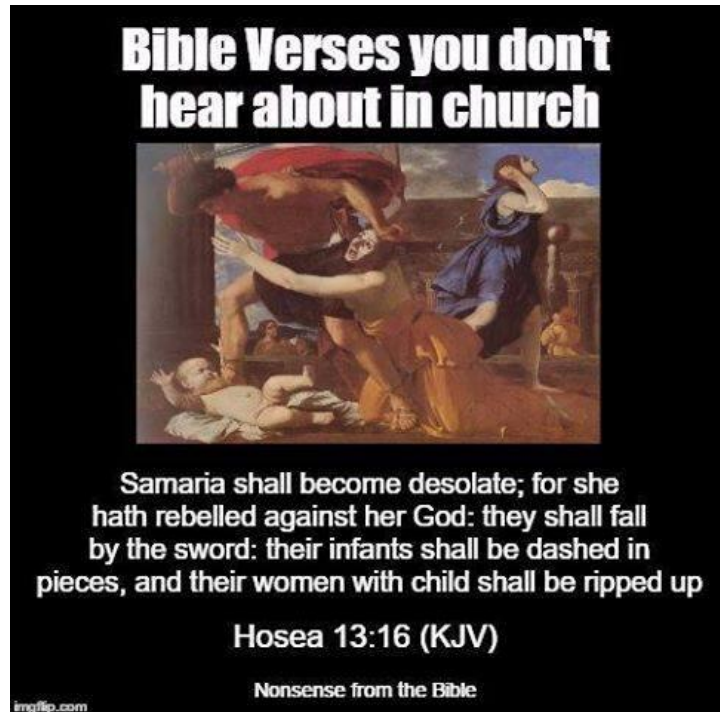
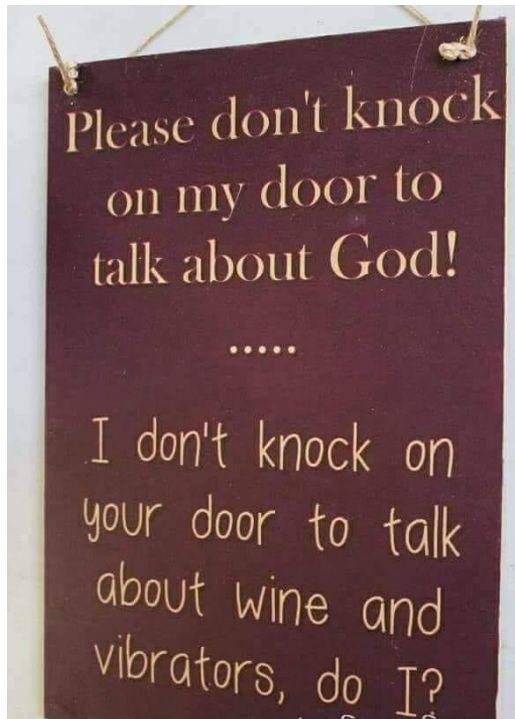


