

Random Scribblings

Junk I've littered the internet with

Volume Two

Other titles:

Journey to Madness

The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius

Yesterday's Tomorrows

Mars, Ho!

Nobots

The Paxil Diaries

Voyage to Earth

Grandma's Cookbook

Random Scribblings Volume One

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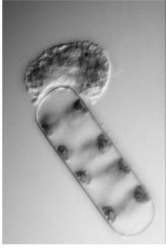
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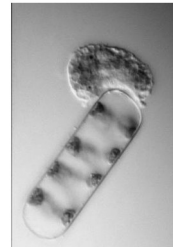
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The Science of Genesis



I'm a firm believer in the Bible's truth. I'm also a firm believer in science, as any Christian should be.

The book of Proverbs starts out "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels."

In other words, if someone's spent years studying something you should pay attention to them. However, if they're a preacher you should beware; he could be a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Many people, both Christians and atheists and probably other religions than Christianity believe that science and religion are incompatible. I don't, and half the world's scientists don't, either. Science is about the material world, things that can be measured or counted, religion is about the spiritual and cannot.

Discussing this with an atheist once on an on-line nerd forum, he proceeded to point out miracles in the Bible that science says are impossible, like Lazarus rising from the dead and the sun stopping in the sky for hours. I explained that as recently as two hundred years ago, people were mistakenly thought to be dead and subsequently were buried alive. Folks

were terrified of this, and many had bells they could ring that were outside the grave if they woke up.

As to the sun stopping, I reminded this fellow that four thousand years ago the closest thing to a clock was the sun, moon, and stars, and the sun stopping meant time stopped. But time is variable. As Albert Einstein said about relativity, “When you’re with a witty, beautiful woman, an hour seems like a minute. When your hand is on a hot stove, a minute lasts an hour. *That’s* relativity.”

But the scientific community and various religious communities have often clashed. Before the late sixteenth century, everyone believed the obvious—Earth was the center of the universe and everything revolved around it. Then science got in the way when Galileo Galilei aimed his telescope at Jupiter and saw it rotating and its moons circling it. It was immediately obvious to him that it was an illusion that we were the center of the universe.

Note that it wasn’t just the church that fought him on this, but his fellow scientists as well. However, the Pope went a little too far with it, especially since the Bible doesn’t actually say that the Earth is the center of the universe, although you’ll see atheist postings on the internet that claim otherwise. One, for example, says the account of the sun stopping in the sky meant Earth was the center, which is foolish nonsense. Does the atheist who wrote it not himself speak of sunrises and sunsets? Atheists lack, in my opinion, wisdom.

If you think science disagrees with something in the Bible, either you misunderstand the Bible or you don’t understand the science. In the above case, science didn’t understand the science and the church read stuff into the Bible that wasn’t there, much like the atheists who post nonsense like I referred to above.

Then there was the bigger chasm between science and the Bible: The birth of the universe. Science said that all the evidence pointed to a solid state, unchanging, eternal universe

that had no beginning and no end, since there was no evidence to the contrary.

But then science had a big bang.

It started in 1912 when Vesto Slipher measured the first Doppler shift of a “spiral nebula” (“spiral nebula” is the obsolete term for spiral galaxies), and soon discovered that almost all such nebulae were receding from Earth.

The universe was expanding, meaning it started from nothing. Science was now saying that the universe had a beginning.

Atheists were aghast and refused to believe it. Many Christians were aghast and refused to believe it as well. “The universe started in a universe-shattering flash of light and sound? No Way! The Bible says the heavens and Earth were created before God said ‘Let there be light’.” Only a few months ago I saw a Christian preacher on TV saying he didn’t “believe in the big bang theory.”

That’s because almost everybody outside of science thinks the big bang theory says “in the beginning there was nothing. Then it exploded.” But that’s not what the theory says.

There was no bang, because there was no matter to vibrate. There was no flash, because light would not exist at all for another two hundred million years; scientists call this period the universe’s “dark ages”.

What the theory says is that a pinpoint (or maybe nothing, their math can’t pin it down) rapidly expanded into a soup of subatomic particles, a fog too thick for photons to penetrate, even if photons had existed. Eventually they coalesced into hydrogen atoms, and hydrogen was the only thing that existed until the first bunch of hydrogen large enough to cause fusion burst into life and gave the universe its first taste of light. Or as the Bible puts it:

In the beginning, God Created the heavens and the Earth. And the Earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the

face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

Genesis exactly describes the big bang theory! How did some primitive man eight thousand years or more ago know that?

Well, that's a prophet, someone to whom God shows things he doesn't show others; the prophet is God's mouthpiece (and the Bible says God was very harsh on prophets who didn't do it exactly right).

But I had a nagging question about Genesis, about the time after the creation of the sun, moon, Earth, and mankind. It said he made Adam from clay, so evolution? I finally figured out that the Bible doesn't go into detail *how* he went about doing it. So that is actually a little misleading, but you have to remember that the prophets were primitive people who didn't quite understand what God was showing them. When God said he made Adam from clay, they assumed Adam was pottery magically brought to life, like Pinocchio. It would be thousands of years later when the "how" started to be figured out.

But what of the garden of Eden?

And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

It goes on to describe the garden and where it was: right where archaeologists determined was the location of the first human civilization.

And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

The knowledge of good and evil is the knowledge of pain, sickness, and death. So far, so good. But this is the part that has puzzled me for years:

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

*Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, **neither shall ye touch it**, lest ye die.*

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

*And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I **was afraid, because I was naked**; and I hid myself.*

And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

The problem was that we aren't born knowing good and evil, it's learned. Babies and small children aren't ashamed of being naked, and in fact aren't ashamed of anything.

It's also pretty clear that clothing was invented to keep humans warm and the embarrassment part comes later. Also, many adults have no problem with nudity.

Then the other day I saw an article in National Geographic magazine (the article is online at <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/06/tiny-vampires-fossils-life-evolution-earth-science/>) by Mark Strauss, titled "You May Owe Your Existence to Tiny Vampires." It had nothing to do with God; it was strictly science. It's a very good article that's worth your reading.

Paleobiologist Susannah Porter who researches at the University of California has discovered fossil evidence of the first predators on the planet and published her findings. What the "oh, wow" moment was for her was the timing of this species.

Scientists tell us that after inanimate matter somehow came alive (called abiogenesis, and they still have very few clues as to how it happened), there was no evolution at all for a billion years. All of the fossils of the life forms, which were all single cell organisms, from seven hundred fifty million years ago to a billion years earlier are the same no matter what part of that billion years you examine.

Dr. Porter found that the first predators emerged at the end of what paleobiologists humorously call "the boring billion." From the article:

Some critters, for instance, developed hard, biomineral skeletal structures and armored hides, while others found safety in numbers by forming colonies that became primitive, multicellular organisms—the earliest precursors to the varied and complex life-forms on our planet today.

If Porter is correct, we owe our existence to the tiny vampires and their ilk, who ushered in an era when life on Earth went from bland to brutal.

Just as in the beginning the Earth was without form, and void, in the garden of Eden Adam and the plants and animals were without form, and void. There is no difference at

all between a fertilized egg and a fully grown human except for form; or lack of it. Both the fertilized egg and the cells of the adult the zygote will become have the same DNA. And when John the Baptist's mother heard that her cousin Mary was a few days pregnant with Jesus, "the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost."

Adam was your first ancestor seven hundred fifty million years ago, and he and Eve each only had one cell. Clearly, someone lost a whole lot of begats. I'm still puzzled by that.

And the part about fig leaves? "others found safety in numbers by forming colonies that became primitive, multi-cellular organisms—the earliest precursors to the varied and complex life-forms on our planet today."

The tree of pain and death was the vampyrellid amoebae's food, and until Eve and Adam had a taste of it, that organism's only food. When Adam and Eve touched it, they got its smell on them (*neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die*) and the vampyrellid amoebae got a taste for people. In fear they covered themselves.

I wonder how much DNA we share with fig trees?



A Half Century of Rock

A Listener's History of KSHE

Some time in the early 1960s, my dad's friend got him hooked on high fidelity classical music, so he worked over his vacation to afford a big Magnavox high fidelity cabinet stereo; furniture to hear Beethoven on. It's now in my garage.



Specifically, the FM station with the call letters of KSHE. At the time, KSHE was just a guy playing classical albums from his basement, an engineer.

The rest of the family was warned to *never* change the station. Someone did—the station. The guy sold his radio station to corporate types, who started playing what was called “Easy Listening” back then. Dad grumbled, but kept listening.

There's an interview at KSHE's web site with Shelley Grafman, whom they call KSHE's architect, but in the interview, the late Mr. Grafman gets some things wrong. First was that when it was classical you could only hear it for a short way, but that was incorrect. We lived across the river in Cahokia and Dad picked it up very clearly.

Also, he thought that it was still classical in 1967, but perhaps he couldn't tell the difference; many people couldn't back then. When the corporates bought it from the engineer is when it stopped being classical and started being easy listening.

I always got home before anyone else, and always picked out a good rock album, the only way to hear rock then. I would turn Dad's stereo on and play the album. Then one day when I was fifteen I got home, got an album out, turned on Dad's stereo, and instead of José Feliciano, better rock than I had in my hand was playing.

KSHE had changed formats again. I listened for an hour and went to my room to find this great station on my little, less faithful stereo.

When Dad got home he was *pissed*, and demanded to know who changed the channel. My sister and I were then grounded until the disk jockey mentioned the format change. I told Dad, he cursed, and rescinded our groundings.

Before that day there were few ways to discover good rock. The AM pop station would occasionally (but not very often) play a rock song.

There was Teentown and bands playing in shopping center parking lots, who never played anything you heard on KXOK; they played the music KSHE would play after the format change.

Then there were jukeboxes. I was playing pinball at the Burger Bar when I first heard *Pinball Wizard*. I bought the album, and was disappointed. It was quite a while before KSHE played The Who, among a few other bands. The Kinks come to mind.

There were friends' albums, music they had found elsewhere. The "elsewhere" was usually where I found most of the good rock—a record store. Record stores always had new music playing, usually good rock. I discovered Led Zeppelin in a record store the day their first album came out.

The critics panned the album. They were wrong. But probably as a result, KSHE, today "Your Zeppelin station forever", never played any until the second album. I heard it on the day it was released, in a record store. It blew my mind; I'd have bought it just for *Communication Breakdown*, the song that was playing when I walked in, even if the whole damned album hadn't been great.

It was years before they played Jimi Hendrix, too. They weren't alone; nobody played him. Rock and pop stations relegated him to the Black stations, and Black stations relegated him to the rock stations. As racist as the nation is now, it was far, far more racist then than today. My late friend

Tom Egbert introduced me to *Are You Experienced?* KSHE started playing him after Woodstock.

Of course, I turned all my friends on to KSHE. It was a station unlike any station I had ever heard before, and KSHE today is far less unlike other stations than it was at first. Part of the reason, I'm sure, as chronicled by Mark Klose, one of its first employees who was hired when KSHE was five and came out of retirement not long ago, was that "they were all a bunch of hippies who didn't know what they were doing," but mainly because all the other rock stations later copied KSHE.

I didn't hear the first song played; nobody did, except perhaps the disk jockey. Nobody who enjoyed Herb Alpert was going to like Jefferson Airplane and would have changed the station or shut it off when *White Rabbit*, Real Rock Radio's first song ever broadcast, started playing.

If I remember correctly, and I may not since it's over half a century ago, KXOK never played Jefferson Airplane. There were very few songs both stations played.

The music KSHE played was basically, or at least mostly, songs relating to sex and drugs; hippie music, starting with that first tune.

Back then, cars didn't have FM radios, cassettes, or eight tracks. The closest to rock you could hear in a car was still KXOK, so KSHE listeners were forced to listen to either KXOK or road noise. We could all still tell that KXOK still sucked worse than road noise. Despite that, both stations sponsored the Doors concert in 1968, a concert I attended. Morrison was so drunk he couldn't have stood up without the microphone stand. He still put on a good show. Both stations played *Light My Fire*, KXOK playing the forty five and KSHE playing the long album version.

1968 was also when their mascot, Sweetmeat, the joint smoking, headphone and sunglasses wearing pig was born, when KSHE started their bumper stickers.

I mentioned earlier that they didn't know what they were doing. Their ignorance spawned the greatest rock station ever.

Every other station on the planet would never, ever play a song longer than three and a half minutes, with most broadcast songs more like two minutes. KSHE didn't follow radio rules because they didn't know them, nor did they care to. KSHE was an album station, playing mostly album sides or full albums, and seldom playing any song shorter than five minutes long. Today's KSHE DJs talk of 45s, but KSHE never played them.

A few stations copied the album format, but not many. By the middle seventies the standard size for a rock song was stretchable, from the old standard up to seven or eight minutes. The pop stations kept the old standard, so when the sixteen minute long *In a Gadda Da Vida* was released, you only heard it on KSHE until they released a cut down forty five. KXOK played the amputated version. When Creedence released *Suzie Q*, KSHE played the seven minute album version. The forty five cut the song in half, with the first half fading out on side one and fading in on side two. KXOK only played side one.

Another thing that was different from any other station except the college stations was that there were absolutely no commercials. After a few months, a few commercials advertising waterbed stores and head shops started playing. It's a far cry from today, where every car dealer and jewelry store in the St. Louis area advertises there.

In late 1969 or early 1970 I caught influenza, and spent the worst day of it laying on the couch listening to KSHE. Before KSHE I, like today's young people, listened to singles, having no clue about concept albums. I mentioned earlier that I had purchased The Who's *Tommy* album on the basis of *Pinball Wizard* before KSHE played The Who at all. *Tommy* was the first Who album they played. I had needled through the tracks, and was disappointed. The album stayed in its sleeve until after that day I was incapacitated by the flu.

The disk jockey started playing the first track, and rather than going to my room to fetch an album, I was too sick and simply laid there listening. By the end of the first side, I realized it wasn't the songs that were important, but that the entire album was a single song, in a way. It was a story! And it kicked ass! "Sickness will surely take the mind where minds can't usually go." It was very fitting.

By late 1970 the albums and album sides were nearly gone, thanks to the record companies, but not completely. They moved full albums to Sunday nights, on Saturday they had the "album of the week", and they played an album side every weeknight at six.

This continued until after I joined the Air Force in June of 1971. For the next four years I would only hear KSHE when I was home on leave, when I would tape it, because east coast radio *really* sucked. In Delaware the only place to find good new rock was friends' albums; even worse than St. Louis before KSHE, as there were no record stores in Dover and maybe not in the whole boring state.

However, I did hear Pink Floyd for the first time; a friend was a fan. He bought the brand new *Dark Side of the Moon* album, having already played *Relics* for me. I probably taped them both. I also learned of Nazareth from the guys I was stationed with.

In July of 1973 I returned home for a month before leaving for Thailand. I'd had a subscription to the *St Louis Post Dispatch*, which was delivered to Dover a couple of months late. I had no news at all in Thailand; I only knew of the Arab Oil Embargo from the Thai taxi and bhat bus drivers bitching about the price of gasoline. The streakers, Watergate, impeachment hearings, everything, I missed it all. Imagine my surprise upon reaching Alaska in August 1974 and seeing the newspaper headline "Nixon Resigns", having known nothing of Watergate or the impeachment hearings.

I went home for a month, to find that my parents had sold my '67 Mustang that I had paid seventeen hundred bucks

for, for three hundred. I wound up with a new AMC Gremlin, with a factory AM/FM radio. It wasn't the first time I ever heard KSHE in a car; I had bought a car FM stereo from Radio Shack about 1970, when I was a little annoyed that KSHE had started playing a little southern rock, which I hated then but have grown accustomed to. I did like Charlie Daniels' *Uneasy Rider* and had always liked fiddle music. Today there is a lot of southern rock on my file server.

1967 KSHE wouldn't have touched Charlie Daniels with a ten foot pole; they wouldn't even play Frank Zappa, despite massive listener requests, because Zappa was comedy, not rock. Fast forward to the 1990s when KSHE itself produced *Nights at White Castle*, a hilarious parody of the Moody Blues' *Nights in White Satin*. And of course there was *Uneasy Rider*; KSHE had started lightening up.

They were also damned chauvinistic in the beginning, refusing to play female singers because "girls can't rock". Fortunately they have evolved a lot. At one point decades later they had Ruth Hutchinson, who was billed as "the world's oldest rock and roll DJ".

KSHE wasn't a lot different in August 1974 than it had been in August 1973. It was about the only thing that hadn't changed much, the first being that gasoline cost twice as much as it had been. Stagflation had started, and President Ford, the only president in US history to have never won any federal election, ran for re-election. There was inflation and recession at the same time, Ford had pardoned Nixon for his crimes, and of course lost the election.

I don't remember when the daily album sides and "Album of the Week" ended.

On the trip to Beale, about seventy five miles north of Sacramento, I discovered that there were a lot of stations playing the same music as KSHE. That wasn't the case when I was traveling before then.

Beale is pretty much in the middle of nowhere and there were no FM stations playing rock, but there was an AM

station that seemed to be taking its cue from KSHE, KZAP. But it had a weekly half-hour radio show that was nothing at all like KSHE. It was called the *National Lampoon Radio Hour* and was actually *Saturday Night Live* before television, with the same cast as the TV show's first season. I have a couple of the shows on cassette, which I've later sampled digitally when I sampled my albums and other tapes.

I was only at Beale for nine months, but a lot happened musically in that nine months. I'd bought a Yamaha acoustic guitar in Thailand, and one of my California friends, Joe Foreman (no relation to the boxer), bought it from me. I didn't really want to sell it, but I needed the money; I was always broke in the Air Force. In fact, I was poor from the time I enlisted and stayed poor for a quarter of a century. I still had the electric guitar I'd gotten when I was thirteen, but it was back in Cahokia.

Joe, I, and a few other guys drove down to see Montrose, I think in Sacramento. It was a long drive, and the concert was awesome. Of course, it had been years since I'd seen any concerts at all. I had no clue that Sammy Hagar would later become a KSHE and St. Louis favorite, but I became a fan at that Montrose concert.

A couple, or maybe a few months later, Joe knocked on my door again. His sister's live-in boyfriend, a guitar player named Duane Mahoney, needed a ride to Las Angeles, from... San Francisco? Oakland, maybe? I've forgotten. Anyway, Joe said he was a really cool guy and it would be fun, and gas and everything would be paid for. Why not? So we drove down.

Duane was indeed a really cool guy, and was happier than anybody I'd seen in a long time, and with good reason. He'd written a song, and played it on his guitar for a record producer, who told him to make a demo tape and he'd cut a record.

The guy told Duane he'd have to change his name. "Oh, man, I wouldn't," I said. He shrugged. "If I want to be famous I

have to.” Instead of Duane he’d go by his middle name, Eddie, and shorten his last name to Money.

He played the tape for Joe and me; *Baby hold on to me, whatever will be will be...* I really wasn’t impressed, but the final record was much better. There was extra instrumentation and arrangement, and the final record had a really cool strained sound that the demo lacked.

I thought “He’s gonna get sued for that.” I didn’t say it, and instead said “Cool, man, good luck! I hope you make it!” He did get sued for it decades later.

I heard the demo for that song before the producer did!

He had a bong collection on his gas fireplace, which was lit, and we got lit, too, with bongs and Budweiser. Duane showed Joe and me a few guitar licks, and I can honestly say that I have played guitar with Eddie Money, although only the three of us were there.

A few hours later Duane realized we’d partied too long and would never make it to L.A. in time, so he’d fly the next morning. Joe and I went back to the base.

Six months or so later, give or take a few months, I was a civilian, driving down Highway Three in Sauget and listening to KSHE, and they played a new song: *Baby Hold On to Me*. I was so surprised and distracted I almost wrecked the car. I was saddened when I heard of his death in 2019, Duane was a really cool guy.

I found a girlfriend, who I married the next summer, and started college at SIU in Edwardsville. Or tried to; in January 1976 on the way home from signing up for classes we had a head-on wreck, we in a 1974 Gremlin doing about fifty, colliding with a three quarter ton pickup doing about seventy. I was off school until the next quarter, listening to KSHE on the killer stereo I’d bought duty-free when I was stationed in Thailand. We got busted up pretty bad; she was in the hospital for weeks. That’s when I started wearing seat belts.

KSHE hadn’t really changed while I was in the military, except one thing that I hadn’t realized at first: the mascot, a

pig wearing headphones and sunglasses and smoking a joint, was missing from their bumper stickers.

My wife and I, the Trepkas, and Davy Bynum went to a Mississippi River Festival concert in Edwardsville, on the SIU campus. I don't remember who was playing.

I had been selling reefer to friends to be able to afford to smoke it, and had rolled up a whole ounce into joints. At the time, the River Festival was a free for all, everything was allowed. But of course the drunks caused trouble, as they almost always do. We sat on a blanket, baggie of joints in the middle, listening to the music. I had to pee, and got up and went to the porta-pottie.

When I got back, they were all gone, having forgotten all about me, the wife (since divorced) included. Dumb, because I was their ride. Davy found me and explained that someone had thrown a full, unopened can of beer and it had hit him on the head, so they shook out the blanket and left.

They were all pretty apologetic when I pointed out in fairly vulgar language that they had thrown away a lot of my pot.

We were very poor, living in the slum that was East Carondelet. Two of our neighbors went to prison for jewel theft.

A friend, Tom Egbert (or was it Mike Brawley?) discovered another KSHE, KADI. Like the early KSHE, and probably like all new stations, it had little or no advertising. Yes, I listened. One day in the middle of a song it went VWOOP, the sound of a needle scratching across a record, and silence. A minute later, classical music played. I later found they had been busted for drugs.

I missed the KSHE kite flies. Of course I heard about them on the radio, but somehow never went; I probably couldn't afford the gas. I would be poor for a long, long time.

The landlord, allegedly a Christian preacher, evicted us when he found that we drank beer. Imagine his horror had he known we smoked pot!

We moved to Cahokia, where we had grown up, where we were married in the oldest courthouse in or west of the Mississippi Valley. It was on the day before the bicentennial, because neither a judge or a preacher is available on Sundays, so it had to be the third or fifth.

We then moved to Collinsville because a friend in the police force tipped me off that I was being investigated; a friend had been busted for his pot garden and turned me in, and if I moved out of the county the investigation would stop. I'm indebted to my police officer friend, who has probably left this world by now.

We hated it. A tiny, cold, trailer. But we were eventually able to move on campus, which was great! We had a big apartment, with a balcony, and on a warm night you could hear the Mississippi River Festival, half a mile down a path but three miles by road.

By then they had changed things. Alcohol was no longer allowed, probably because Davy likely wasn't the only one who had been injured.

We would go down and listen to the concerts every night outside the gate, and I never had to buy beer when we lived on campus, because people still brought huge amounts of it and left it in giant piles outside the gate.

I never bought any pot, either. Remembering my lost ounce, I walked down there early one morning and found at least a quarter pound of weed. From then on, I went to collect pot every morning after a concert. This was great, because I had stopped selling it when we moved to Collinsville and usually didn't have any.

Of course, weed wasn't the only thing left behind, but it was all that I was after. Almost never was there any cash, but of course when there was, I took it. It wasn't like there was any way to find the owner, and I was way too poor to do anything else. If I'd found a wallet I'd have returned it, of course, but there were no wallets left behind.

My wife got free tickets for us from KSHE phone-in contests. One that particularly sticks in my mind was to a Yes concert at Kiel, with Donovan opening. We had five bucks to our name, so we put three in the gas tank. We drove down there and I spent one of the two dollars on two joints, in Kiel's men's room; I never liked carrying pot while driving.

As Donovan came on I lit up the first joint and passed it to my wife, who passed it along. A couple of minutes later a different joint came from that direction, then another, then a pipe. It went on for three quarters of the set. I was stoned.

Yes came on and I lit the second joint. The reaction was the same as the first. Oh, and the music was great, too. Sometimes the people around you can make or break a concert.

There was a sold out REO concert at Kiel, and KSHE broadcast the concert live! I taped it, but somehow the tape has disappeared. Maybe it will turn up on one of the tapes they're looking at now and Favazz will play it on a Sunday night. At least one song from that concert was on their live album.

KSHE played Ted Nugent's first album a week before it was officially released, and I taped that, too. A couple days later we were in a bar in Wood River and the band took a break, so we went outside to smoke a joint. I had the Nugent tape blasting, the Vega's hatchback was open, and the band came out. "Wow, man, that's some great rock!" They partied with us, and their weed was better than mine. Thanks, KSHE!

They had what was called "superjam" at Busch stadium for a few years, with several big name bands playing. We couldn't usually even afford the gas it took to get from Edwardsville to downtown St. Louis, let alone tickets, which were pretty damned expensive for the time. A bunch of us pooled our dollars one summer and drove down there, and sat outside listening, like we usually did with the River Festival. Of course, when a band I really loved was at the festival and I had a few bucks (rare), we paid and went in.

After college I struggled in vain to find a job; I discovered that to get a job in advertising, they didn't care what you studied or if you never studied at all, it was whom you knew. A friend's brother worked at the Cerro Copper factory in Sauget, and I got a job there. They laid off half their workforce a month after I was hired, so I was unemployed again.

The pig mysteriously returned, only instead of an ink drawing it was a cartoon pig who no longer partook of the noble weed. I don't remember exactly when that happened. I'd been smoking it since the year I joined the Air Force.

My mother, who had divorced my dad the year I was married, had moved to Florida and encouraged me to visit and see if Disney would hire me. I did. I didn't get an art job, but was hired as a "cast member", pumping gas at their service station. The pay was lousy, but the benefits were great. One benefit that wasn't in the union contract was that I saw every space shuttle launch before Challenger, since I worked outside. I even saw a night launch from my mother's in Tampa; space rockets are really loud and really bright.

There were two stations there that played pretty much what KSHE played, one in Orlando and one in Tampa. But my knowledge of KSHE between 1980 and 1985 was nonexistent, except for a few days in 1981 when we went back to Cahokia to retrieve the belongings my sister was storing for us.

But working at Disney I met a lot of the rockers KSHE played and still plays, as well as other famous folks. I never understood why people go crazy about fame, the only difference between them and you is they (probably) have a better paying job, so I always treated them like I treated anyone else.

Like anyone else, some were nice folks, like Lou Brock, and some were real jerks, like a pop musician KSHE wouldn't play in a million years named Chris Cross, who was really rude and angry because I'd never heard of him.

Others, like John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd denied being themselves when some of my co-workers pestered them. I went to their defense, and Aykroyd quietly thanked me as they left. I kind of felt sorry for them, because of my co-workers.

Many, like the late Buddy Hackett, enjoyed conversing with fans. I asked if he was an employee and said I could give him a discount if he was. "I have been," he said. I replied that I recognized him. He was a very pleasant man to talk with; his favorite movie was *The Love Bug*. "I had so much fun making that movie!" he said. We talked for a good twenty minutes.

Still poor, we moved back to Illinois after our first daughter was born, and lived in my sister in law's attic for a month. On my Dad's recommendation, we moved north to Springfield. I still couldn't get a job, but we were able to get on AFDC and food stamps up there, unlike in St Clair County. KSHE reception was sketchy up there until I could retrieve my good stereo from my mother's in Florida a year later, the stereo that would pick up the ten watt college station in Forest Park from Edwardsville.

I was still unemployed when my second daughter was born, so I spent the week they were in the hospital at home, potty training her big sister. I had previously spent my days fruitlessly searching for a job.

The kids grew up on KSHE, and came to hate Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd because I played their albums so much. I never heard Pink Floyd on KSHE until I got out of the Air Force; they apparently started playing them after *Dark Side of the Moon* was released. Today you occasionally hear *One of These Days* or *Free Four* as well as albums after *DSOM*.

I had KSHE on when my youngest was three, and a Loggins and Messina song came on. Her jaw dropped, her eyes got wide, and she exclaimed "They're singing about Winnie the Pooh!"

I finally got a job at Public Aid as a clerk, when my youngest was a few months old, after hundreds of tests and dozens of interviews. With The Personal Responsibility and

Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) I now worked in the Department of Human Services. We were poor until I got a huge raise shortly after, becoming a... I have forgotten what my job title was. I retired comfortably in 2014.

When we had gotten back to Illinois I was crestfallen to find that they had quit playing rock in the mornings, instead playing the not often funny syndicated “Bob and Tom Show”. I don’t exactly remember when they got rid of that show and brought rock back, but I was pleased, as I imagine everyone else was; we listen for the rock! I was appalled that the station that formerly wouldn’t play Zappa because it was comedy and not rock, replaced morning rock with a couple of lame comedians who spoiled all the humor in a mildly humorous country song by laughing hysterically.

New rock that didn’t suck was scarce in the noughts, and KSHE made a huge mistake, not only airing a Red Hot Chili Pepper song that unfortunately wasn’t real rock at all, but putting it in regular rotation! It was pure unadulterated rap crap, which most of us rockers strongly detest; rap is the twenty first century’s disco, which we rockers all hated and is now dead. Rap will die, too. I’m sure KSHE lost listeners, and I have one friend that they did lose because of it.

Perhaps they had caught “Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Fever,” where you call everything from Tommy Dorsey to NWA as “rock”. That hall lost its meaning the first time they put a rapper in. The only rock hall of fame that matters is the KSHE hall of fame!

They never mentioned anything on-air, at least that I heard, but I read about something stupidly hilarious. I looked for it on the internet, and it was there, but not the date or even the year. KSHE started a restaurant, maybe at the station; I never ate there. It was, of course, called the Real Rock Cafe, and the Hard Rock Cafe sued them for trademark infringement. Hilariously stupid, because KSHE had trademarked “Real Rock” long before the Hard Rock Cafe was

even thought of, and of course KSHE kicked the Hard Rock Cafe's ass. I think it was in the mid nineties.

KSHE's ownership had changed several times, but the rock didn't. They were still "the best of rock, old and new." They celebrated their fiftieth birthday in 2017, the world's longest running and now oldest rock station.

A couple of years later and they changed owners again, this time slightly changing the format, now "St Louis' classic rock station."

As rare as good, new rock is these days, I'd especially like to hear good new rock; the Rolling Stones released *Ghost In a Ghost Town* in 2020 about the pandemic that KSHE played, twice, the first new song I heard there since the ownership changed. They should put it in regular rotation. They mentioned that Metallica had a new song that hit number one, but haven't played it. Bruce Springsteen released a brand new song, *Letter To You*. they mentioned it, but didn't play it.

Sad!

In the early days, one would never hear the same song twice in the same day, usually not twice in the same week. Sadly, these days, despite their "no repeat workday" they play mostly the same songs every day, becoming as vapidly repetitive as any other classic rock station. I love *Teacher, Leave Those Kids Alone* but I don't want to hear it every damned day!

Sundays are the exceptions, when John Ulett plays the "KSHE Klassics" (he's been there since the early 1980s) and his morning show partner Favazz plays "The Seventh Day" at night, when they still play half a dozen full albums, over half a century later.

And in 1975 KSHE never played Led Zeppelin's *Moby Dick* without following it up with *Bring It On Home*. In 1980 they never played Van Halen's version of *You Really Got Me* without first playing *Eruption*. Sadly, you hear that and worse far too often since the latest ownership change. I once heard the 45 version of *In A Gadda Da Vida* on Ulett's show. Sacrilege! In the last few years I also heard The Beach Boys and the Dave Clark

Five. KSHE *never* played those bands when they were making records! They only released singles, and KSHE only played albums. As to the Beach Boys, Hendrix said it best: “To you I must put an end. Never hear surf music again!”

For any day but Sunday they're no longer any different from any of a huge number of classic rock stations. I miss the old KSHE.



Don't Feel the Reefer

All our tokes have come
Here but now they're gone
Sneeze and don't feel the reefer
Just feel the wind and the sun and the rain,
we can feel like they are
Come on baby, don't feel the reefer
Baby take a toke, don't feel the reefer
We'll be able to fly, don't feel the reefer
Baby I'm your man
La, la, la, la, la



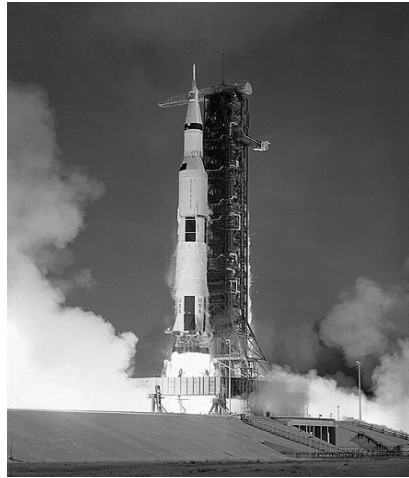
Now the roach is done
Here but now it's gone
Romeo and Juliet
Are together in eternity, Romeo and Juliet
40, 000 men and women everyday, Like Romeo and Juliet
40, 000 men and women everyday, Redefine happiness
Another 40, 000 smoking everyday, We can be like they are
Come on baby, don't feel the reefer
Baby take my hand, don't feel the reefer
We'll be able to fly, don't feel the reefer
Baby I'm your man
La, la, la, la, la

Then the door was open and the wind appeared
The candles blew then disappeared
The curtains flew then he appeared, saying don't be afraid
Come on baby, and she had no fear
And she ran to him, as they got real high
They looked backward and said goodbye,
She had become like they are
She had taken his hand, she had become like they are
Come on baby, don't feel the reefer

Indoor Rocketry for Children

First, this is for the benefit of children but **adult supervision is absolutely necessary!** These are real rockets that really fly and like SpaceX or NASA rockets, there is real fire.

Before we build a real rocket we need to understand how real rockets work. A rocket has some sort of propellant, a place to put the propellant, like a propellant tank in a liquid-fueled rocket, and a nozzle. These matchstick rockets need only one more thing, but large space rockets need a lot more.



The last thing we need to launch our rocket, once it's been built, is a launch pad/gantry combination.

Rocket engines work by the physical principle that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. The rocket is pushed forward by expelling its exhaust in the opposite direction at high speed, and can therefore work in the vacuum of space. In fact, rockets work more efficiently in space than in an atmosphere, because the air holds it back; it is a resistance to the push.

Rockets date back to at least 13th century China. Significant scientific, interplanetary and industrial use did not occur until the 20th century, when rocketry was the enabling technology for the Space Age, including setting foot on the Earth's moon. Rockets are now used for fireworks, weaponry, ejection seats, launch vehicles for artificial satellites, human spaceflight, and space exploration.

Chemical rockets are the most common type of high power rocket, typically creating a high speed exhaust by the

combustion of fuel with an oxidizer. Our oxidizer is combined with the fuel, and only needs heat to start the reaction.

Here is a simplified diagram of a solid-fuel rocket.

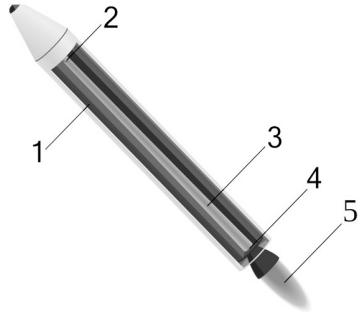
1. A solid fuel-oxidizer mixture (propellant) is packed into the rocket, with a cylindrical hole in the middle in the illustration. Our hole will be to the side.

2. An igniter combusts the surface of the propellant. Our igniter will be simply another match, lit.

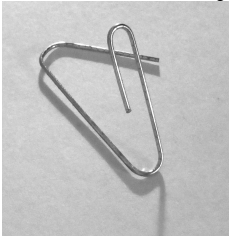
3. The cylindrical hole in the propellant acts as a combustion chamber.

4. The hot exhaust is choked at the throat.

5. Exhaust exits the rocket.



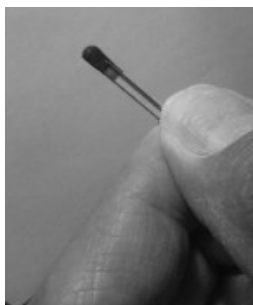
What you will need to build rockets are paper matches for the rocket body and propellant, as well as an igniter, and a small piece of aluminum foil about an inch and a half square for the housing and nozzle. Too big and it won't fly, too small and it will explode, just like a big NASA rocket. Luckily, tiny rockets have tiny explosions.



A sewing needle or pin is needed to use as a tool to construct the rocket's combustion chamber and nozzle.

And a small paper clip to build a gantry with. We will need a gantry before we build the rocket. To build the gantry, pull the outside out, and the inside up, as in the illustration.

Now to build our rocket. It will consist of a paper matchstick and about an inch square piece of foil. You will have to experiment, as different brands of foil have different thicknesses. Unless you have extra heavy duty foil (which may not even work) you will probably have to double the foil to keep it from exploding. Like I said before, the explosion is tiny.



First, cut or tear the foil to the right shape and size. Take a matchstick and lay the needle on it as in the illustration. The needle's point should be resting on the match head, which is of course our propellant.

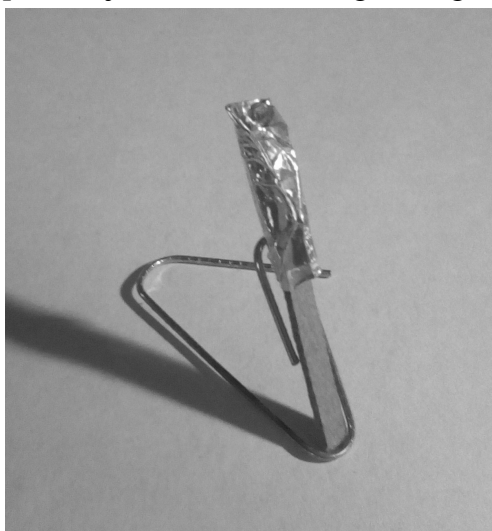
Now tightly wrap the foil around the head end of the match and pin. If it isn't tight, the housing will fly off, just like a big

NASA rocket.

Then gently slide the needle out, leaving your combustion chamber/nozzle for the hot gas to shoot out and propel your rocket across the room. Place it on your gantry, with the nozzle that you made with the pin on the bottom.

Now, to launch your rocket, light a match and heat the top of the rocket, the aluminum with the match head underneath. It may take a few failures and destroyed rockets before your rockets fly, just like NASA and the Russians. You'll probably learn a few things along the way, and your children

certainly will, both from the failures and successes.



Just like with SpaceX, Boeing, or NASA, your failures may be spectacular, like when you have a miniature explosion. I've made a lot of these tiny rockets, and have never seen them cause any sort of damage, although if one hit you in the eye you would probably need medical

attention. And of course make sure the children can't get the matches!

“By Using This site...”

I am both amused and bemused by web sites with meaningless “privacy policies” that have a javascript thing at the bottom of the screen with a “close” button that reads “By using this site, you agree to our privacy policies and terms of service.”

No, Mister Idiotic Newspaper Man (It’s almost always newspapers), that is most certainly **not** the agreement. By posting your web site on the open internet, you agree that I can use your content any damned legal way I wish.

I love most of what’s happened technologically this century. I hate what’s happened to society and I especially hate the war against truth and honesty.





Never shop when you're sick, especially with a respiratory illness, because your brain doesn't work very well when it's deprived of oxygen. This goes double if you're shopping for something expensive. Of course, when your brain doesn't work well, that's not an easy thing to remember.

My TV had been trying to die for months. It was a fourteen year old Sony Trinitron, a huge heavy thing, forty two inch flat CRT weighing two hundred fifteen pounds. Early last summer, the degausser went out on it. Before the degausser died, when you turned it on it would click, then the degausser would go WOONOMMMMPH and a few seconds later the sound and picture would come on.

When it stopped going WOONOMMMMPH, that was the sign the degausser was dead. I thought the TV was dead, but it lit up in a few seconds. Then it started taking longer and

longer to come on. When it got to where it took ten minutes to start, I stopped turning it off and just muted it at night.

I knew I was going to need a new TV.

Then I woke up last Saturday morning sneezing and coughing. Damn, how did I catch cold? I hadn't left the house since Tuesday when I picked up groceries at Humphrey's and Walgreen's.

By noon I knew it wasn't just a cold, I had the flu. I was sick as a miserable dog. Fever, chills, I was coughing my lungs out and sneezing my head off. Just going to the kitchen for a glass of water drained me horribly, as if I'd just ran ten miles.

Sunday was a tiny bit better, but not much. Monday was quite a bit better, and Tuesday I started to feel like I was starting to get over it, and in the evening started out to Walgreen's.

The door knob came off when I closed the door. I tried to fix it, but didn't have enough light. So I locked the deadbolt and used the back door.

When I got up Wednesday morning both the kitchen and the TV were dark (the TV usually said "WEB" because I had the computer plugged in it). I hit the power button on the remote and it clicked. I turned on the kitchen lights, and the one over the sink had burned out.

Gremlins.

I started the Bunn and got dressed.

Still no picture. I pushed the power button on the TV itself. The tiny red LED started flashing after it clicked, so I had turned it off when I had thought I was turning it on.

By ten, it was apparent that my TV was dead. It wasn't apparent that my brain was, as well. I called a locally-owned place, Sundown One, and asked if I bought a TV would they deliver it and take the old one away? They would.

As soon as I hung up, the TV finally came on. It had taken three hours.

I should have waited until I was completely well to shop. I felt better, but when you're coughing, you're short of

oxygen, and oxygen deprivation makes it so you don't realize how stupid you've become. Kind of like drinking.

So I drove over there through the thick fog. WAY over on the FAR west side of town, way past Veteran's, even. I thought I'd passed it in the heavy fog a couple of times, and pulled over to look at Google Maps again.

I finally got there, and a guy asked if he could help me.

"Yeah. I'm looking for the biggest TV you have for a thousand bucks." That was straight from when I bought the last TV from Circuit City, which I'd been happy with.

Now, if I wasn't recovering from influenza and was in my right mind, I'd have looked at brand and whether or not it was a smart TV. The old tube TV was also used as a computer monitor. *I didn't want a smart TV!* I already have computers I can plug into it, and I didn't want a TV that could be hacked. Hackable telephones are bad enough, and I've been hacked before (just computers, not the phone—yet). Once by a giant corporation. Sony. Someone should have gone to prison over that.

As to brand, I did NOT want an LG. Ten years or so ago I had an LG phone, and it was the worst, buggiest piece of crap I ever bought. Sometimes the screen was upside down, sometimes reversed, sometimes solid black. Few days went by without a reboot, and I sent it back under warranty after a week.

The replacement was even worse.

I didn't even ask about brand. Stupid. But what's worse, it wasn't LG.

It was a Sony, I realized after they took the old TV away and I paid attention to the box. I had sworn years ago to *never* buy from Sony, after they ruined my PC with their XCP trojan. My then seventeen year old daughter (too young to enter into a contract) bought a BMG-Sony CD from the record store she worked at, and played it on my computer. She probably clicked an "I agree"; computer stuff seldom works if you don't (unless

you use open source computer things) despite the fact that she could not be legally bound to any contract.

Their evil software disabled my CD burner and all of my sound recording and ripping software, which I had legal need for. It was the ugliest, most malicious trojan I ever heard of, and I read a lot. It was obviously targeting independent musicians, their competition. I'd lost sound and video card driver CDs in a move, so Sony's hack cost me a couple hundred bucks and several hours in the end.

I didn't get as much as an "oops, sorry, my bad" from the evil sons of Satan, let alone any kind of restitution whatever.

Never shop sick! It's a Sony Bravia Android TV. Now I'm afraid my TV will hack my laptops and phone and tablet. I mean, Sony did it before, and nothing bad happened to any of the evil perpetrators for doing it, so why wouldn't they?

Damn.

Oh, well, screw it. I back up everything on a drive that's only plugged in and used when I do backups, and the TV isn't getting plugged in to my network. I'm still pissed off at myself for giving money to the evil damned Sony. If the assholes hack me again, I'm suing them for the worth of their company, the evil sons of bitches.

And I am certainly NOT connecting it to my network. Putting digital electronics made by a company that has willfully vandalized your devices on your network is like playing Russian Roulette.

The setup guide was more of those damned multinational hieroglyphics. It was hard as hell to figure out how to get the damned thing out of the box and installed on its base.

But I'm getting more channels than I was with the old TV and external digital tuner, as many as I got when I first got cable back in 1980. Forty nine had added two more channels, and I'm picking up channel eight, a snowy analog PBS channel. I thought they had outlawed analog TV? I found that eight and

the digital 14.1 were identical, and mostly play kids' educational cartoons.

It's a 4K HD and the picture is incredibly sharp, even though all the content tops out at 1080p. Old shows from the analog era are really fuzzy and look out of focus, but back in the last century TVs were much smaller and the sets lacked much definition. But the colors on the new TV are amazing.