GREAT MOMENTS IN SCIENCE

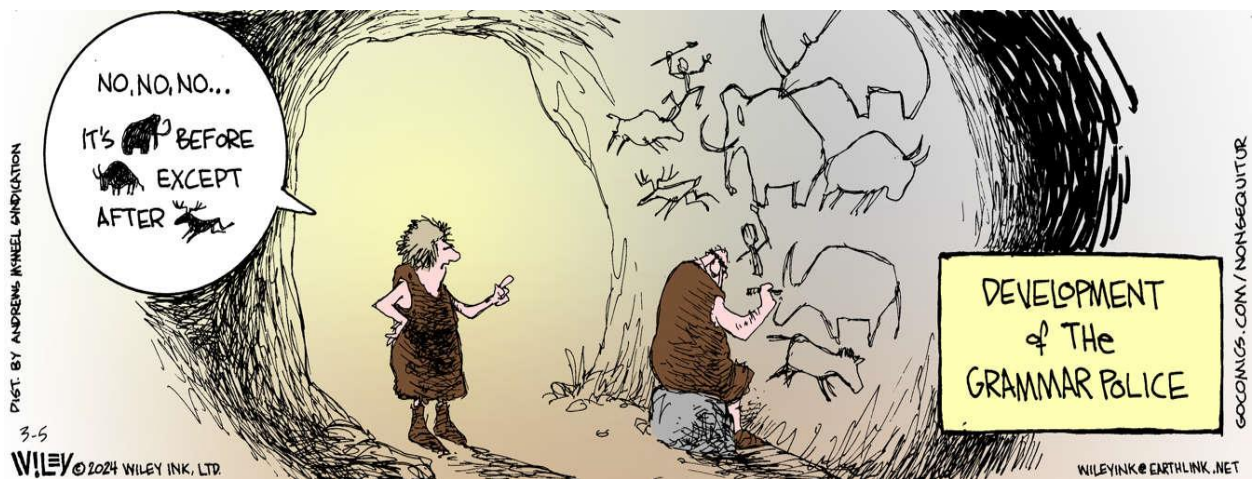
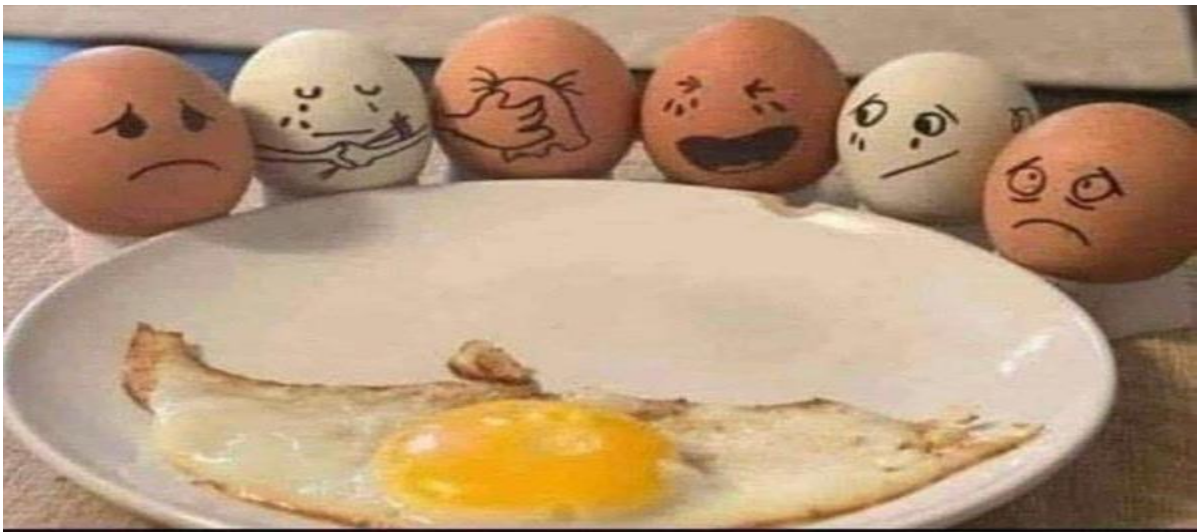
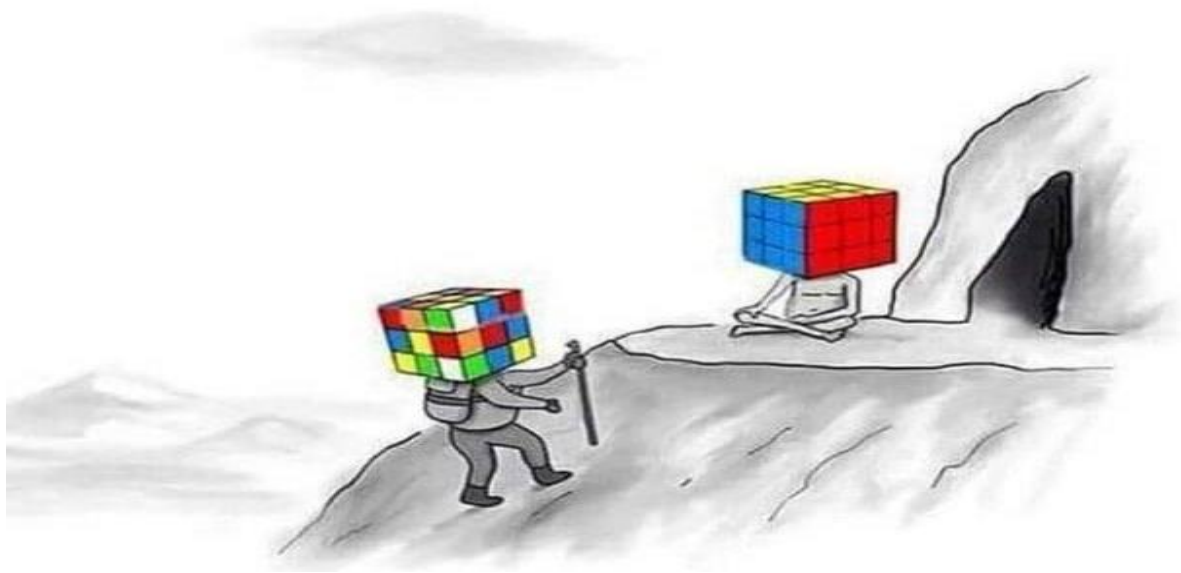