At least I have a working TV now, bigger than the old forty two inch tube and far higher resolution than its 720i, which it would only do while playing a DVD. Also, to make it 720i you had to wade through a bunch of menu items, and it would reset as soon as you switched to another input source.

So after I get it all put together and turned on, I find the documentation, part of which tells me that using MY OWN TV that I bought and paid for meant I agreed to the evil Sony's and Google's privacy policies!

I have news for the corporate morons: that "agreement" isn't legally binding. I cannot be held to a contract that I did not agree to before handing over my money! Had they offered the contract before accepting my money, they would not have made a sale. I would have done without television first.

What in the holy hell is wrong with these God damned stupid rich bastards these days? No morals, ethics, or logic whatever.

At any rate, the next Saturday my flu had faded to a mild cold, and I hooked up the DVD player. I'm going to have to buy a Blu-Ray now, I thought. The primary reason is HDMI.

Besides composite video and RGB video and the associated sound ports, there are no RCA jacks on the TV at all. There's no sound output port except the headphone jack. There are five HDMI ports, and nothing I own except the television has HDMI. So I'll buy a Blu-Ray and give the DVD player away, because Blu-Ray has HDMI and it's 1080p. That will free up the composite video for a VCR or laptop, the RGB will be unused because nothing I own has an RGB output.

So after I connected the DVD player I turned on *The Fifth Element*, and man, the broadcast networks have a clearer picture than a DVD player. One more reason for Blu-Ray.

I'm trying to decide what to do with the packaging. I can let the trash hauler take it away, or keep it for protecting the set when it needs to be moved. I finally stuck it in the garage in case I move; it will be good protection.

I'm also considering the fact that it's safe to shut off the computers, shut off my phone's wi-fi, plug the TV into the router (It's not getting my wi-fi password!) and watch Hulu or YouTube, as long as I unplug the TV from the network before turning a laptop or tablet or my phone's wi-fi on.

I'd probably do that anyway, I'm paranoid; I've been hacked before.

I'd still not been a hundred percent when hooking up the VCR, and studied the manuals and stuff some more. Sunday I'd plugged the computer's sound output to the TV sound inputs associated with the RGB inputs. When listening to KSHE like that (through the TV speakers; I still hadn't gotten it to feed the stereo), the TV shut itself off every half hour after informing me that there was no picture input!

I hate smart devices. The old dumb TV didn't care if there was an input.

Then I noticed more RCA jacks on the DVD player. Great! I'd hook it to RGB video and the VCR to the composite video, and plug the computer's sound to the VCR. But the VCR came without a remote.

Figuring I'd tackle that later, I plugged the DVD into the RGB. The colors were *terrible!* One of the plugs was bad. I went to replace the cable—and discovered that my DVD player had an HDMI port! So I drove down to Walgreen's and bought an HDMI cable.

That cable made a hell of a difference, the picture was way clearer, although not as good as broadcast. But broadcast is 1080p and DVDs are only 720p. I'm putting off buying a Blu-Ray, because the picture is now acceptable.

Tuesday I tackled the VCR after going through the TV's dumb menus and getting the sound to come out of the stereo. My first converter box's remote went out after a year or so, so I'd replaced it with a universal remote and put the rest of the remotes in a drawer. I reprogrammed the remote so it would operate the VCR, and now have sound through it. Since it transmits a blank blue screen when it has no input, the TV no longer shuts itself off.

I have a very old sound amplifier, and it must have been designed for small speakers, because it has WAY too much bass. With the old TV, I had the bass almost all the way down on both the TV and stereo, but the new TV will only let you adjust tone going to its own speakers.

Damned dumb smart stuff! So I guess I'm going to need an equalizer.

Then I discovered that the stereo's "bass boost" button had been pushed. No equalizer needed.

There is a Google Play and a Netflix button on the TV's remote. The Google Play's use is obvious, since it's an Android you can install apps on it, but Netflix?

I was amused that I have a 4K ultra-HD TV, and the TV stations and Blu-ray are 1080p, four times less resolution. Then I discovered why there was a Netflix button: Netflix is the only place to get 4K content! Too bad I don't have Netflix... (I do now, my daughter entered her login info to my TV)

With the HDMI, the DVDs aren't quite as sharp as TV (DVDs are 720p) but they're acceptable, and with my luck, as soon as I bought a Blu-ray they would come out with a 4K disk or start selling movies in 4K on thumb drives. Why aren't they already?

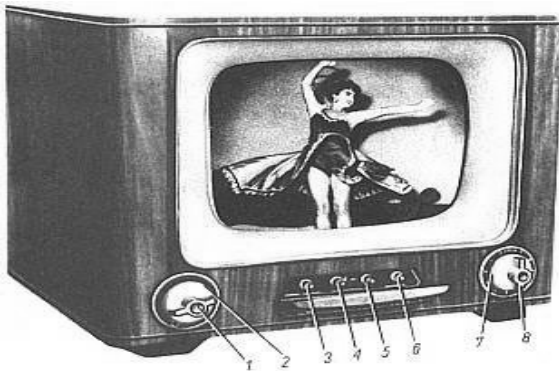
I've actually gotten to like this TV, despite its evil manufacturer. The menus make sense once you're used to them. There's a USB port, and it will play MP3s, and WAVs, and video files (I've forgotten which ones), and JPGs from a thumb drive. I watched *The Trouble with Tribbles* and *Trials and Tribble-ations* played from a thumb drive on it last night.

I hope Sony didn't purposely infect my thumb drive with anything.

It's now two weeks later, and I've discovered that the damned TV write-protects thumb drives you use in it! It's quite annoying. I had to do a bit of googling to find out how to overcome the write protection, and most of the answers didn't work; they had to do with changing a registry item that doesn't exist on this computer. What finally worked was copying all the files from the thumb drive to the hard drive, opening a command prompt in administrator mode, running "fsutil dirty query d:", then running "chkntfs /x d:" and then "format d:", which takes quite a while to format. I have no idea how checking if the dirty bit is set or looking at the file system makes it possible to format it, but it works; I've done it twice.

It's a pain in the ass, especially since the TV often won't read the files, or plays half then stops. When it does this, I have to run the files through a video converter program I bought last year, often converting it to the same format it was originally in, after which it will play.

I'm trying to figure out a logical reason that my TV would be making a thumb drive read-only. I'm even more suspicious now. If it was Microsoft or Adobe I'd figure "software bugs" and not worry about it, but they've never deliberately vandalized my equipment like Sony has.



A Piece of Asimov Pi

In his book *Asimov On Numbers* there is an essay titled “A Piece of Pi”, explaining what pi is, its history, and workings. It’s an excellent book, as are all of his books. Carl Sagan called him “the greatest explainer of the age”. He had books in nine of the ten Dewey decimal categories and is one of my favorite authors.



The atheist Asimov takes a poke at his parents’ religion in that chapter, correctly pointing out that the ancient Hebrews weren’t very good at math or building, and needed the Phoenicians to build the Temple of Solomon for them. Their plans for a vat, Chronicled in Chronicles 2:4, states that the diameter must be thirty cubits and the radius ten cubits. He correctly points out that this would result not in a circle, but a hexagon.

But Dr. Asimov was thinking like a mathematician, not an engineer or architect. There is no such thing as a circle; a circle is a two dimensional construct, and no physical object exists in only two dimensions... not in this universe, anyway. The vat had an inside diameter of 30 cubits and an outside diameter of 31.4 cubits, So the walls of the vat would be .7 cubits thick.

The good doctor mentions that the Hebrews held certain numbers, like the number three, in holy respect. In fact, seven is also one of those numbers, and the Star of David has six points. Draw straight lines from the star’s points and you have... a hexagon!

So even not understanding math, they got it right. Now, how could they have possibly done that?

Overcoming Gimpy Text

The GNU Image Manipulation Program is an excellent free and open source graphics program that will do almost anything you want to a bitmap image.

Almost. When text is needed in an image, GIMP is indeed gimpy. Rather than use fonts installed in the computer's operating system, it has its own, very limited set of fonts, and no way to exactly position your text.

The workaround is easy: don't use GIMP for text.

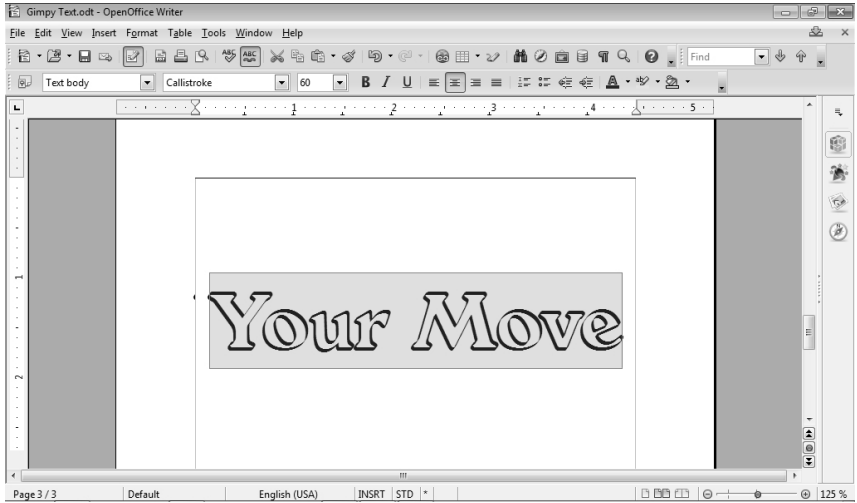
Today's word processors can all write PDF files, both closed source commercial word processors and open source tools. My favorite is Open Office Write. GIMP can import them as images, and it does an excellent job of it.



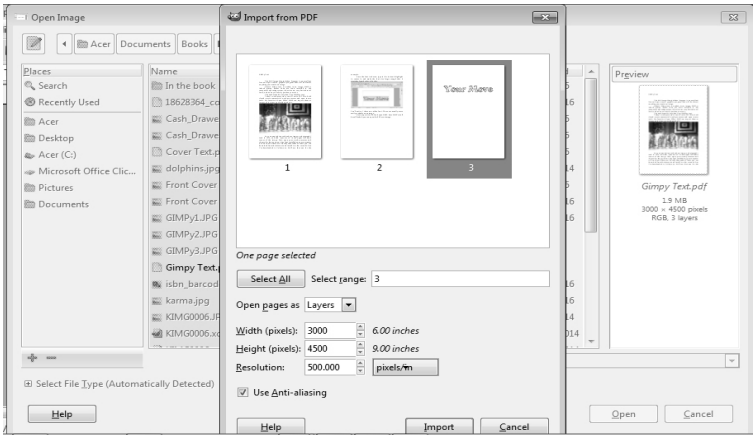
Say you wanted to use the above image (a 35 mm slide I took in 1974 and digitized with a cheap plastic slide viewer, a phone, a rubber band, and adhesive tape) and add "your move" in the upper left hand corner of the image. First, open your word processor and choose the font you want. Any font

installed on your computer will work, and there are literally thousands of fonts you can download from the internet and install in a few seconds. One I've downloaded is Baltimore Typewriter. We'll use that one for the example, and I'll explain why shortly.

Once the font is chosen, type in the text and highlight it, center it, and make the font size large enough that it stretches from border to border.

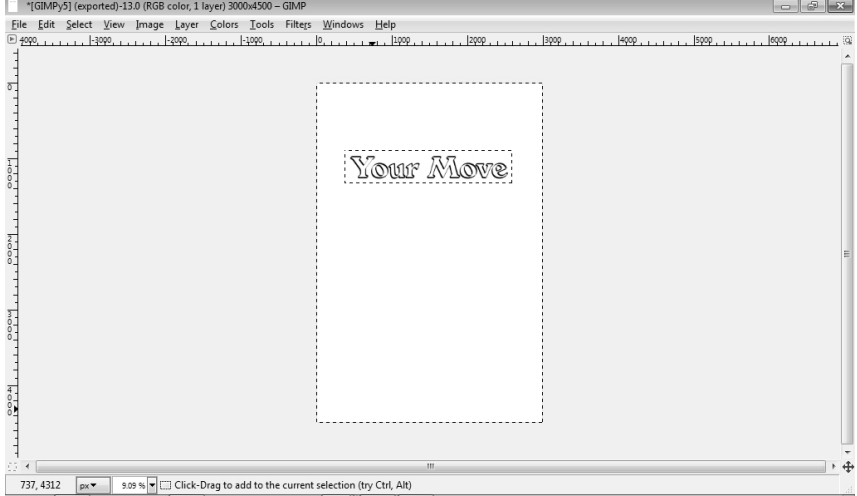


Next, export it as PDF and open GIMP. Once GIMP's stuff has all loaded, you can open the PDF as an image. I simply put



it on the last page of this document rather than making a new document. Before you tell GIMP to import it, raise the resolution to 600 DPI or higher to prevent pixelation. You can make it smaller later.

When it opens, select Tools → Selection Tools → Rectangle Select, and outline your text.



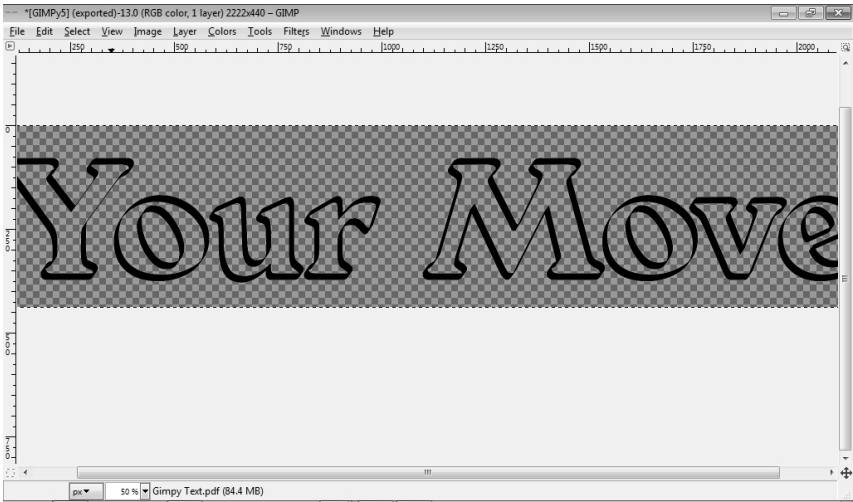
Now select Image → Crop to Selection.

The reason I like the outline fonts in most illustrations and graphics is that I can have white letters outlined in black, which will show up clearly in any image. If your text is going to be in a landscape with a blue sky, a non-outline font in a contrasting color is as good or better. Don't use red letters on a green background as it will be invisible to some people.

There are a couple of steps to get there. First, select Tools → Color Picker. Place your cursor over the white and click. Then choose Tools → Selection Tools → Select By Color. Now click anywhere white and press “Del” and everything white will be transparent.

Now, select Select → None.

Transparent parts will show up as a two shades of gray checkerboard as in the illustration below:



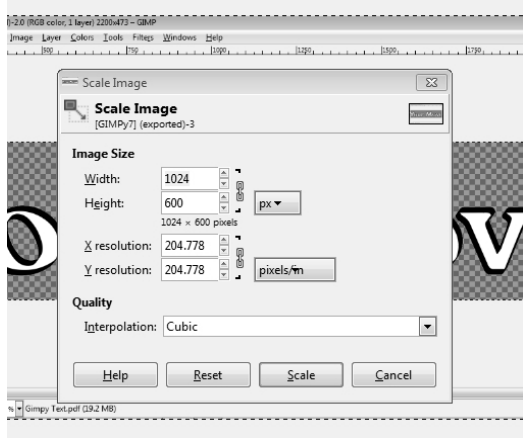
Now choose Tools → Paint Tools → Bucket Fill to fill in the white part of your text.



Now open the image you want to put the text in. There will be a ruler at the top of the screen showing how many pixels in a given area. In our image, where we want the text is

about 750 pixels wide. In the text image, select Image → Scale Image. The following dialog opens:

Place the cursor in the “Width” field, then type in the number. We’re changing 1024 to 750. Now press “Tab” once and the “Height” field will change. Now just click “scale”.



When it finishes scaling, press Ctrl+A to select the whole image, than Ctrl+C to copy it. Tab to the image you’re adding text to, make sure the “Rectangle Select” tool is chosen (see earlier in this article) and press Ctrl+V to paste the text in.



Now put the cursor on a letter and hold the primary mouse button and move the text where you want it.

Now merge the two images by pressing Ctrl+M then Enter. Here is the final image:



You can add all sorts of fancy things to your text with different images.



To make the above image, I got a picture of fire from Google, Wrote the word "FIRE" in open office, exported as PDF, selected black (lettering), deleted, and pasted it over the fire.

So finally, GIMP has everything I need. Well, maybe except the ability to make moving PNGs and vector graphics.

Are Printed Books' Days Numbered?

In his 1951 short story *The Fun They Had*, Isaac Asimov has a boy who finds something really weird in the attic—a printed book. In this future, all reading was done on screens.

When ebooks like the Nook and Kindle came out, there were always women sitting outside the building on break on

a nice spring day reading their Nooks and Kindles. It looked like the future to me, Asimov's story come true. I prefer printed books, but thought that it was because I'm old, and was thirty before I read anything but TV and movie credits on a screen.

And then I started writing books. My youngest daughter Patty is going to school at Cincinnati University (as a proud dad I have to add that she's Phi Beta Kappa *and working full time!* I'm not just proud, I'm in awe of her) and when she came home on break and I handed her a hardbound copy of *Nobots* she said "My dad wrote a book! And it's a REAL book!"

So somehow, even young people like Patty value printed books over ebooks.

My audience is mostly nerds, since few non-nerds know of me or my writing, so I figured that the free ebook would far surpass sales of the printed books. Instead, few people are downloading the ebooks. More download the PDFs, and more people buy the printed books than PDFs and ebooks combined.

Most people just read the HTML online, maybe that's a testament to my m4d sk1llz at HTML (yeah, right).

Five years ago I was convinced ink was on the way out, but there's a book that was printed long before the first computer was turned on that says "the news of my death has been greatly exaggerated".



Hi Yo, Silver!

Last year the TV show *Innovation Nation* highlighted an inventor who had produced a shirt that never stinks. The way it worked was that there were silver threads woven in with the cloth. Silver kills bacteria, they explained, and body odor is caused by bacteria.



I didn't know that about silver, and they never explained why or how silver kills bacteria. I was informed that copper and bronze are even better at killing both bacteria and viruses. Wikipedia has a very good article explaining how these metals kill pathogens.

This made me wonder why all door and faucet handles, light switches, hand rails, and all sorts of other places that spread germs in hospitals aren't silver or copper plated?



Q and the Real “Deep State”



I met the infamous Q first online at K5 before meeting him in person over the July fourth weekend in 2003. He was a White guy between 25 and 35, driving a small black sedan, dressed in black and wearing a black hat, which covered his hair. I wrote about it in the book *The Paxil Diaries*.

The “Deep State” nonsense started as a joke on K5. Since Trump started running for president an awful lot of people have started taking it seriously.

The thing is, there really is a secret deep state, but George Soros has nothing at all to do with it, and it’s hiding in plain sight.

The Deep State is the people who are decrying it—the very rich who seek to transform America into a Fascist nation. They legally bribe the politicians with “campaign contributions”, who are wholly dependent on them. A politician will do what the NRA, or the coal companies, or the telecommunications companies, any of the giant businesses want or they won’t be re-elected. Period.

THAT is the deep state. If you don’t like the idea of America being run by it, stop voting for party, but pay attention to how your representatives vote. Oh, it helps to not be foolish enough to believe advertising and fraudsters. The Deep State has psychologists and sociologists on staff who know how to make you do anything they want you to.

For example, President Trump pushed mining coal “for jobs” despite the fact that the coal industry is on its last legs; coal is just too dirty and expensive. HE is the deep state, lying like the deep state always does. Jobs? Those coal miners would be far healthier and financially better off say, building windmills or installing solar panels.

And why do I peg Trump as Mister Deep State? Because rather than draining the swamp, he has staffed all the

regulatory agencies with heads of or lobbyists for the very industries they're supposed to be regulating.

He hires foxes to guard America's hen houses. And some of you will be foolish enough to vote for the Nazi again.

And speaking of Nazis, you should be told that racism is a tool of the rich to keep the rest of us at each others' throats so we won't notice who it is who's holding us down. It isn't Black people, or White people, or Asian people, or Jewish people, it's rich people.

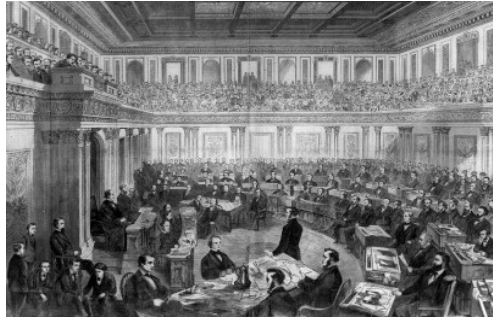
The deep state got the rabid racist elected President. The deep state isn't partisan; it got the hugely unpopular Hillary Clinton nominated, and Deep State agents infiltrating Russia worked to make her even more unpopular. Right before the election James Comey put the final nail in the coffin when, as Wikipedia put it, "Many Clinton supporters claim his decisions [to say she was innocent of wrongdoing without actually exonerating her] not long before the 2016 election might have cost her the presidency."

Face it, Trump is a fraudster and a liar. And you are the butt of the deep state joke that Q started.



The Federal Impeachment

When the president of the United States referred to the “phony emoluments clause” I decided to explain to everyone what that particular clause (also called the “Title of Nobility Clause”), which is not in



any way phony and is, in fact, in the Constitution, and is not a single clause but several, actually is and why it’s there. These clauses not only apply to the president, but any Constitutional officeholder.

So I decided to add the Federalist Papers to mcgrewbooks.com. It was written to explain the Constitution to the people of the new nation, and to convince them to ratify it. In it is not only the explanation of why the emoluments clauses are in it, but explains why our government is structured as it is.

I got the text from a page from congress.gov and reformatted it, and fixed a few things that were wrong with it. For instance, there are at least two OCR errors in the congress.gov version, and several footnotes marked but with the explanations missing. I corrected the errors, and found the missing explanations in other sites.

I added several other goodies, too. If your device has a mouse, mousing over a footnote mark displays the actual footnote. For a phone, tablet, or other mouseless computer you’ll have to click the footnote.

This book, written over two centuries ago, shows that the emoluments clause and the parts that describe impeachment were written specifically for someone like Donald Trump. You can read it at mcgrewbooks.com.

The Best Music Ever Recorded



Some time back I ran across an article in *The Atlantic* titled “The Whitest Music Ever Recorded”. Reading it made me wonder when that magazine started hiring twelve year old writers. The music he was complaining about he called “prog rock”. I surmised that he was referring to progressive rock, the music KSHE was playing that we now call “classic rock”.

I only read a half dozen paragraphs, because not a single thing he said was accurate, up to and including the title. That is, assuming that “prog rock” is progressive rock and not country music. I’d say the first progressive rock band was the Beatles, starting with the albums *Magical Mystery Tour* and *Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*, breaking out of the 2:45 pop mold. They had Black studio musicians.

I saw the Electric Light Orchestra live in the seventies. They had a choir and an orchestra, and I saw Black faces in the orchestra and choir.

Country, however, has had a total of two Black musicians that I know of, the singer Charlie Pride and some new fellow that country fans say isn’t country.

I was left thinking, why would you write down your stupid opinion of a musical genre that you hated? Especially one you were so ignorant about? The fool had no clue whatever about rock, progressive or otherwise.

Some time in the late 1970s my dad, who was never very musically inclined (I got my music from my mother), opined that the music he listened to as a teenager during World War Two was the best music ever recorded.

I disagreed, saying that I thought what was on the radio then was the best ever recorded. If his music was the best, why did you no longer hear it? He had no answer. “I don’t know, it was just good.” That’s the thing about music, it’s subjective and personal.

Thirty years later I was the divorced father of two teenaged daughters who lived with me, and on the weekends I would walk downtown to listen to live music in bars. The bars were all filled with people in their twenties. The musicians were in their twenties, a lot of whom I became friends with.

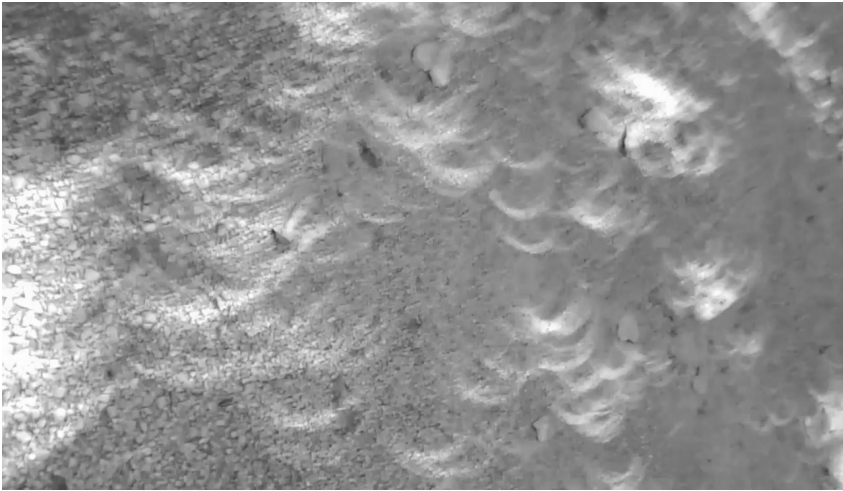
The music was all covers of the songs I'd told Dad I thought were best. Thirty years later, the young people were yelling "FREE BIRD!!"

At the time I'd had the conversation with Dad, Disco was in full swing. They said it would kill rock. It died, instead. But the best music ever recorded is still played today.

I think that like classical music, classic rock will still be enjoyed hundreds of years from now.



The Solar Eclipse



I'd been eagerly looking forward to this event since I first heard about it—Illinois was going to see its second total solar eclipse in its history as a state, and no one alive had ever seen an Illinois total eclipse. It happened in 1869 and totality passed right through Springfield, the state's capital. Then, as now, people were very excited.

I heard more and more about it, like totality was passing through Carbondale. Carbondale is about a hundred miles from St. Louis, which is about a hundred miles from Springfield. Ozzy Osbourne was slated to hold a concert in a tiny town thirty miles from Carbondale, and play *Bark at the Moon* during totality.

I was stoked; it was reported that the stars come out during totality and there are other strange things, like wavy lines on the ground that scientists couldn't explain.

At first I was planning to meet my daughter Patty, who lives in Cincinnati, in Carbondale, but Carbondale was where everyone was talking about. It was going to be a madhouse, I was sure, and decided to visit my mom in Bellville the day

before, a Sunday, then go to my friend Mike's in Columbia to cook pork on his Weber and drink beer. I planned on crashing on his couch and heading south early the next morning.

Then I found NASA's interactive eclipse map. Mom and Mike were right on the edge of totality, and the center of totality passed right through Prairie du Rocher, about thirty miles or so south of Mike's house. Patty watched from the Shawnee National Forest, camping there the night before.

I set out south Sunday morning, and traffic was thick. However, it always is on the weekends, which is why I usually visit during the week. As is my usual habit I set the cruise control to five miles under the limit to make for a stressless drive. But I knew traffic was going to be worse the next day.

I visited my mom in Belleville, then headed to Mike's, where we grilled pork steaks (well, he did) and we drank beer and bullshitted. I crashed on his couch, as planned.

Patty texted me, excited that they had found eclipse glasses for ten bucks apiece. She was thrilled. I thought she had been ripped off, as Mike's wife had five pairs she had picked up at the library for free. I just heard today when I picked up tacos at George Rank's that they were selling them on the internet for \$150!

I'd planned on not using the glasses, not trusting them; there are some really evil people in the world who don't mind blinding people for money, or even killing them. I wound up looking through them once or twice, anyway.

Monday morning we got up and drank coffee, and headed south on Bluff Road for the middle of the umbra, the part of the shadow that is in totality.

Bluff Road is a little-used two lane highway that you can often travel without seeing another vehicle. We turned on to Bluff Road, and joined a parade of cars and trucks headed for the best view. Traffic moved briskly, at the various speed limits on the way. It took about forty five minutes.

On the way we saw a roadside stand selling eclipse glasses for twenty bucks apiece. Mike cursed the ripping off

they were doing; they'd gotten theirs for free from the public library, donated by a veteran's club. It was indeed a ripoff, because it would have probably cost less than a penny apiece to make them. But better than a hundred and fifty, at least.

I wished Mike had driven rather than me, because there was some enchanting scenery on the way, as well as an eagle's nest. The magic was beginning hours before the sun and moon met.

Mike has a grandson who lives there, and we had a hard time finding the address of the house in the tiny town. His wife had told him that if he asked google for the address on Bluff Road it would lead to the wrong house, as his address was *Bluff Street*.

Stupid Google kept giving directions to the address on Bluff Road, and it was even more maddening because we were surrounded by bluffs and the cell signals were nonexistent to very weak. We'd brought no refreshments, so stopped at a restaurant for soft drinks and directions to Bluff Street.

The place was packed, inside and out. We had a hard time finding a parking spot. When we got out of the car, the very humid heat was oppressive. We were informed that the streets were the same; Bluff Road became Bluff Street for a while.

His grandson lived in a house trailer right up against the bluff. We got out and it was even hotter and more humid. We went in, and it was perhaps five or ten degrees less hot than outside; the trailer had only a single one-room air conditioner. Every time I went outside, the heat started getting to me. My hands shook and I could barely walk; I was starting to suffer from heat exhaustion. Mike and his very young great granddaughter went up the hill exploring.

"There's a cave up here!" Mike yelled down to me, so I staggered up the hill. There was a cool breeze coming out of the cave.

It wasn't cool enough, so I got in the car and started it and blasted the air conditioning. It really helped, and I was in the car several times before the eclipse started.

I saw something I'd not seen since I was a kid—a toad. Then another one. This hellishly hot day was really cool!

Finally, some time between twelve thirty and one it started. I finally looked through the glasses once, and afterward made a pinhole viewer out of my fist. When the sun was a crescent, I saw the “wavy lines” science couldn't explain and I had no trouble at all explaining them. It was the multiple crescents moving around the gravel. The tree was causing multiple pinhole viewers. The way the breeze moved the leaves did look like wavy lines on the ground as the crescents moved around the gravel.

There were clouds which sometimes covered the sun, and I feared the clouds would cover it during totality, but they didn't. I hear clouds occluded the totality in Carbondale. I hope they didn't cover the sun in the forest where Patty was.

I'd brought my big tablet, thinking I could use its front-facing camera to watch the eclipse on it and maybe make movies, but I feared the glare on the screen might harm my eyes, so that was out. I tried to take a photo with my phone, and I got a picture, but it didn't show the sun as a crescent. The only halfway decent photo was the tree shadows when it was still partial.

Then the sky gradually changed colors for about ten minutes, after which it took seconds for it to become dark and for all the streetlights to come on, and the screams and cheers and applause of the thousands of people in town for the sight were very loud, from half a mile away. Mike kept saying “Wow! Man, that's the neatest thing I've ever seen in my life!” Nobody could help but agree.

It did get very dark, about like under a full moon. But I saw no stars, although a friend who was in a different spot in totality told me he saw two or three stars right by the corona, which I only glanced at. Around the corona it was indeed pitch

black, but the horizons were like dusk. Obviously light was being reflected from places that weren't in totality. It's hard to explain what it looked like.

Darkness lasted maybe two minutes, give or take a few seconds. I was way too busy taking it in for photos, and it was too dark for my phone's camera to work without a flash, anyway. I should have bought film and brought my Canon 35mm SLR I'd bought half a century ago. Yes, film is coming back. They now sell and develop it again at Walgreen's.

When it was over I was again in distress from the heat, then we headed back to his house. Mike, who knew where we were going and I didn't, was too busy watching the scenery to see a turn we needed to take. We got all the way to Red Bud before realizing our mistake, and highway three was in gridlock. We didn't want to go that way, anyway, and turned back around.

The little-used Bluff road was full, but traffic was moving at a reasonable pace. I'd planned on crossing the river for cheaper gasoline, but was still heat-distressed and decided not to. We went to his house, where I drank a copious amount of water, and we ate leftover pork steaks, but eating was making me hot. They say "starve a fever, feed a chill" and the reason is that eating will warm you up, unless it's ice cream.

I left Mike's about two, planning to stop by Mom's house on the way home, and changed my mind as soon as I got on I-255. Traffic was at a crawl. The normally ten or fifteen minute trip to Bellville took nearly an hour. I drove right past her exit, because I could see this was going to be a long drive and I didn't want to get home after dark.

Not once did the speedometer measure over 30 mph on 255. Getting off 255 to I-55 is a nightmare in normal traffic because of the idiotic interchange design, so I decided to bypass it and take Collinsville Road to I-55. Traffic was heavy, but moving briskly, far faster than the interstate. I stopped for gas and a soda and got on I-55. I was really glad I'd bypassed a bit, probably saved myself half an hour or even more.

I've never seen traffic that heavy outside Chicago in my life, and never saw traffic that heavy that stretched that far. My phone rang three times before I reached a rest stop, just past the I-70 interchange. I had to pee, I had to get my tortuously aching back out of that car, and I wanted to see who was trying to call. I figured it was my mom, who I'd told I'd probably visit again on my way home.

Two of the calls were from her, worried about me, and I ignored the other one, because I don't answer calls without attached names. If you're not a spammer, scammer, or pollster you can leave a message and I'll call you back and add your number to my address book.

I've never seen an interstate rest area so crowded. Cars parked where they didn't normally, and so did I. This wasn't a normal day. I reassured Mom, walked quite a long way to the rest room, and walked back and resumed the arduous journey.

Four and a half hours after leaving Mike's I'd traveled fifty miles. Past Staunton I had it up to 55mph for a short time, and hit sixty past Mount Olive. Five miles from Litchfield, traffic was stopped again.

Past Litchfield traffic thinned somewhat, and you could usually do forty, but it was almost in Springfield before anyone could do the speed limit. There was simply far, far more traffic than that highway was designed to handle.

Which makes me wonder how bad it will be if a nuclear missile is headed to a major city whose occupants have only half an hour to escape.

The trip was finally over about eight, just as it was getting dark. It had been a seven hour journey with an average speed of 14.3 mph. But it was well worth it! I'm really looking forward to the one in 2024.

Driving the Snakes from Ireland



The legend repeated every March seventeenth is that Saint Patrick ran the snakes out of Ireland.

“But,” they say, “There are no snakes in Ireland!”

“See? He ran them all out!”

I thought that was just a silly joke, until I found where it came from.

What the good priest did was to convert the Irish to Christianity, or rather, help in the effort. He was by no means the only one to do so, there

were plenty of missionaries. But he was the one who was sainted.

Before Christianity, the Irish were Celtic. The Celts were pagans, worshiping many gods, as the Hindus and Buddhists do. Their rulers were the Druids, with different Druidic orders; banking, clergy, administration, etc. The rulers were also pagan.

The ordinary Irish common-folk had found Jesus, and rebelled against their pagan Druid overlords.

It was made easier by the fact that the Druids all had snakes tattooed on their forearms.



SEARS

In the late eighteen hundreds you would have to walk, or ride a horse or wagon miles to a store. Then came Sears.

It was a mail order company that sent its catalogs to everyone. I remember the Sears catalog in outhouses at my grandparents' houses; people used the catalogs' pages for toilet paper. By then, Sears had large stores in most cities, and horses as transportation had been gone for generations. It's been decades since I've seen one of their catalogs.

Then came the internet and Amazon. At first, bookstores were the only businesses affected, then Amazon branched out. Soon, shopkeepers everywhere were scared.

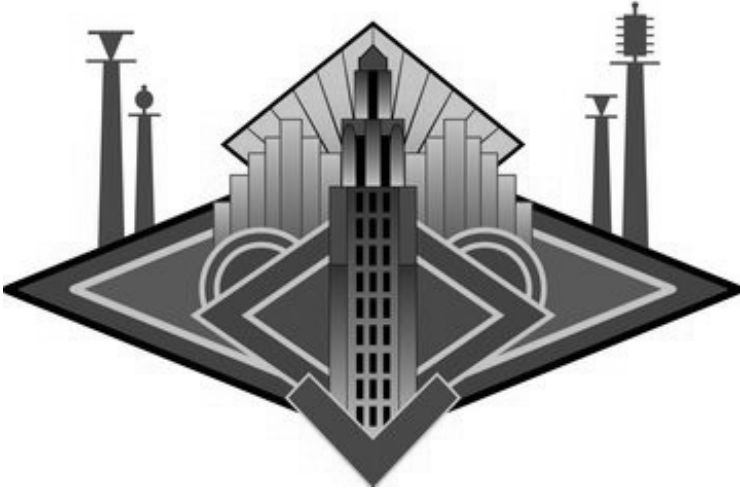
Malls, very popular for decades, started closing. But the irony came this past week when Sears filed for bankruptcy, hoisted on its own petard. The store morphed from a mail order business into a sales behemoth, giving up its mail order decades ago, and was put to death by a mail order company, Amazon.

It seems a little ironic.



MIDAMERICON II

THE 74TH WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION



I had more fun this weekend than I have in years! Patty and I attended this year's World Science Fiction Convention in Kansas City.

Patty had said that she would be at my mom's house in Belleville around one, and I got there a little before.

She got caught in construction work traffic in Indiana, and we didn't get on the road until three. Traffic was terrible, not just through St Louis but all the way there. We decided to go straight to the convention; we could check in to the hotel later.

We got parked (finally), and went in through the light rain, which would be a hard rain later, and cold wind. There inside the building sat Dr. Who's Tardis!



There was a door handle, and Patty decided to see if it would open. She walked up to it, and it moved away!

That was the first really cool thing we saw, but not the coolest by far.

We got to the place to get our badges, and oops: I forgot the magic numbers: the membership and PIN numbers. All I could do was hope we could get in, anyway—I had the emails from worldcon on my phone.

It turned out not to be a problem, as they had us in their computer systems. Patty's name tag said "Patty McGrew", mine said simply "mcgrew". A helpful lady in a scooter gave us the lowdown on everything. I asked where the nearest drinking fountain was, and she said that bottled water, soda, and snacks were free in the exhibit hall.

I got a bottle of water and Patty got a soda. We wandered around and came across a life sized cardboard cutout of an astronaut, and someone said a real astronaut was there. There was a fellow in a business suit, the first business suit I'd seen and asked him if he were the astronaut.

"No, she is," he said, gesturing towards a trim, fit, attractive Black woman in a green dress.

I've never been one to be starstruck. I'd met dozens, probably hundreds of celebrities while pumping gas for Disney World between 1980 and 1985: major league baseball, basketball, and football players; professional golfers, more than one who became irate because I didn't recognize them, despite the fact that I've hated that sport since my first job at age sixteen, working as a groundskeeper ("If anybody has to work that damned hard for me to play a silly game, I'm done with golf"); Rock and pop stars (one of whom, Cris Cross, was a complete and total jerk, but most were pleasant enough)...

And Movie stars. My favorite movie star was Buddy Hackett, a really nice guy. Knowing he had done Disney movies, I told him if he were an employee I could give him a discount. He said he had before and may be again. "Yes," I said,

“I recognized you” and told him my favorite movie was Mad Mad World. He grimaced.

“I hated that movie,” he said. “It was hot, half the actors were not very nice and Mickey Rooney was an asshole and Jim Backus...” (the actor who played the rich guy in Gilligan’s Island) “...was always flubbing his lines because he was always drunk.

“My favorite movie was *The Love bug*,” he said. “we had SO much fun making that movie!” He had quite a few tales about that movie.

He said he was there to talk to the brass about an upcoming movie, which he didn’t name but was *The Little Mermaid*, where he played... I’ve forgotten, I took my kids when they were little.

It was a very pleasant conversation. He gave me his credit card, I ran it through the machine, the old-fashioned kind with carbon paper, returned his card, thanked him, and



he drove off. I mentioned to my co-workers, who all were star-struck, who I had just served. They didn’t believe me, so I showed them the card receipt and they all went ape-shit.

John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd stopped by and the star-struck dummies I worked with kept pestering them and they kept repeating that they’d never heard of those guys. “Guys, if they say they’re not John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd they’re not!”

As they were leaving, one of them winked and thanked me. The morons I worked with seemed not to realize that the

only difference between them and us was that they had better jobs.

And then I met NASA engineer and astronaut Jeanette J. Epps at Worldcon, and for the first time in my life I WAS star-struck. This woman had been in outer space (or rather, will be in 2018)! I had a very pleasant conversation with her. She asked if I wrote science fiction, and I told her “yeah, but I read more of it than I write.” It seems she was as impressed by meeting a science fiction writer as I was by meeting an astronaut! At her questioning I told her Sputnik launched when I was six, I watched Armstrong land on the moon, and while living in Florida I saw every shuttle launch before the Challenger accident... and the look on her face told me no astronaut likes to think of that.

She said she was envious, to see all that history with my own eyes. I told her I was envious of folks Patty’s age. “Now, only a select, elite few ever make it to space but by the time Patty is my age, space will be open to everyone.”



By then, the word “astronaut” would be as disused as the word “aviator” is now, as everyone would be able to visit space. After all, there was no such thing as an airplane when my grandmother was born, the first airplane flight being six months later, and she flew on several planes and saw men in space land on the moon. Yuri Gagarin flew into space twenty six years before Patty was born.

We talked of America’s inability to send people to space (I got the idea that she didn’t like Russian rockets) and I countered that at least we could launch

cargo, and would soon have our own capsule. “Three of them,” she said. I took Patty’s picture with her and shook her hand. She indicated she wanted to see us again the next day (today; the awards are presented tonight; I’m typing a draft in the hotel and will finish when we get home) and I assured her we’d be back. I intend to give her a copy of *Nobots* if I see her today.

As Patty and I walked off, I realized that for the first time in my life I was star-struck. This woman was not only an engineer (all the astronauts are, if I’m not mistaken, scientists and engineers) but an astronaut! “That alone was worth the price of admission,” I told Patty with a huge smile on my face, and she was as impressed as I was.

Dr. Epps was one of the few Black people I saw there. There were more Chinese alone, and Japanese, than Black people. I saw more Blacks in my hotel than in the teeming masses at the convention. I met one Black fellow later, an overweight gentleman who said he was an actor from New York. For all I know, he was in *Hamilton*.

S/N ran a piece last week about “racism in SF” and I can tell you that there are few Black SF writers because Black SF fans are almost nonexistent.

The crowd was almost as Caucasian as a Donald Trump rally.

Most of the night was that good. I took Patty’s picture as she sat on the throne from *Game of Thrones*, she took my picture with some alien Japanese monster. However, the weather got to me—it got cold outside, and with the huge building’s air conditioning it was cold inside and my arthritis started aching terribly. But the pain didn’t stop me from having a great time.



There was a very short man in a Jedi robe, a woman with a robotic baby dragon, and lots of booths put up by cities hoping to host a worldcon. Dublin wants it in 2019, and God if it's there I want to go! Ireland's on my bucket list, anyway.

They were raffling stuff off, some of it really expensive stuff, so we each got a ticket.

We didn't win anything.

After the raffle we drove to the hotel, checked in, and went to our rooms.

Day Two:

I'd gotten to bed about two, and since I can't seem to sleep when it's light I got up about seven. There was a strange small coffeemaker, two packets that said they were coffee, but no basket.

So I took the elevator down to the lobby, hoping to find coffee. Coffeeless, I pushed the wrong button on the elevator and it stopped on the second floor, and there were two computers for guests. I decided to write when I was awake enough; the previous night I had regretted not bringing a computer.

Not only was there coffee, there was breakfast. I got a cup of coffee and went back up to my room to read and watch the news. Back down for more coffee and carrying a thumb drive, and on the way back up I stopped on the second floor to write.

No such luck, there were two young teens at the two computers. So I went back up to read some more. Patty was sleeping and wouldn't wake up. It was her rental car, and I considered taking a cab to the convention center, but didn't. While reading, I heard strange sounds outside the window, three stories down. Looking out through the screen, I saw the kids on skateboards. Good, I could write!

My coffee was empty after writing for a half hour or so, so I went back downstairs to fill my cup, and back to my room,

again considering a cab. It was eight-thirty, so I called Patty's phone again. This time she answered, and I informed her that she had twenty minutes to get breakfast.

She came back up after breakfast and said she needed to lay down a little while and would be half an hour or so. She said she wasn't feeling well, which was understandable since she'd driven from Cincinnati to Kansas City the day before, and we'd been at the convention until after midnight.

Oddly, despite only sleeping five hours the night before, I was fine, wide awake.