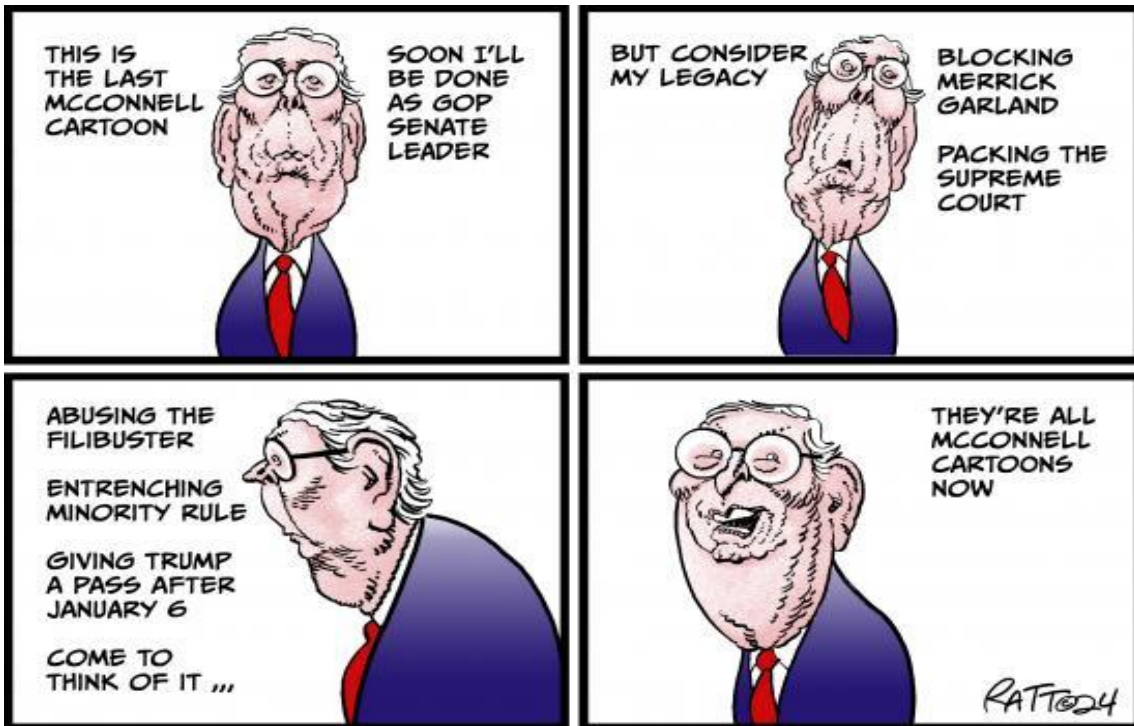
www.piecomic.com







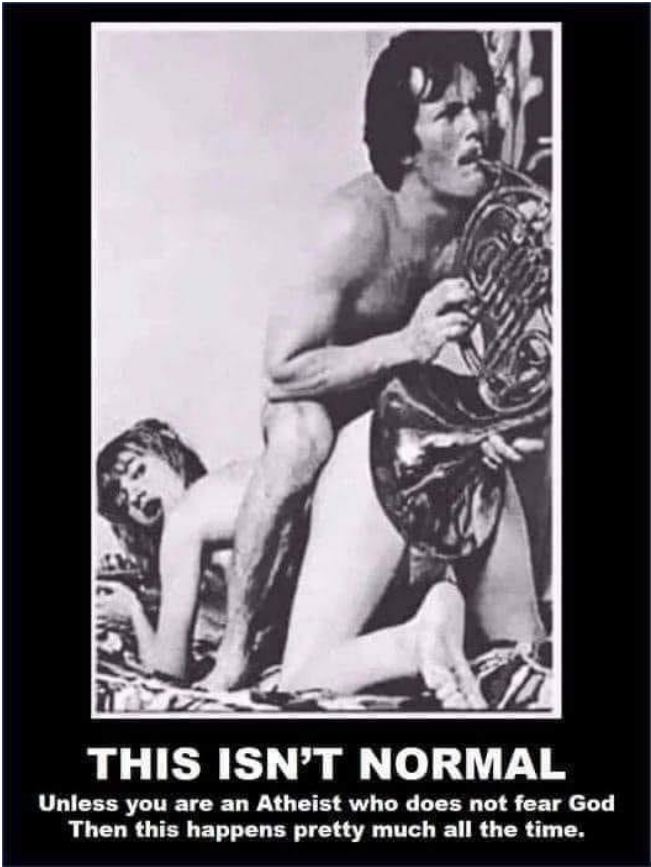




Mike Luckovich



And suddenly, Bob found himself the topic of all the office gossip.



THIS ISN'T NORMAL
Unless you are an Atheist who does not fear God
Then this happens pretty much all the time.



**OK YOU WANT RELIGION
IN SCHOOLS**

**BUT THAT MEANS ALL
RELIGIONS, RIGHT?**

epic in Express
Make a Meme+