We got to the convention about eleven-thirty or so, too late to meet Dr. Epps again. But we discovered that the daytime was a lot more busy and had a lot more to see—and buy. I bought three tee shirts, and so many books I won't be at the library for

months. One was *Star Prince Charlie*, co-written by Poul Anderson and Gordon Dickson, signed by its editor. At least, I think it's the editor's signature. There was all sorts of cool stuff, like the bridge of the Enterprise and a huge sculpture of the part of the Death Star that Luke Skywalker blew up, made from Legos and including Luke's and another pilot's craft.

The illustration here is from one of the tee shirts I bought. The title of the book the robot is reading is "Tomorrow is Now", which makes me wonder if the artist has read *Yesterday's Tomorrows*. If so, I'm flattered.



Then I met David Gerrold, who has been writing and selling science fiction since he was in college, which is an interesting story in itself. He had written a screenplay called *The Trouble with Tribbles* and sent it, unsolicited, to Paramount. Paramount, like all film studios, return unsolicited manuscripts unopened.

However, they had no script for the next Star Trek episode and were becoming panicked. They read, then after several rewrites, filmed the script. He's been making a living at it ever since. The September issue of F&SF is dedicated to him, and he signed a copy of it and I bought it from him.

There were more nerds than I'd ever seen at once, far more. And every one of them was smiling. I had pleasant conversations with several people, including a gentleman from the Kansas City library.

Carrying around what felt like fifty pounds of books and short on sleep, I decided to get the car keys from Patty and put the swag in the trunk.



I must have walked around for miles carrying that load trying to find the car. Hot and tired I was stumbling like a drunk, and when I fell down I decided it was time to surrender, and staggered back to the convention center, still hauling my load.

I ran across the librarian, who grinned and said, as has been written in so many science fiction stories and comic books, "So—We meet again!"

I stumbled back in and got a bottle of water and sat on a couch towards the back of the hall; my back was killing me. I tried to call Patty, but she wasn't answering. I was starting to worry, as my phone battery was getting low, and she had my battery charging battery in her purse. Ten minutes later, my water empty, I decided to get a beer. I tried calling again—no

luck. I sat back down on the couch again as my phone rang; it was Patty. I told her where I was and she couldn't find me.

"Do you know where that big screen is?" she asked. I answered "Yes, I can see it from here."

"Stand under it!" I did, and she found me. We sat at a table by the screen and I plugged my phone into the charging battery. There was a heavy Black man in a polo shirt, one of the incredibly few Black people there. There was an engineering company logo on his shirt.

"So," I asked, "Are you an engineer?"

"No, but I play one on television."

Patty had gone for snacks and I had a pleasant conversation with the actor, about SF in general and the convention in general.

Patty came back with some veggies; raw broccoli and cherry tomatoes and cheese. We ate it and walked around some more.



There were a couple dozen people in various science fiction costumes. One was a very short man in a Jedi outfit that

I mentioned earlier. I could swear I've seen the guy on-screen somewhere.



We decided we'd seen everything there was to see there by three, so went back to the tables by the screen. It had been beaming some sort of thing that was going on in the auditorium the night before, but only a static photo now. We had a conversation with a couple of folks who looked about my age, two men and a woman. The woman and one man and I talked about science fiction and art, the other man, who was with the woman, was largely silent. Patty had gone

to the restroom. I decided to get a slice of pizza and a beer at the Papa Johns booth, which looked like a permanent part of the place. A very small four piece pizza was eight bucks, and a pint can of Budweiser was six, twice what a Guinness was in any bar at home. But I was having too much fun to worry about my bank balance or credit card bills.



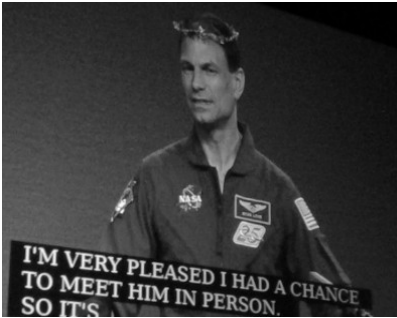
I ate one slice, and nobody else wanted any. The three left, and a while later we made our way to the auditorium to watch the Hugos be presented. “Too bad we got here too late to see Dr. Epps again,” I said.

“I saw her when you were looking for the car,” she said, “but she was with people looking busy so I didn’t bother her.” We got pretty good seats toward the front, but it was still forty five minutes before the ceremonies started. I used the rest room and got another beer, this time a Corona; beer choices were pretty limited.

Finally it started. The Master of Ceremonies was Pat Cadigan, a woman who had won a Hugo decades ago, and she would have made a pretty good stand-up comedian.

She came on stage holding a bull whip and after telling everyone to silence their phones, admonished us “Don’t make me use this!” Her whip was the center of many jokes by many people on stage.

I’d been disappointed since 2012 when I read *The Martian* that it hadn’t gotten the Hugo it deserved, and apparently I wasn’t alone, because Andy Wier got two of them this year. One was “best new writer”, probably since it was years too late to award it for the book, and one for Best Long Version Photoplay for the movie version, that even beat Star Wars!



Mr. Wier wasn’t there. An astronaut in his astronaut uniform accepted the award in his place for “best new writer”.

When “Best Long Version Photoplay” came around, another astronaut in uniform accepted it for him: None other than Dr. Epps! I gave her a standing ovation, but no one else did.

I haven’t had that much fun in years! I spent a fortune, but it was worth every penny.

A Wolf in Shepherd's Clothing

A year or so ago I saw something shocking on TV: a “Christian” preacher preaching the opposite of what Jesus taught.

He was the lead pastor of a large local multi-campus church, Eric Hanson. I saw it while flipping through channels.

First he preached fear—fear of terrorists, fear of criminals, fear of crazy people. But Jesus said **not** to fear those who could kill the body, but those who can kill your soul, like the wolf in sheep's clothing on the pulpit.

Then he preached hatred for Muslims. He certainly knows about the Good Samaritan and that Jesus said to love **everyone**, yet he preaches hate!

Then the most outrageous of all. He said everyone should get a concealed carry card and arm themselves like he had! I was completely aghast. Jesus said that those who live by the deadly weapon, die by the deadly weapon. The Bible also speaks of the Armor of God. “If God be with us, who can be against us?”

“If something happened to me, what would happen to my family?” he whines. Apparently this “Christian” preacher doesn't trust God!

I assume he's a closet atheist who went into preaching for the same reason that L. Ron Hubbard started the bogus religion he called “Christian Science”, saying to his fellow science fiction writers “the money is in religion.”

Don't be fooled,
read your Bible.



CSS

I learned way back in the 1980s to always reuse code whenever possible. First, reinventing the wheel every time is stupid. Second, since the reused code has already been debugged, there is far less chance of error.

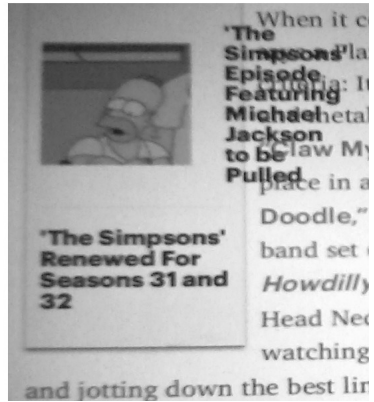
I always disliked CSS. I don't like its convoluted syntax any more than javascript's. I gritted my teeth and learned javascript anyway (I still have the fat book on it)

because when I first got on the web it was about the only way to do certain things, like mouseovers. We used IE at work, and almost every web page I viewed in that browser was screwed up, stupid things like photos covering part of the text (see the image taken from *Rolling Stone*, above). Not only was it convoluted, messy, and error-prone, it was unnecessary, so I put off learning it until it became useful and necessary to do so.

They first developed CSS because morons didn't know how to code properly, and used tables for everything and did the tables wrong; screen readers for the blind couldn't make heads or tails out of them. I use tables as they were meant to be used, as tables. But tables got a bad name because of the bad coders.

When I saw that you could use CSS for mouseovers, I finally had a use and could get rid of the javascript. I put a `<script>` section with the six short lines in `mcgrew.info` and later at `mcgrewbooks.com`. Everything seemed to work well on all the devices I could test it on.

Then the big Samsung tablet died a couple of years ago and I replaced it with a new Acer. I was horrified to find that on the Acer in Firefox my pages all rendered in a sans-serif



font rather than one of the three fonts I'd specified (Gentium Book Basic, Times New Roman, and Times).

So of course I started researching. I searched for an answer for months, and a search for Android fonts led me to a font called Droid Serif, so I added that.

It didn't work. It was still sans-serif. It showed serif in the other browsers, but not Firefox. It was annoying. More annoying was that other sites' pages would show a serif font. I downloaded them to study the code, and they were all machine generated messes. Nothing to see there.

Then my searching found a CSS answer: browsers could use fonts not installed on the device with a short bit of code. I made a test page, uploaded it—and it didn't work. I fiddled with it, searching the web for an answer, and finally found it. Of all the pages I'd read, only one mentioned that the font code had to be placed first in the script. I modified it and uploaded it again, and it worked! Gentium Book Basic on the Acer!

While I was searching, I found a "margin" statement. I had previously had a one row, three column table with the outside cells empty to add a fake margin. This didn't confuse screen readers, but using the CSS made the pages a little shorter.

Then I spent the next few days adding it to the hundreds of pages on the site. Now there were two tasks left. One was to make a style sheet so I only had to change all those pages one more time, even if I find more useful CSS.

The second was the Bible. The titles are rendered in Olde English, written in Open Office, saved to PDF, and converted to JPG with GIMP. Adding the Olde English font allows me to delete dozens of graphics, saving space and making load times a little shorter. It also looks better.

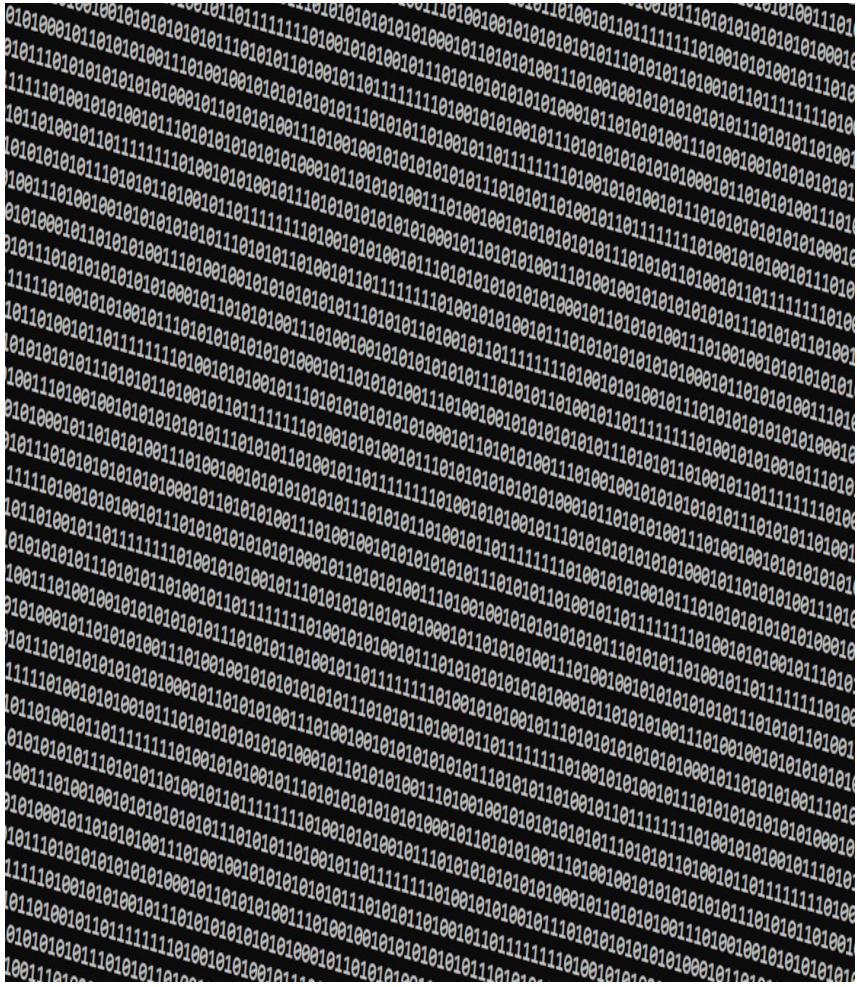
I now have serifs in all the books, in the same fonts as the printed books.

I did run across one fairly large problem: the line height of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was fine before chapter two, and there the line spacing is widened. Odd, since the code

heading for the rest of the chapters seemed identical to the code headings in the preface and first chapter. I finally found my error; not CSS but HTML.

Also, the Franklin Gothic font works in it on the computer, but not the tablet. So I just did away with the Franklin, which is similar to the Gentium, anyway,

I'd like to put the style sheet in the root, instead of one in each directory, but one site said IE has trouble if you do that. Is it correct?



Dear Rodney,

I have a few questions, the first of which is what has happened to the Republican party? What has happened to YOU? Why did you vote against Illinois when you passed the tax cuts, which didn't affect me but raised many Illinois taxpayers' taxes? You're supposed to be on Illinois' side, not Kentucky's.



When I was a child, the best president I've seen in my life was in office, Dwight Eisenhower, who was elected when I was an infant. During his administration and for over a decade afterward, it only took a single minimum wage paycheck to pay the bills... barely, but they were paid.

A CEO earned forty times what the janitor earned. Today the CEO earns four HUNDRED times what the lowest paid employee earns, and that employee now needs LINK to eat.

The rich paid very high taxes, the middle class very low. But "Republicans" have drastically cut taxes on the rich (while doing nothing to mine) during your time in office.

Eisenhower during my childhood made me a Republican. He started NASA and built the Interstate Highway System. He expanded Social Security. He did good for all of America.

I didn't think much of Johnson, things just kind of continued for me, but they sure changed for Black people. At the time, I had no idea. I joined the Air Force in 1971, and voted for Nixon to be re-elected in 1972. Despite his corruption he did a lot of good things for the country, such as signing the Clean Air Act and Clean Water act.

After Reagan the party started dying, especially when the Tea Party came about. Each Republican president was worse than the one that came before him, culminating in the most corrupt politician I've seen in my life occupying the White House.

Today it seems like my Republican party has died completely, replaced by the cult of Plutus, the ancient Greek god of wealth. Your ads decrying the impeachment infuriate me. They say the will of the people put Trump in the White House, but he lost the popular vote by three million votes, and was put in office by the politicians in the Electoral College, only the third time in history that has happened. Saying the will of the people put him in office is a bald faced lie, making you and your fellow Republicans bald faced liars. I'm assuming you consider yourself a Christian, if so read your Bible: Satan is the father of lies, and the love of money is the root of all evil.

I watched the hearings. Trump is guilty as sin and should resign like Nixon or be removed by the Senate.

My Republican party seems to have died with Senator John McCain, with the few patriotic Republicans jumping ship. As one prominent Republican said on his retirement, "I didn't leave the party, the party left me."

I no longer have a party. And don't expect me to vote for you again unless you stand up to the bullies running the Fascist party that used to be Lincoln's Republican party. As he said, you can fool all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time.

Please, sir, do the right thing and stand up to the wingnuts in the party. The Republican party is on life support and will die without cowards like you who fear Trump ruining them growing a spine and bring party back. The REAL Republican party that signs the Clean Air Act rather than yanking us from the Paris accord to line the pockets of the oil and coal industries to the detriment of our great nation.

Again, I beg you.

How to Digitize Film Slides for Less Than Ten Dollars



I was an amateur photographer in my youth, starting in high school when I bought a Canon 35 mm Single Lens Reflex (SLR) camera. I'd been interested in photography since I was about twelve, when I somehow obtained a Three Stooges photo developing kit. That toy hooked me, even if I could only do contact prints until I got a job when I was a teenager and bought a cheap enlarger. Color film went to a commercial developer, as I had neither the knowledge nor equipment to develop color film.

So I have a lot of photographic slides and prints to digitize, since film photography is now obsolete; Kodak put itself out of business when they invented the digital camera which made their cash cow, film, obsolete. Prints are easy to digitize, as scanners are cheap and make good digital photos out of film prints. But what about my slides?

I asked at Walgreen's photo department if they could digitize slides, cringing at what was sure to be expensive since I've dug up half a dozen boxes of them. But they couldn't, and the lady said there were only two places in the country that could. I looked them up. Both were prohibitively expensive and you don't get the slide's frame back, only the film.

Then I had an idea, remembering the slide viewer I used to have and may still have somewhere. All I had to do was put my phone to the viewer's eyepiece and snap a photo! I looked, and bought one on the internet. It was only six bucks after shipping.

Alas, when the viewer came, there were complications; keeping the camera and viewer lined up still was impossible, making the digitized images awful.

So my next step was holding it together with a rubber band to keep it steady. I didn't have any, so the final cost was closer to ten bucks; you can't just buy one rubber band, you have to buy the whole bag.

If you have no computer, it will cost you the price of one, because later you'll need an image editor.

Here's what the phone/viewer/rubber band combination looks like:



The next step is to turn the phone's camera on and line the viewer up.

Next, carefully lay it flat on a table and tape the viewer to the phone. Any kind of adhesive tape will do, just make sure it's tight before removing the rubber band, which will interfere with the photo if left on.



Of course, you can use any source of illumination. I used a table lamp; a flashlight would do. You can vary the brightness and contrast by moving the contraption closer to or farther from the light.

Here's what the raw output from the camera looks like, which is why you need an image editor:



I use the Gnu Image Manipulation Program (GIMP). It's free and open source and has everything you need to manipulate images, although it has a large learning curve. Here the slide is; digitized, cropped, and rotated:



One advantage of digital photography is very evident in this picture of Dover Air Force Base from the stairway to my barracks in 1972. The color has faded almost completely, leaving a pink tinge to the right, and bits don't fade.

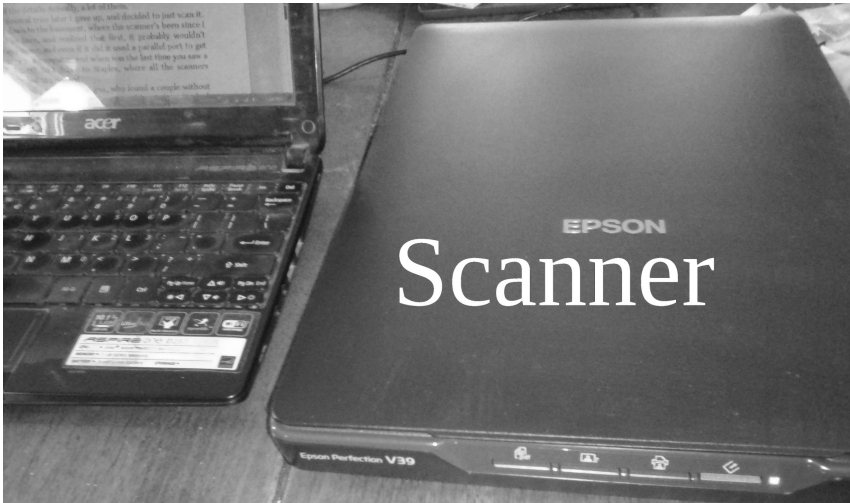
So the final picture is saved as grayscale rather than RGB.

So now my slides, at least the ones I've found, are digitized. I'm keeping them, maybe I'll have a better camera to better digitize some time in the future.

Here's a slide I digitized of a friend and co-worker when I was a teenager; time was kinder to this almost fifty year old slide, although all the green color is faded (not visible in a grayscale photo); I restored it with GIMP the best I could. It's obvious that where you had the slides developed matters a lot.



Now I need to buy a scanner...



I spent a hundred bucks on my next book last week.

Each story had an illustration at the beginning, except one: “Watch Your Language, Young Man!” I could find no suitable old women on Google Images, so I figured I’d have to either find an old woman at a bar who would want to be the illustration of a shrewish old lady, or just get out my pencil and make one.

Rust never sleeps! And boy, but my fingers seemed to be solid rust. Of course, when I was young I drew every day, or at least almost every day. I was damned good.

Not any more. I haven’t drawn a single thing since my kids were born three decades ago. So of course when I sat down with pencil and paper, nothing was produced but offal. Damn. It was late and I’d had a few beers, so maybe I was drunk?

I set it aside for the next morning. Several days and a lot of paper later and I finally had a cartoon drawing of an angry old crone. I figured I’d digitize her the same way I digitized my slides—I’d use my phone’s camera. With an eight by ten image to photograph, it should work fine. After all, the cover of *The Paxil Diaries* is a photo of one of my paintings I painted when I still had talent, and it turned out all right.

Not Mrs. Ferguson. The white paper was a neutral gray in the digital image. “GIMP’ll fix it,” I thought.

Nope. Adjusting the brightness and contrast removed some of the details. Actually, a lot of them.

Several tries later I gave up, and decided to just scan it. I went down to the basement, where the scanner's been since I moved in here, and realized that first, it probably wouldn't work any more, and even if it did it used a parallel port to get the image in a computer, and when was the last time you saw a parallel port? So I drove to Staples, where all the scanners were attached to printers!

I finally found a sales guy, who found a couple without printers that cost more than the ones with printers attached. He said they always put printers on cheap scanners, so I bought one of the expensive ones, an Epson Perfection V39.

I took it home and scanned Mrs. Ferguson, put her at the top of the story, printed her out, and shrunk down like that, again a lot of the details were gone. So I thickened some lines and rescanned. It's fine now.

I wasn't going to mention it because when I bought the scanner I had the idea of scanning all the photo albums for Patty, but that's taking a long time, they won't be done by Christmas, and Leila says she can't come this year, anyway.

I have one album scanned, and half its photos straightened out and separated from each other, but I'll be at it for a while. I'm also going to scan the book my uncle co-wrote, and if I get permission from my aunt to publish it I'll do so. Of course, it would only be of interest to family since it's about family history, some of it ancient, fifteenth century ancient.

I really like that scanner! It's a lot smaller than the old one in the basement; that one's four or five inches thick and a foot and a half by two feet, and has a thick power cord with a big box in the middle, and a parallel port. The new one is smaller than my big laptop and needs no power cable, as it gets its power from the USB port. It uses the same kind of USB cable as your phone (unless you have an Apple, which is compatible with nothing) and it will scan the same size images as the old one.

At any rate, I haven't written much lately...

Channel 49



I got rid of cable over fifteen years ago. When we moved into the apartment, cable was included in the rent payment, although I had to pay for internet. Then in March 2006 a strong F-2 tornado ripped through my neighborhood.

There was no electricity for a week, and no landline phones, cable, or internet for a month. When internet and cable came back, there was no cable included in the rent. I haven't had cable since.

I bought a digital to analog converter for the TV I bought back in 2002, and never got 14, 17, or 49. The converter went out and I bought a new, more expensive one, and sometimes 49 would come in.

Then two years ago I bought a new 55 inch 4K TV, and 49 would come in far more often, and 14 and 17 occasionally came in.

The window behind the couch is rather leaky, so I keep a space heater by the couch to keep my feet warm. A couple of months ago it broke. I replaced it with a radiant heater that uses less than half the electricity and is more than twice as warm.

One evening I was watching something on channel 49, and it was coming in perfectly. My feet got a little too warm so I turned the heater down to low. The picture on the TV started getting colored squares and ribbons. Could the heater be interacting with the television? Maybe the 60 Hz EMF radiation was putting off a harmonic that matched channel 49? Maybe it strengthened it?

I mulled over it for a few days, and wondered if the table lamp had any effect. I turned the TV on to 49, and reception was unwatchable. I turned the heater on high and it

got a little better. I shut off the lamp—and a second later it was a crystal clear picture! It's a three way LED, so I turned it to low. Colored squares started appearing. Medium and it was worse. High and it was unwatchable again! Shut off again, perfect reception.

I wondered about the other lamp. The two lamps are identical except the bulbs. The one where I sit that interferes with channel 49 is a three way LED, the other is a three way CFL.

The CFL bulb had no effect at all on the reception. That leaves two possible reasons: either there is a bad connection with a wire in the socket, or the bulb itself is emitting interference.

My guess was the three way bulb. The CFL works similarly to an incandescent; an incandescent has two filaments, the CFL has two tubes. I suspect that there are electronics in the LED to give it three brightnesses, rather than having a different number of elements electrified.

I hadn't tested it. That would simply entail swapping bulbs and seeing which one interfered, but they're on all the time except when I'm in bed, so they're too hot. I couldn't do it before I turned the lamps on because I can't function before coffee.

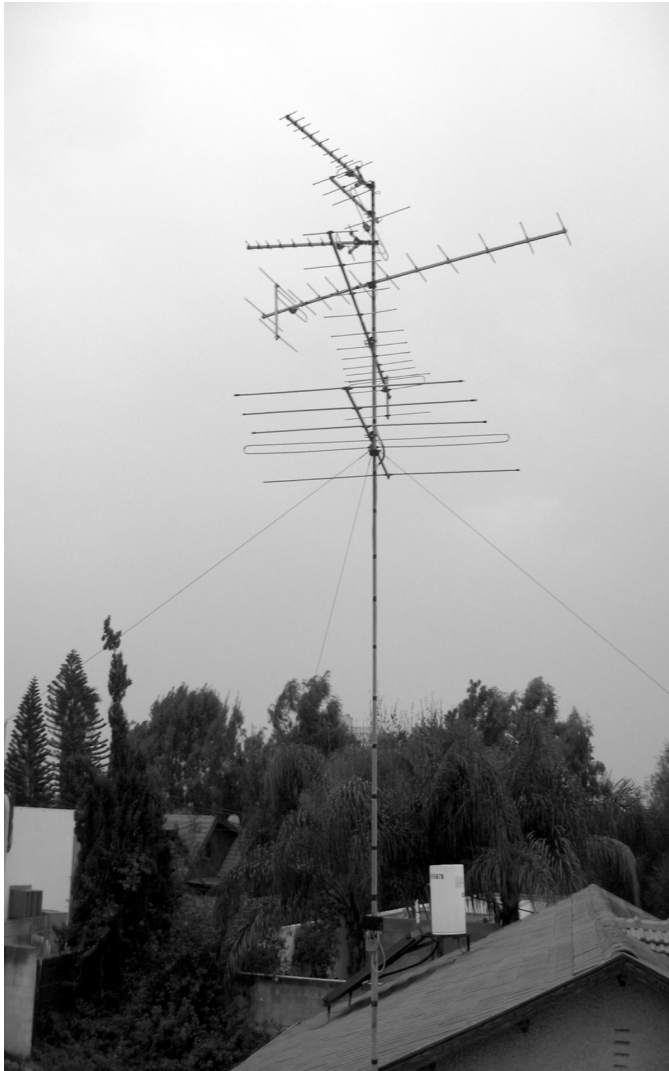
About a week later when I turned on the lamp with the LED bulb, there was something strange, but I don't remember what; I had just gotten out of bed and hadn't had my coffee. At any rate, it convinced me that it was the socket, not the bulb. So the next time I was close to the hardware store (it's near the liquor store) I stopped in and bought a new socket, then put off changing it.

A few days later I got up in the morning, and when I turned the living room lamp on, it flashed rapidly on low. A very annoying flashing. I shut it off and traded bulbs.

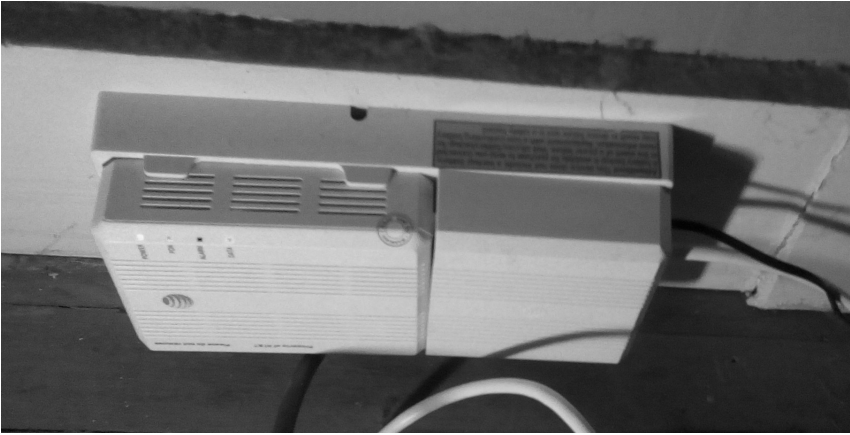
Channel 49 came on flawlessly. It was the bulb, after all. The LED bulb is still in use in the other lamp; it only flashes for

a few minutes before lighting normally, but still interferes with 49.

The lesson here is if you're having reception problems in any radio device like a TV, radio, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, or anything, start shutting electrical things off until the reception improves.



Fiber!!!



A year or so ago I was walking through the park down the street, and saw fiber optic cables sticking out of the ground. They were clearly labeled as such. I wondered if fiber was coming my way? And hoping cautiously that it was, of course. I was on cable modem, and had recently increased my speed (and bill) from ten megs to fifty so I could watch 4K TV. The bill jumped from fifty to eighty.

Then late last year I got an offer from AT&T—I was right, my neighborhood was indeed ready for household fiber. It looked like I could double my speed while bringing my bill down to what I was paying for a tenth of the speed! It was Saturday afternoon, and Monday I went down the street to the AT&T store.

I was cautious, knowing how dishonest corporations are these days, and expected to see fees and taxes that would double the bill.

Nope, fifty bucks! If I were still into internet gaming I could have gigabit speed for ten bucks more than I was paying for fifty megs. The installer was scheduled to show up on Friday. He got there about 9:30, right when they said he would, calling before he came.

I always wondered how it worked; how far did the fiber go? To the pole? To the box outside the house?

Nope, the fiber is strung all the way to a fiber modem, which is plugged into the network's router, and it looks like that cable is fiber, too. It took him four hours to install it.

I don't notice any difference in any device. Newspapers still load as slowly at a hundred megs as they did twenty five years ago on a 33.6K phone modem.

The difference is in the bill! I haven't used bittorrent with it yet, or downloaded any huge files, so I'll see.

The next Monday I drove all the way across town to return the cable modem. Their computer system was down! I got a receipt for the modem. I still needed to call and have them stop service.

I neglected it for a while, and the bill came. I paid it and left a note that I had returned their equipment and expected to see no more bills.

Then there was getting all the new devices on the new network, with a new network name and password. It was a lot easier than I expected, especially since if the device is plugged into the router, no password is needed. The network drive and two laptops are usually plugged in.

The "problem child" was the printer. It wasn't a problem when I bought it, because the old router had the button to push so you could connect a device. The new one doesn't. So getting it connected with Wi-fi required a USB cable. I knew I had one, one had come with a sound blaster box twenty years ago. I looked all over the basement and couldn't find it.

I finally decided I'd go to the hardware store and buy a new one. I went to get one two days later.

They seemed to have every conceivable cord and cable, except a USB cable. I finally asked a clerk for help, and she had a hard time finding it, and what she found didn't look like the USB I remembered, although the end with a tongue looked

right. I bought it, and made sure I kept the receipt, because that one end just didn't look right.

After I got home I realized that I'd bought a USB extension. And then I saw it; a cable hanging from a cluttered table. Was that it? It was, still plugged in to the Sound Blaster box.

So I looked up the manual and followed it carefully. The blue Wi-fi light had stopped blinking and was shining steadily, and that's what signals it's connected to the network. So I opened a document in Oo Word and tried to print a page.

The printer didn't show up; none of the drivers or programs had installed. I opened the installation program again and studied the interface. One selection was for installing drivers and stuff.

It's finally working correctly.

And I got another bill from the damned cable company. Needed to call them and set them straight (i.e., threaten them with the BBB and FTC).

I didn't have to threaten them, they looked into it and are sending me a \$150 check. It hasn't come yet.

A few days after I wrote that, what looked like a bill showed up. What the hell??

I opened it, and it was a bill, except it showed that they owed me money. The day before my birthday, a check showed up in the mail.



Stupid Web Tricks

Back when I first got on the internet with Family Video in 1997, the service came with unlimited web hosting along with email and internet service for only thirteen bucks. Their URL was a good one: short and easy to remember. I had to get a browser from a brick and mortar software store because there wasn't an Internet Explorer yet to download a real browser. I got the original Mosaic browser U of I wrote. Since I had free hosting I learned HTML.

When I started my Quake site at the suggestion of someone who had seen a couple of my other game pages, its URL was famvid.com/mcgregw/games/quake/quake2/. A British gamer and webmaster named "flamethrower" who had a podcast about that game (although they were called "shoutcasts" back then) said it was "the URL from bloody hell" and defied anyone to actually type it in.

But domain name registration cost over a hundred bucks back then, and it wasn't like I was running a business or anything. Like the sites I run now, they were ad-free. This was not because even though I didn't realize that web ads are a losing proposition (but nobody else knew it then, either), but that ads were forbidden by the terms of service.

Then GoDaddy came along. They were cheap, but everything I read about them said that they were sleazy. I found Register 4 Less, and they were extremely cheap and they weren't a bit sleazy. I'm still using them today. Their bottom tier of service gives you your domain name and ten megabytes of storage for fifteen dollars a year. I use that "free" service for mcgregw.info. My book site, mcgregwBooks.com, needs a bit more space than that since I'm hosting a dozen full books, some of them heavily illustrated, so I'm paying fifty bucks a year for fifty gigabytes for that site. I get five email addresses to match my domain along with the extra space, and a lot of other goodies; tools a commercial site usually needs. It has every tool I knew of and many I hadn't heard of.

I registered TheFragfest.com (a “fragfest” was what the games’ battles were called; the URL “fragfest.com” was already taken) around 2000. By then, my site was wildly popular (a lot from it is in my new book) and “the URL from bloody hell” got a lot of traffic. Mirrored at TheFragfest.com, the site with the short name got very little traffic.

Later, as I recounted at the site and in the book, I realized that people never got there from typing in the URL but from clicking a link from someone else’s site. The only people who would benefit from a short URL are businesses that advertise on other media.

So what domain name did Rental City (who I saw in a TV commercial) come up with? Not RentalCity.com, which would have been the logical choice. Perhaps the domain was taken, but if you google “rental city” the business in Champaign that was being advertised comes up, at least if you’re in Illinois. If so, RentalCutyCU.com for “Rental City Champaign-Urbana” would be logical.

They chose cuatrentalcity.com, which is how the URL looked on the TV screen; all lower case and all the same uniform color.

How damned stupid are web designers and advertising people these days? First, with no spaces or capitals or change in shade or color between words, it would take more than the few seconds it flashed on the screen to decipher the jumble of letters. They should advertise it as cuAtRentalCity.com. Still stupid, but better. Or make each word in the URL a different color or shade.

I started writing this when the commercial came to mind and I couldn’t remember what was being advertised, only that its URL was brain-dead stupid. The third error should have them very embarrassed. Trying to remember whom the ad was for I googled all I could remember of it, “cuat,” and was pointed to the Urban Dictionary, which informed me that “cuat” was a cross between a cunt and a twat. I sure wouldn’t want that in my domain name!

The fourth error was that they also have RentalCityIL.com as an alternate URL that displays the exact same page as the moronic URL. So instead of advertising the easy to type and remember URL, they advertise the clumsy, hard to read URL with a ghetto vulgarity in it.

Then there's TV channel 3 in Urbana, IL, WCIA. Their URL is wcia.com, right? Wrong. They dumbly chose "illinoishomepage.net". Yeah, I'm going to type that into my phone... what morons!

None of the other TV stations are any better. WICS? Their brainless URL is newschannel20.com, despite the fact that they're always WICS but are only channel 20 over the air; cable and satellite change the channel numbers. Idiots!

I wouldn't have penned this except that sort of idiocy is starting to be the norm. Stop it! Hire a webmaster who isn't a drooling dunce.

Most of the sites aren't any better than their doltish URLs. Newspapers are probably the worst, especially on a phone. Their advertising is simply annoying, with pop-ups, pop-unders, flashy, moving, distracting graphics. Yeah, I'm going to go out and buy a product that's just annoyed the hell out of me by keeping me from reading what I wanted to read! Numbskulls. Quietly and unobtrusively show me something I'm interested in and you might get a customer, but I try my best to keep my money away from people who anger me. Like the brainless pinheads whose corporate policy is to card geezers for beer (or try to), like Walmart or County Market or a few gas stations.

Or have ads that make me wait thirty seconds to read something that will take ten seconds to read. Stop it, dimwits!

Twenty years ago the only people with high speed internet connections were on college networks. Everyone else was on dial-up, even though phones hadn't had dials since the early 1970s. Your internet connection today is thousands of times faster than twenty years ago, even your phone's internet. Yet there are so many graphics, videos, and

especially third party automatic linking to outside sites' overloaded servers (those damned ads), lines of code that is useful only to advertisers, that most of their web pages render as slowly on today's high speeds as they did on crawling slow dial-up back before commerce discovered the web. Often they load even slower.

I laugh when I see commercials for cable companies bragging about how much faster your tablet will be than if you had DSL, claiming they have "the fastest wi-fi". Guess what? There's a physical speed limit to wi-fi that's slower than DSL, so on wi-fi they're the same on either service. In short, they all have the fastest wi-fi. They're only faster on devices plugged directly into your router.

But what slows a web page isn't your ISP, your wi-fi or your "antique" tablet, it's a hundred under-powered and overloaded web servers each serving you an ad. Your computer has to make hundreds of connections to hundreds of sites to render that *one* web page. I'll bet it annoys people who have data caps even more than it does me.

Cretins. Newspapers should insist on doing their online ad offerings as they've always done in print—serve the ads themselves so the page renders almost instantly. Stop stalking your viewers for the sake of your advertisers and insist that they simply supply a graphic for the newspaper to publish with a link to the advertiser's site, almost exactly like they've done for hundreds of years. Every site should load as fast as mine does, at least when it doesn't have a lot of large graphics, like in *Huckleberry Finn*, a book I host on my site. They should also disallow moving graphics; paper newspapers don't have those damned distracting animations!

It infuriates me when I'm trying to read the news on my phone and a pop-up pops up. Half the time the "close" button won't work because it's too close to the edge of the screen, in real estate that's already been mapped to browser functions.

And if I manage to close the pop-up before simply hitting the "back" button in disgust, there are even more

(although less insane) ads. And the halfwits wonder why we use ad blockers! We NEED them, you mentally retarded newspaper people! And guess what? Serve the ads from the same server as the newspaper content and ad blockers won't block them.

Some newspapers have an ad on the bottom of the phone's screen, with a social media bar above it, with a title bar at the top, leaving only half of the phone's screen for actual content.

Then there's pandering to the aliterates, the TL;DR crowd who never read a book they weren't forced to read in their entire lives. The people you see in waiting rooms who aren't reading. "Tap to read the rest of the story" after the first paragraph. WTF? Now I have to wait another full minute for you to pull even more ads from overloaded, under-performing web servers. What is wrong with these people, are they all on cocaine or something? Or is their target audience people who are even dumber than they are?

Yeah, simpletons, annoy me and expect me back. I knew a bar owner like that.

He wasn't in business very long. No wonder the newspapers are in trouble.



RUR

Half a century ago I was reading a book by Isaac Asimov. I don't remember what book, but I know it wasn't *I, Robot* because I looked last night and it wasn't in that book. But in the book, whichever one it was, Dr. Asimov wrote about the origin of the word "robot"; a story by Karel Čapek titled *R.U.R.: Rossum's Universal Robots*.

I searched every library I had access to, looking for this story, for years. I finally gave up.

Then a few weeks ago I thought of the story again. I have no idea what triggered that thought, but it occurred to me that there was no internet back then, and since the book was so old, it would probably be at Gutenberg.org.

It was! I downloaded it, and to my dismay it was written in Czech. So I fed it to Google Translate.

Thirty five years ago when I was first learning how computers work and how to program them, I read of a program the US government had written to translate Russian to English and back. To test it, they fed it the English phrase "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Then they fed the Russian translation back in. The re-conversion to English read "The wine is good, but the meat is spoiled."

I figured that in the decades since their first efforts at machine translation, it would do a better job.

I figured wrong. What came out of Google Translate was gibberish. It does a good job of translating single words; paper dictionaries have done this well for centuries. But for large blocks of text, it was worthless.

When I first saw the Czech version I could see that it was, in fact, not a novel, but a stage play. I kept looking, and found an English language version translated by an Australian. It's licensed under the Creative Commons, so I may add it to my online library.

Wikipedia informed me that the play was written in 1920, and a man named Paul Selver translated it into English in

1923. So I searched Gutenberg for “Paul Selver” and there it was! However, it was in PDF form. Right now I’m at the tail end of converting it to HTML.

After reading it I realized that this story was the basis for every robot story written in the twentieth century, and its robots aren’t even robots as we know robots today. Rather, they were like the “replicants” in the movie *Blade Runner*—flesh and blood artificial people. That movie, taken from Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* would have actually been a sequel to *R.U.R.*, had *R.U.R.* ended differently.

The Terminator was *R.U.R.* with intelligent mechanical robots instead of artificial life. Their aim, as the “robots” in Kapek’s story, is to destroy all humans.

Asimov said that his robots were an answer to *Frankenstein* and *R.U.R.* He thought the very idea was ridiculous, so he made his own robots inorganic and mechanical rather than organic, and added his “three laws of robotics”. His laws weren’t physical laws like the inability of anything to travel faster than light, but legislation; similar to *Blade Runner*, where the artificial people weren’t allowed on Earth. In a few of his books, like *The Caves of Steel*, robot use on Earth is strictly limited and controlled and people hate them.

I thought Asimov had the first mechanical, non-magical robots, but I was wrong. There were fictional mechanical robots before Asimov was born. The first US science fiction dime novel was Edward S. Ellis’ 1865 *The Steam Man of the Prairies*, with a giant steam powered robot.

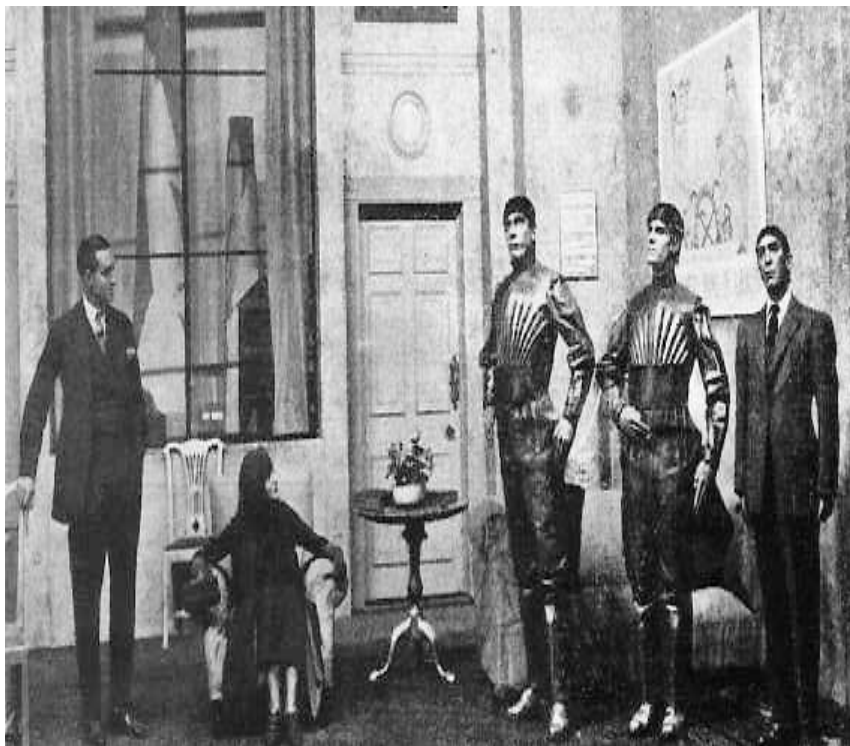
One thing that put me off about this play (besides the fact that it’s a play, which is far better watched than read) was that the original story was written in a language I don’t understand. That’s why I don’t read Jules Verne; his stories were written in French, and I don’t speak that language, either.

I dislike translations because I used to speak Spanish well, according to South American tourists, and a smattering of Thai. And I’m a *reader*. It’s more than just the story, it’s how

it's written. There are word plays and idioms that are impossible to translate. For instance, a beautiful English phrase that uses alliteration would lose its beauty in any translation. And, there are no boring stories, only boring storytellers. I suspect that Kapek may have been an excellent writer, but Selver wasn't, to my mind. Little of the dialog seemed believable to me.

But in the case of this story, even the poor translation (Wikipedia informs me it's abridged) is worth reading, just for the context it places all other robot stories in.

It will be at mcgrewbooks.com soon.



कर्म

The belief in karma is enticing, that you don't have to punch that jerk, karma will take care of the jackass. The belief that the good you do is rewarded is also enticing.

The concept's origins are murky, but karma as we know it today was first preached by the Hindu religion, and when the Buddhists split off like Christians split off from Judaism they of course continued.

Unfortunately for us Christians, it violates several tenets of our religion. Firstly, it depends on reincarnation. How else could you explain why a braggart and a bully like Donald Trump who was born rich isn't cast down to poverty, covered in slimy sores? Why does someone born into wealth deserve that wealth? Hindus and Buddhists explain it by reincarnation, a basic tenet of their religions. Our Bible, however, says when you die you immediately go to judgment.

"Aha!" the fundies say (I say "fundies" because you should have to actually understand the fundamental concepts before you could truthfully call yourself a fundamentalist). "You are judged for your sins!"

If they taught you this in church, your preacher was what Jesus called "a wolf in sheep's clothing," because the very core of Christianity is that Jesus paid for Christians' sins so you won't have to pay for yours!

Rather, a Christian is judged on his or her good works. It's payday.

Yes, both the Bible and the Hindu's Mahabharata both say you reap what you sow, but that is taken out of context in both books and the meaning is completely different.

Mahabharata says “As a man himself sows, so he himself reaps; no man inherits the good or evil act of another man. The fruit is of the same quality as the action.” From what I’ve seen in my life that simply isn’t so, I’ve been harmed by the actions of others through no fault of my own many times. The Hindus and Buddhists say it’s punishment for my misdeeds in the past, in this life or the previous. I say “Bullshit.” The Bible in Matthew 5:45; actually, Jesus Himself, says “it rains on the just and the unjust.”

The context of “reap what you sow” is in Galatians 6:7, but is continued in 6:8-10. It says “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

As Jesus said in Mark 4:3-9, not every seed you plant will grow.

So please, if you’re a Christian, let go of the idea of Karma. It is not compatible with Christianity.



Zombie Tech That Just Won't Die

Some “obsolete” tech that is no longer used perhaps should be (I’ve written about it) because they were better in some respects than newer replacements, but there are some other obsolete technologies that



no longer serve a useful purpose, some remaining among the near dead, some almost comatose and some screaming in fear.

The steering wheel, brake pedal, and throttle control are screaming in fear. They only have twenty or thirty years left. When they’re gone, good riddance! But the tech isn’t quite there yet, although the clutch has died a quiet death.

The near dead is the home phone. I haven’t had one in over fifteen years, but my ninety year old mom who uses her cell phone like we used to use pay phones when they still existed (and had a reason to exist) still has one. Call her cell and you get no answer. I knew a few other, but very few, all wedded to the past. I had a grandpa who refused to use the toilet my uncle installed in the bathroom he built, always using the outhouse.

The home phone is dead. But it still writhes.

Then we have cable and satellite TV. They became endangered when TV became digital.

When they were young (to me, meaning when I first met them) they were great. No snow, no ghosts, no static in the sound. Plus, you got half a dozen more channels, including HBO, for ten bucks. The cable channels either didn’t have

commercials, or only had them between shows. Most cable channels didn't censor out vulgarity.

There were educational channels, like Discovery and The History Channel. There was the rock channel, MTV, that played music videos.

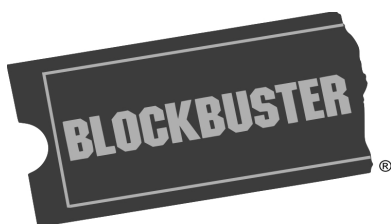
It gradually changed. Commercials started appearing, and now they show commercials at the bottom of the screen while the actual content is running. MTV stopped playing music videos and started showing stupid reality shows. Discovery stopped showing science and technology and started showing stupid reality shows. The History Channel stopped showing history and started showing stupid reality shows.

More channels were added, none anyone in their right mind would watch, like the four or five shopping channels. So many sports channels were added that the "sports" channels started showing pool, poker, and even chess, despite the fact that those games aren't sports. And the price kept rising to the point that the cable bill cost more than the phone bill or the trash bill.

Then television went digital. The number of over the air channels tripled or quadrupled. Ghosts, snow, and audio static were banished. Now, instead of cable giving a better picture than over the air, it's reversed. Almost all cable channels are standard definition with none offering better than 720, while the same channels over the air are in 1080.

There was no longer any reason to have cable, unless you were a Nascar fan, but now even Nascar fans can watch the races with Nascar's TV app. And it got worse for cable. Netflix started streaming a plethora of excellent shows and movies, without commercials, and uncut, for about ten bucks a month, a little over a tenth of the cost of cable. Their highest pricing tier offers 4K content.

But a lot of people (I'm guessing Nascar fans that haven't heard of streaming boxes) still have cable. When will this zombie die?



It's a commonly known "fact" that Netflix killed Blockbuster Video, because shortly after Netflix came on the scene, Blockbuster had some serious business troubles and finally went bankrupt and out of business.

Netflix had little, if anything, to do with it. Terrible management filled with greed killed Blockbuster.

When movie studios started selling VHS tapes of their movies, they were ridiculously expensive; ninety dollars and up for a movie. Nobody but people who rented out movies (and maybe some rich film buffs) bought them.

It cost about five bucks for a movie ticket then, so renting a movie for five bucks for the family to watch was like getting the whole family on one ticket. It was a good bargain for everyone; the studios, the rental stores, and the renters.

The first nail in Blockbuster's coffin was the price of the tapes dropping. Blockbuster was far from the only tape rental store. There were scores of others, but they were the largest. When the price of tapes started dropping, Blockbuster's competition's prices dropped, as well. Blockbuster didn't.

They had done so well because they were so big, and could have a bigger selection of movies, so they survived. I only rented a few movies from them. None were close in Orlando, and when we moved back to Illinois the closest rental to our house was a Family Video. And their movies were two bucks for four nights, Blockbuster was still five bucks for two nights. And we were poor, not renting any movies and almost never going to them, unless it was to a Disney movie with the kids.

Movie prices kept going down, and a lot of smaller outlets could no longer make a profit. Then came DVDs.

The smaller outlets had little trouble adapting to the new media, but the massive behemoth Blockbuster was late to the party. It takes a lot more time to turn a freighter around than it does a fishing boat. They suffered more. They closed several stores here. Meanwhile, Family Video was expanding. At one point there was a Family Video across south 6th Street from Blockbuster.

DVDs were initially expensive, but not nearly as much as tapes were when they first came out. It wasn't long before Redbox automated the whole DVD rental thing, with a vending machine that produced DVDs, the dollar rental paid by credit or debit card. They made money on excessive late fees, as if you returned it the next day the credit card company made more from Redbox than your dollar. Their pull was convenience, vending machines placed in high traffic areas like a drug store or fast food joint. They prospered, and still do.

Then, suddenly it seemed to me, who had been on the internet for nearly a decade, that everyone was on the internet.

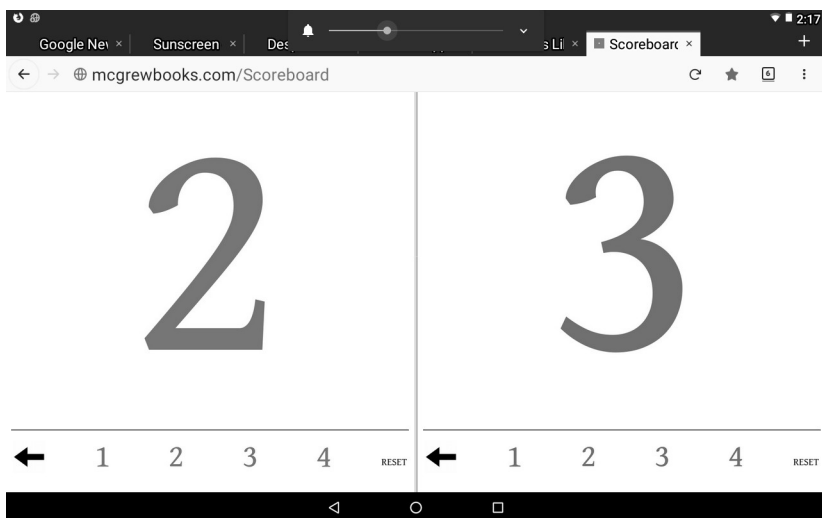
By then Blockbuster was tottering, already shedding stores left and right. They had priced themselves out of business, charging the same five bucks they had charged two decades earlier when movies were a hundred bucks to buy, and now you could get a DVD from a Walmart bargain bin for what Blockbuster wanted for two nights!

Netflix was brand new and renting a month's worth of mail order DVDs over the internet for the price of two Blockbuster rentals when the last Blockbuster in Springfield closed.

It was the one across the street from Family Video. That store, and many other Family Video stores all over town are still in business, as well as lots of Redbox machines, still thriving.

Netflix didn't kill Blockbuster. Blockbuster committed suicide.

A Useful Computer Program Using Only HTML



My intention wasn't to use HTML as a programming language—it's a markup language. I didn't realize what I had done until I had done it.

I've been programming since 1982, but haven't done any of what I called “real” programming since they switched from Foxpro to Access at work well over a decade ago; yes, you can build databases with Access but I didn't consider it “programming”.

The only coding I've done in years isn't what I call “programming” unless there's Javascript, and there's very little on either of my sites.

Mike Meyer bought a very old shuffleboard, older than me, for his bar, Felber's, last year, and came up with a paperish whiteboard for a scoreboard. I was playing with my tablet a couple of weeks ago and realized that I could make a scoreboard in HTML, so I swapped the tablet for the computer and went to work.

The first thing I needed to do was something I'd only done once before, and that was almost two decades ago—use frames.

That first time was a joke I played with an online friend and link buddy in Canada, who was going to medical school. He often complained of the lab rats biting him.

I often ran a contest on my site called the “Ticket to Nowhere”. The winner was a Quake or gaming webmaster who went the longest without updating their site. The winner got a no expense paid ticket to absolutely nowhere.

Dopey Smurf (the fellow's Quake handle) emailed me and said he was planning to close his site, because graduation was coming up and he feared it would harm his upcoming career.

As soon as I saw the email I had a humorous idea and emailed him back. I would have another contest, and in addition to the ticket to nowhere, the winner (Smurf, of course) would get a box of voracious invisible rats that if let loose would eat a web site. I wrote a container that loaded an unlinked page from my site, which would have a screen-sized GIF of his site. Touching it got the GIF running, which showed the outlines of rats eating their way across the page leaving a dull yellow behind.

Two or three years earlier, Joost Shoor had shut down his Quake site search engine, leaving a dull yellowish screen with a Strogg holding a sign that read “Haste does not lead to success”. What the invisible rats left was identical to Joost's closed site, except the sign read “Out to lunch”.

If I'd kept that code, the scoreboard would have been a lot easier, as I had some relearning to do. I'd completely forgotten how to do frames. Of course, I'd only used one in that one occasion.

Once I had that figured out, it was a piece of cake. I just made an HTML file and a JPG for each number of each color, with arrows at the bottom to increase or decrease the number, linking to the next and previous. Dirt simple. But when I tested

it I realized I needed a way to bring them back to zero, so I added a reset. That done and tested I rolled a joint and opened a beer.

Later that evening I thought of a big improvement—numbers from one to four at the bottom, with each number linking to the number that value higher than the present number. So I got out the computer and, half drunk and all the way stoned, backed up the working files and tried to do the modifications, but I was nowhere near sober enough. I put it away for the next morning.

It was a lot easier, and the modifications took about an hour or two (there were 44 HTML files to change). I uploaded it to my web site, got out my tablet, and only then realized that I'd written a completely functional program using nothing but HTML 4.1 and JPGs.

The one last thing I need to do is to name the window so I could have a single reset button. I knew how to do it when I gave Smurf the invisible rats, but have forgotten completely how. It might have used javascript, I don't remember.

I wish I had saved the rats!



Why Are There No DINOs?

For the last several years there has been talk of “RINOs”; Republicans “in name only”. But I have never heard the term “DINO”, Democrat in name only. I’ve been pondering that lately, and I think I have it figured out. The Republicans have stopped being a straight political party and have become a cult.



Wikipedia says “In modern English, a cult is a social group that is defined by its **unusual** religious, spiritual, or **philosophical** beliefs, or by its **common interest in a particular** personality, object or **goal**. This sense of the term is controversial and it has divergent definitions both in popular culture and academia and it has also been an ongoing source of contention among scholars across several fields of study.” The emphasis is mine.

Wikipedia leaves out one of the defining characteristics of a cult: its sense of belonging. This is key to the “Cult of RINO”. When they call you a RINO, they’re saying that you’re not one of them; you don’t belong, an untrustworthy outsider.

The Republicans used to be a simple political party wanting what’s best for America but disagreeing with others about what actually was best. Some time in the late 1990s with the advent of the “Tea Party Republicans” things started changing, perhaps sooner. This wing of the Republican party was pro-millionaire and anti-middle class. The Republicans had been pro-Christianity, but began using Christians’ Christianity for their own devious aims; introducing Fascism to America in the name of God.

Fascists worship money and pretend to worship God. Just because a person is in church doesn’t mean they’re Christian, even if they’re standing on the pulpit. The

“prosperity preachers” are some of these; the love of money is the root of all evil, and you can’t love both God and money.

It culminated with the election of Donald Trump, possibly the most corrupt president in history, and certainly the worst liar. The “swamp” he promised to drain was the “swamp” of regulations that kept people, the country, and the world safe. He drained the “swamp” by appointing people to regulate the very industries they came from. And he flouted the law; something no president has ever done before, and the Republicans let him.

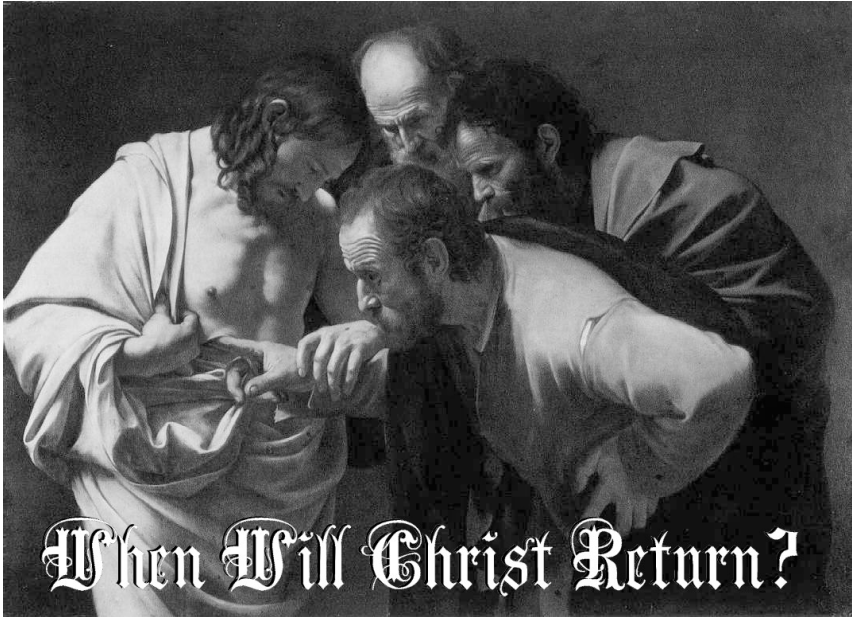
This is a far cry from the Republican party with Watergate. The old guard Republicans stood for law and order, and forced Nixon out of office when his corruption was unearthed. They put our nation above their party.

Not so with these modern bozos. In 1970 no congressman would have voted with his party over his state, regardless of party. Yet both of my congressmen, LaHood and Davis, both voted with their party for a tax cut for the rich and for corporations that actually raised taxes for many Illinoisians.

Almost every Republican was against impeaching Trump and removing him from office, despite overwhelming evidence that he put his re-election before the defense of America.

This cult that has replaced what used to be the Grand Old Party needs to be dismantled. Make America great again by voting against those who want to dismantle American democracy.





All my life for as long as I can remember, Grandma McGrew preached that we were in the end times. She was a Southern Baptist, a fire-and-brimstone religion. She often read the Bible to me when I was a small child, and the passages were usually from the old testament—Genesis, Daniel in the lion’s den, the three cast into the furnace (My grandparents’ dog was named Shadrack, one of the men who were miraculously saved from the fire), Jonah and the whale, Noah and the flood... and from the new testament (except at Easter and Christmas), the book of Revelations.

In that book, one of the signs of the end times was the re-establishment of Israel as a nation. She was forty four when that came about, five years before I was born. That was the fifth trump spoken of in Revelations.

Never forget that Christ comes at the seventh trump. The false Christ comes first; he is the sixth trump. Don’t let him fool you!

People have been claiming that now, whenever “now” was, was the end times for centuries at least. When I was fourteen, everyone thought that June 6, 1966 was the end date, since that date was 6/6/66. In the late nineties a pastor (from Texas if I remember correctly) gave us a date in that decade that was to be the last day.

It came and went. He then said he’d made a mistake in his calculations. The newly calculated date came and went, too.

Then December 14, 2012 was slated to be the end of the world, because that’s when the Mayan calendar ended. Silliness to the extreme; does the world end every December thirty first?

But the world did end. For Grandma McGrew it ended in her hundredth year, when she fell down in her nursing home, broke her hip, and died from complications. It ended for the preacher who said the end was soon, although his end was a year or two after what he’d predicted.

It will end for you. It will end for me. “But when will Christ return? Two thousand years is a long time!”

Well, it is to you and me, but not to God. The Bible says in more than one place in both testaments that a thousand years to man is only a single day to God.

Jesus said he would return in three days. He rose from his physical burial three human days after his execution, and it’s now God’s third day. A few minutes past midnight, in fact.

Mary found the tomb empty early in the morning, and he showed up before his followers around lunchtime. If Jesus shows up at noon, that will be in about five hundred years from now. He could wait until evening, in about seven hundred and fifty years. Or he could wait until very close to the end of the third day. It could be almost another thousand years.

Jesus said that no one knows when he will return, not even him. I certainly don’t—but it’s now shortly after midnight of the third day. It could be tomorrow.

In fact, it will be tomorrow for a lot of people. Armageddon was in January of 2003 for Grandma. It could be in

less than five minutes for you, and is for thousands, because somebody somewhere is dying right now.

It's almost certain that you will meet Jesus in paradise, long before he returns here. So "let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die" (1 Corinthians 15:32).

Be ready for it. It's coming.



Fresco by Andrea da Firenze, Santa Maria Novella, Florence, 1366

perhaps the earliest "hovering" Christ

Useful Dead Tech Part Three

Potentiometers and Variable Capacitors

In the first installment, written over a decade ago, I bemoaned the loss of volume and tuning knobs on car radios, which had been stupidly replaced by buttons. By the second installment the knobs were back, although the knobs were digital, rather than analog.



A potentiometer is a variable resistor with three leads. Usually the control lead is the center and can raise the voltage to a second lead while lowering it to the third. In analog systems they were used as volume, tone, and balance controls. In stereo systems there were two stacked together, one for each channel.

A variable capacitor was a capacitor where turning the knob one direction raised the capacitance, the other was lowered it. These were used for tuning radios, and UHF channels on early televisions.

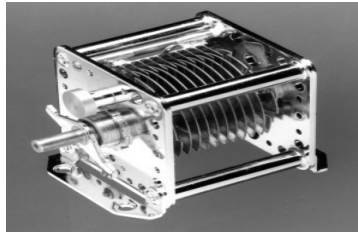
Never once did I ever see one of these two devices fail. Old potentiometers suffered from getting dirty, which caused a crackling noise when turned, and often made the sound silent. However, this was easily remedied with switch oil, sold at Radio Shack as color TV tuner cleaner. It only took removing a few screws to access them for cleaning.

I drive a fifteen year old car, and the volume knob drives me nuts. Try to turn it up and the volume often goes down, or the reverse, or nothing at all. The digital tuner often jumps off the station. The old analog equipment never did that no matter how old it was.

There's no reason whatever to use digital switches for volume knobs, because all sound is analog and all amplifiers are analog. Potentiometers would still work well, and you can

still buy them, but I don't think I've seen one on any new stereo in this century.

Why did they change? The mantra of youth, "new is always better!" Well, sometimes it is. Just as "reform" doesn't mean "improve" but to change the form of something for better or worse, change can be better or worse.



Digital volume and tuning controls have no advantages at all over the older tech, and many disadvantages. Changing this was just stupid.

Packaging that doesn't need tools to open

Back in the last century things generally came in thin cardboard boxes, simple things that were always easy to open and seldom needed tools, and the only needed tools for some were a knife or scissors. Now? They package things in hard plastic that sometimes breaks scissors!

And it's terrible for the environment. Over half of all plastic on Earth was manufactured in this century! There's absolutely no rational or logical reason to imprison a product in a stupid, very hard to open plastic package. It seems that with some items, they gave more thought to the looks (but not usability) of the packaging than the actual merchandise!

Stop making all that damned plastic and stop making it so damned hard to access everything I've bought!

Now, easily opened packaging isn't completely dead; they still use paper wrappers and cardboard boxes for fast food. But anything else? "Honey, have you seen the jackhammer?"



Car windows you can open or close without the ignition in the operating position

Now, I love power windows. It's great to be able to roll up all your windows from the driver's seat without having to pull over and open each door to roll the windows up. It's also nice to be able to keep passengers from rolling them up or down.



But why does the key have to be in the running position? I should be able to simply open the driver door and roll them up or down. When they're rolled up and it's hot outside, you certainly don't want to put your upper body in that hundred fifty degree furnace!

There's absolutely no reason why I should need a key to roll a window down.

This isn't exactly on-topic, but when it starts raining, the windows should roll themselves up.

Glass soda bottles

Plastic bottles make sense for a lot of things; viscous substances like shampoo and condiments are far better served by squeezable bottles, especially ketchup, which was hard to get out of a full glass bottle. Milk and other assorted liquids are fine in plastic, as long as the container has a flat bottom.

But there is no good reason to put liquids, like soda or cooking oil, in plastic. Plastic is bad for the environment, particularly the oceans' environments. The only reason it's used is because it



only takes a hundredth of a penny to make a plastic bottle but a penny for a glass bottle.

That saving of .99% of a penny does in no way make up for the environmental damage of plastic, nor for the instability of soda bottles. Beer still comes in glass bottles, and you can set one on the hood of your car easily. Not soda, a soda bottle's design (which makes it look like it holds more soda) is unstable unless on a perfectly flat, level surface.

But worse, plastic is pliable (or a plastic ketchup bottle would be useless), which means the soda will go flat much faster. That's why they still use glass bottles for beer!

As for cooking oil, if it's on your stove when the oven is on, it will melt.

Plastic soda and cooking oil bottles are not user-friendly, or environment friendly. Bring back glass!

Paper cups and straws



As mentioned above, plastic is bad for the environment. There used to be no plastic cups or straws; they were made of thin waxed cardboard, and I see no reason why plastic cups and straws should cost any less than paper.

They should bring back paper milk cartons, too.

Bezels

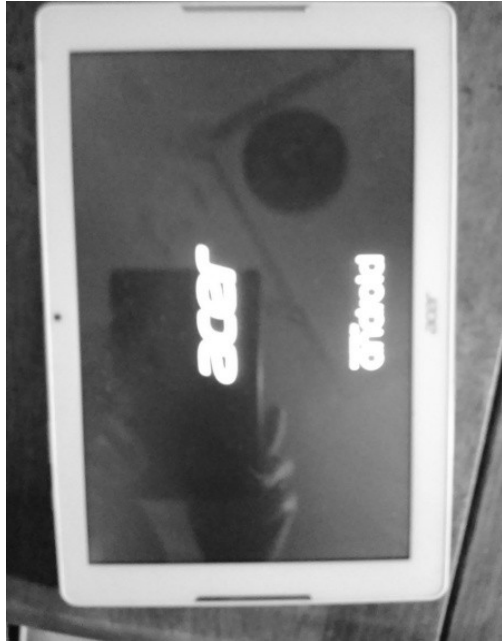
They're not dead yet, but it's coming. Now, getting rid of bezels on TVs and monitors is a great innovation. The one on my new fifty five inch TV is only half an inch. But why do designers these days never look at how a device is going to be used? The bezel on my four inch phone is already too small, and I've read they're so small on the new phones that they're being called "bezel-less".

It's stupid! The bezel on a phone or tablet is necessary to keep from accidental clicks, which my phone gets all the time. My tablets, with generous bezels, never do.

Idiot designers, forget about cool, I don't need to impress anyone with "innovation" that some stupid young hot shot came up with.

Getting rid of phone bezels is almost as dumb as touch screen controls in cars, the

most idiotically dangerous "innovation" in decades. You shouldn't have to take your eyes off the road to adjust the heater or turn up the radio!



Foot operated car dimmer switches

I don't know what idiot in Japan... or was it Germany? Whatever, cars used to have foot switches to dim their headlights.

And then some moron decided to move the dimmer switch to the turn signal. I guess whoever made that decision never used his turn signals and figured he'd add a use to the "useless" turn signal.

But using your turn signal to turn or change lanes is the law in all fifty states (I don't know about foreign countries). The problem occurs when you go to use the turn signal and blind some poor soul in an oncoming vehicle.

Someone please fire these morons before they kill more of us!

Trump and the Christians



Ever since Trump was elected, I've been scratching my head trying to figure out how any Christian could vote for such an evil man, who tried to take a war widow's home under imminent domain so he could build a parking lot, was found guilty of racial discrimination, admitted to fraud, slandered honorable people, and said he could do anything he wanted because he was famous. He seems to have no morals at all. So why do Christians, especially evangelicals, support him?

An article in *Vox* explained it—abortion and gay marriage. As a Christian I agree, abortion is a sin and homosexual acts are an abomination. But not every American is a Christian, nor have they always been. Among the founders were Jews, and later immigrants of every faith. Many Americans are atheists and agnostics.

I would not want to live under Sharia law, would you? Then why would you want to impose our Christian law on those who aren't Christians? After all, Jesus said to treat others as you would want to be treated. He also told us to love our neighbors, even if they're Pagans; read the parable of the Good Samaritan.

"But my taxes are supporting abortion!" That doesn't mean you do. Do you ask your grocer their view of abortion? She may well have had one herself. I was completely against the immoral and unnecessary second Iraq war, but my taxes paid for it.

Now I'd like to talk about a very late term abortion. Donna's birth was the result of her mother being raped, and she would have been aborted early today. But in the 1950s abortion was illegal. The cause of her birth caused her so much mental anguish that she committed suicide, a terrible sin. Had she been aborted by a doctor, the sin would have been his, not hers.

If you're gay, I'll pray for you. I won't pray that God will make you straight, because it's His will that you were born gay, it isn't a choice that a person can make. But your homosexuality has no effect on me. Note that being gay is no sin, it's acting on that urge. But again, gay "marriage" has nothing to do with me.

Now, I mentioned earlier that I would not want to live under Sharia law. Most Christians wouldn't want to live under Christian law. Tattoos are forbidden, piercings are forbidden, and a man shaving his entire face is forbidden. Under Christian law, adultery would not only be a sin, but a crime as well.

Now let me talk about what you have refused to think about, the fact that you are actively supporting sin. You're supporting tearing families apart. You're supporting caging children. You are supporting hatred.

Your soul is at peril for supporting Trump. It's plain to see that he worships money, not God.

The love of money is the root of all evil. I'd rather have a Muslim or Jewish president, at least they worship the same God we do, not the golden god.

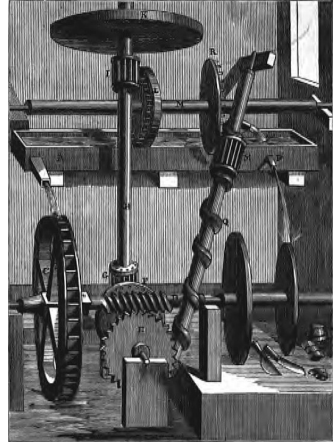
Finally, look in your Bible and see what God did to Israel when they chose an amoral leader like Trump. It wasn't pretty.



The Perpetual Motion Machine

Actually I should have titled this “How do I school the ignorant about the laws of thermodynamics?”

I was visiting an old friend who was talking about a mutual old friend who had moved into a camping trailer on fifteen acres of Nowhere, Missouri; or semi-moved. Anyway, he lit the place with his perpetual motion machine, and you will find it either humorous or infuriating. Maybe just sad.



The way it supposedly worked was that “Perpetual”, as I’ll call him, had two twenty four volt truck batteries, two solar panels, an alternator from a truck, and a motor to power the alternator, which fed its power to the batteries that ran the motor that ran the generator.

Yep, you read that right.

I’m pretty sure he didn’t do the math, and probably couldn’t even understand the math, since the US public school system has been dysfunctional since at least 1958, when I started first grade. You’re not too stupid to learn, your teacher was too incompetent to teach.

We didn’t have kindergarten, let alone preschool, since most moms stayed home. They could afford to back then. I’m told I could read before school, and remember knowing how to tell time earlier than that.

But they really suck at math.

What I found humorous was that it would appear to work, the batteries the panels charged running the motor that lost energy trying to get free energy. But he was wasting the free energy he got from the panels on his ignorant device!

I tried to explain it to my friend, but his math teachers sucked, too.

20 Downsides Of Electric Vehicles: Debunked

A magazine named “Motor Junkie” posted an article titled *20 Downsides Of Electric Vehicles Drivers Often Overlook*, by a fellow named Vukasin Herbez (<https://motor-junkie.com/20-downsides-of-electric-vehicles-drivers-often-overlook/31416/2/>). It’s oil industry propoganda and mostly bullshit, and it’s being promoted on Facebook. Mr. Herbez writes:



For almost 10 years now, electric vehicles have been the talk of the car industry. From the early Tesla models up to today’s Mustang Mach E, electric vehicles tried to show what the future of personal transport looks like. To some, they are appealing since modern electric vehicles introduced zero emissions and high-tech driving interfaces.

However, EV manufacturers have hidden the downsides of those vehicles.

He first cites “Short Range Anxiety.” I don’t know when this piece was written, but this is no longer a problem, and seldom would be for most. Few people drive anywhere near two hundred miles every day, except for vacations. Many fly to their destinations and rent a car once there. For that yearly trip, flying or not, just rent a gasoline car.

Not a diesel car, I hate those noisy, stinking things. He piles on, saying that Tesla’s 300 mile range doesn’t compare to a diesel... and this is a problem, why?

Number two was “Long Charging Times”. Again, this would only be a problem on a long trip. Plug it in at night and

it's completely charged the next morning. You probably won't even need to every day unless you have a thirty mile commute to work.

He says "Putting the fuel in your car only takes a couple of minutes compared to charging your vehicle overnight." Again, how is this a problem? Plug it in, go in the house, unplug it the next morning. Far better than standing there in twenty degree weather for fifteen minutes while your gas tank fills, especially if you have a heated garage.

Then he cites "Trip Planning Problems" as number three, when he actually simply repeated numbers one and two. As propagandists go, this guy isn't the sharpest knife in the drawer, and as Terry Pratchett said, he might even be a spoon. He says "You can't plan a fast trip in an electric car without knowing the location of charging stations." Again, EVs are so far not that good for traveling long distances, but in twenty years all gas stations will also have charging ports, and since technology advances so fast, you'll probably be able to charge as fast as filling a gas tank.

But that's the future. For now, rent a gasoline vehicle for long trips, bringing us to his next point, "Mostly Good for Urban Use". Exactly the same argument as the first three. So far the four reasons are all "not good for long trips". If you're a traveling salesman, an EV is not for you. If you aren't, and drive less than fifty miles to work, it's not a problem.

He says "Also, if you run out of juice while driving in the city, which often happens with electric vehicles, you can easily find a cab, Uber, bus, or some other form of transportation to get home." This is brain-dead stupid, and he likely knows it. You're no more likely to run out of electricity than you are running out of gas; *they put gauges in them!* Stupid.

Next is "Not So Environmentally-Friendly". His argument is about their manufacture. "While it's true that electric vehicles have zero emissions, did you ever think about what it takes to make just one electric vehicle? Apparently, the

process of making a big chunk of Lithium-Ion batteries as well as their disposal is polluting since they aren't recyclable."

If lithium batteries aren't recyclable, then why do electronics recyclers take them? This argument is nonsense, especially with the number of oil, transmission fluid, and coolant changes are needed in a gasoline engine.

His "zero emissions" statement is often untrue as well—it depends on where your electricity comes from. If it's solar panels on your house's roof, or your electricity comes from wind, solar, hydroelectric, or nuclear, you do indeed have a zero emissions vehicle. But I live in a city that generates its electricity from burning coal. If I had an electric car, it would pollute more than the gasoline car I drive now unless I had a solar roof. Not sure about natural gas, that is probably cleaner than gasoline.

He then resorts to a flat-out falsehood. "Also, electric vehicles demand more electricity." Well, DUH! That part's true, but then comes the whopper: "That comes from thermoelectric or nuclear power plants, which are extremely dangerous because they're choking the Earth."

Thermoelectric and nuclear do NOT "choke the Earth", carbon emissions do. And there have been no new nukes because of cost for decades.

"The rising demand for electric power will only raise the level of global pollution. This is actually far beyond what internal combustion engines are doing now." Again, this is flat out bovine excrement. Generating the electricity for your car, even if it's a natural gas generator, will pollute far less than any internal combustion engine.

Next he cites cost, calling himself a liar as he does so in the next paragraph. "Too Expensive. Since electric vehicles feature the latest, most advanced technology, they cost more. For example, there is a range of electric cars for sale on the current market, with the top models going for well over \$100,000."

All new high end cars feature the latest technologies, and many of them cost far more than the most expensive Tesla. Then he admits to being a liar: “Although there are affordable models like the Volkswagen Golf E or Nissan Leaf, electric vehicles still cost significantly more than models that run on fossil fuels.” Yep, read it again. NOT ALL EVs ARE EXPENSIVE!

Next is “Repair Difficulties. If you own an electric car, you can forget going to your local shop or fixing it inexpensively. Regardless of the type and the model, all-electric vehicles require specific maintenance and service procedures as well as extremely high safety standards.”

The thing is, your EV won’t need much maintenance. There are no oil, coolant, transmission, or any other fluid changes. Your only needed maintenance will be tires, or perhaps brakes. Your normal mechanic will be able to perform them, but he’s going to miss all those fluid changes.

An internal combustion engine has pistons, gears, belts, pumps, thousands of parts to wear out. An EV has two or four electric motors, steering, and braking. When is the last time the furnace fan in your house went out?

Then he says “Also, servicing electric cars can be quite dangerous because most of the car’s mechanics consist of battery packs under high voltage.” High voltage? My dad was an electrical lineman who dealt with 90,000 volts on the towers, 750 in the residential lines. Guess what? You can unplug a battery! Plus, he shows his ignorance of electricity. 50,000 volts won’t harm you if there’s almost no amperage. Watts is the measure of electricity, not volts.

“Also, in case of a fire, you can’t just put it out with water. You have to use a special fire extinguisher since the batteries burn at a much higher temperature.”

Wrong again. You can’t put a gasoline fire out with water, either, you use CO², just like an electric vehicle.

Here comes more BS: “Too Heavy. One of the main downsides of having a big battery pack underneath your car is

the additional weight. While most modern vehicles are heavy due to all the extra safety and comfort options, electric vehicles are the heaviest champions. On smaller models like the Kia Soul EV, the electric batteries add around 450 extra pounds of weight.”

How much does twenty gallons of gas weigh? 120 pounds. Add the weight of the engine and all its fluids and the weight is far more than an EV, but really, what does it matter what it weighs? If the extra weight is at the bottom of the car, like most EVs, the more the better, as it will make your handling far better since there is a lower center of gravity; the heavy gasoline engine isn't under the car.

Next is “Cold Temperature Issues”, and he actually has a point here. Your range won't be as far when it's freezing, even without the heater turned on. In Illinois, you'll need the heater. But again, if you drive less than a hundred miles a day you'll be alright, especially if you have a garage.

After his sole valid point, he wades deeper into the manure and complains about “slow” top speeds. To his credit, he faults only the cheaper cars, admitting that “there are some electric supercars with insane high speeds like the Rimac Concept One, most regular everyday EVs are quite slow,” neglecting the insanely fast Tesla. His complaint? “The top speed of the Golf E or Kia Soul EV is limited to below 100 mph, for instance.”

This argument is as dumb as a box of rocks. When was the last time you drove at over a hundred miles an hour? When I was in the Air Force in 1974 driving across Death Valley in my new six cylinder '74 Gremlin I discovered that its top speed with the air conditioner running was ninety five miles an hour.

After that incredibly idiotic point he repeats “Highway Driving Consumption”. Yeah, dude, you already said they're crappy at long range driving.

Then comes a gem for the ignorant: “High Heavy Load Consumption. Tesla may tease their fans with the Cybertruck, a rig they designed to be the first fully-electric commercial

vehicle, but the truth is, that is far from reality. No matter how strong or big your battery pack is, the energy consumption under a heavy load is excessive.” Yes, it is, just like an internal combustion vehicle. Here’s a tidbit for you, freight trains are electric vehicles and have been since steam was obsolete. In a locomotive, a diesel generator runs the electric motors, since no internal combustion engine has enough torque to pull a train.

Not that his missed point even matters in a passenger vehicle.

Then he appeals to the least intelligent privacy conscious people, saying “Ease of Tracking Your Movements. Most upscale electric vehicles like Tesla Model S or Porsche Taycan have advanced infotainment and driving aid systems as standard equipment.” As if high end gasoline autos don’t.

Then we travel farther into the stupid with “Just Plain Ugly.” As if ugly isn’t in the eye of the beholder! Has this blind man never seen a Jeep or a Humvee, or that incredibly boxy Honda SUV? Ugh! EVs I’ve seen look like normal cars, not the least ugly. He does admit that “There are some electric vehicles that are stunning beauties.” He then rags on an electric Mustang! “Even the 2021 Mustang Mach E, which shares many design elements with the regular, gasoline-powered Mustang, is not an attractive car.” As if it has anything at all with the fact that it’s electric.

This is reminiscent of the US president’s assertion that windmills are ugly. Really? CWLP’s smoke-belching smokestacks are pretty? Talk about questionable taste!

Then he finally gets to the real reason he hates EVs: “Threatening Existing Economy Models. Some economic experts fear that the mass production of electric vehicles and focus on this kind of technology will destroy the current economic model.”

Exactly. Our atmosphere has way too much carbon, and we need to stop adding more as soon as possible. The coal and oil companies are going to have to go away or civilization may

not survive, and if it does, it will certainly be a lot worse than conditions today.

“Also, think about the enormous car industry with all the companies that make fuel-related products, such as engine parts, fuel injection systems, transmissions and drivetrain components. All those companies and millions of people will be out of a job, which would put further strain on the economy and global standards.”

NO!! We can't have electric lights! It will put all the candle manufacturers out of business! No, we can't start building and selling those infernal horseless carriages! What will it do to the horse breeding industry, oat farmers, buggy whip makers? Wagon manufacturers! NO!! We can't have moving pictures, it will put Vaudeville out of business!

“Major Car Companies Aren't So Sure.” Like Wikipedia says, “citation needed.” He offers no evidence for his probable lie.

“Practically Unusable in Third World Countries and Markets. The EV craze is limited to just a few first world countries and markets in the world.” Craze? That's what they said about automobiles in 1890.

“If you go to remote parts of the world or any of the developing countries, you'll notice that fossil fuels are still the primary source of energy, and that's not likely to change soon.”

Actually, it will. The third world has no electrical infrastructure, but when it does it will almost certainly be clean energy. You need refineries to run gasoline, not so electric. Just solar panels.

“Buyers Still Consider EVs a Gimmick.” How stupid is his intended audience? I've not once, at least before reading this article, heard EVs called a gimmick. Maybe the oil barons do, whistling past the graveyard.

“An EV Can't Be the Only Car in Your Household.” Last time I looked, most US families own more than one vehicle. I only need one, since I live alone, but most don't. And when

Covid is over and I can travel again, I'll rent a car, because my old 2004 is really uncomfortable. I'd do the same if it was a comfortable EV.

“A Hard Sell. Most drivers lease their electric cars and then return them to the dealer after a few years to get a new model. However, those people who have bought electric vehicles could experience great difficulty selling them on the used car market or trading them in at the dealership. That is because electric cars depreciate much faster than gas-powered vehicles since the technology is so new and still evolving.”

That makes them perfect for me, because I buy my cars used. I'm not going to waste money on full coverage insurance and interest payments when I can get a five year old car that looks and feels new for under ten thousand! I bought my '04 for \$6,000 in 2014. About to trade it in.

I'm looking forward to putting a used Tesla on my credit card, and paying it off in a few months. Maybe in a few years it will actually happen.



Socialism and Capitalism



Charles Fourier, influential early French socialist thinker



Cosimo de' Medici, one of the first Medici bankers

Capitalism is a force for good, if restrained. Unrestrained capitalism is a force for evil. In the middle of the twentieth century unrestrained capitalism led to the German Nazis and the Italian fascists.

The fascists in Italy and the communists in the USSR claimed their governments to be socialist, despite the fact that under communism, government controls industry, while a fascist government is controlled by industry.

In a socialist government, like some European nations, capital works for society, which controls government and regulates industry so that it benefits society. In a capitalist country, like the USA (which keeps creeping farther away from socialism and closer and closer to Fascism), society works for capital, to the benefit of the rich and the detriment to everything and everyone else.

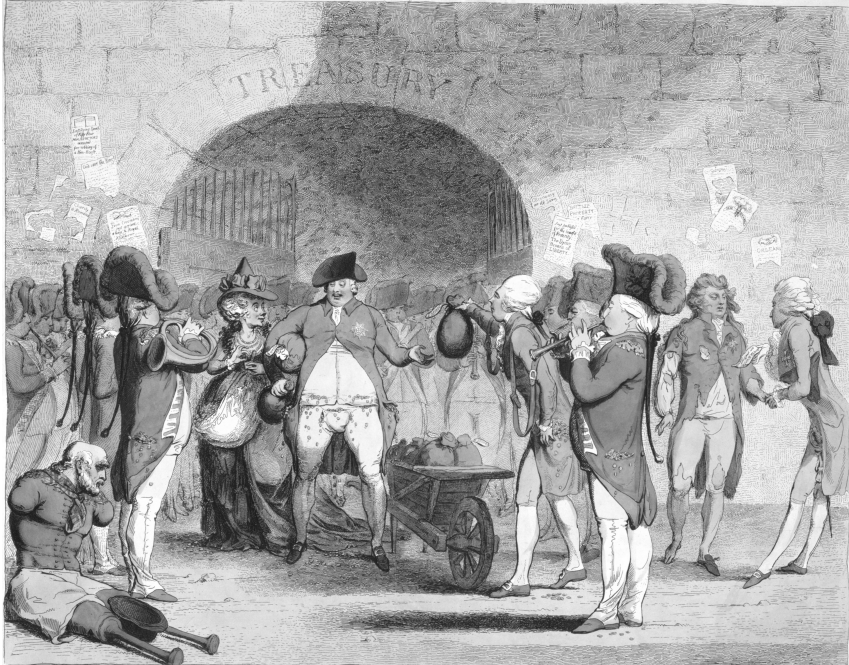
It pollutes the planet, but capitalism as practiced in America doesn't care. It impoverishes people, but capitalists don't care. It causes crime and violence, but capitalists don't care. Capitalists only care about money.

Capitalism worships money. Many capitalists claim to be Christian, or Jewish, or Muslim, or Hindu, but none of them really are; as the Christian Bible says, no one can serve two masters; he will love the one and hate the other; and the love of money is the root of all evil.

Many Christians think capitalism is good, and socialism is evil, because so many socialists are humanist, atheist, or even Satanists. But socialism is neither humanist (although it is good for humans), atheist, nor Satanic. It has nothing to do with any religion, or lack of one. It says society should control government and industry, not the other way around.

The capitalists have caused American minds to be really twisted. They have not only made socialism to sound like heresy (which it is, to one who worships money), but the word *liberal*, as well. But look what those words really mean: liberal and generous are synonyms, as are conservative and stingy. If you call yourself a conservative, you're saying you're stingy and will refuse to share.

Do you want a stingy America or a generous America?



The Dongle



I have an old HP laptop that's too big for a lap, but that doesn't matter because the battery's dead and won't take a charge. I use it to record KSHE on Sundays, and to play the thousands of songs on my network drive in Winamp.

However, there are two problems with it: one is that it's still running Windows 7. The biggest problem, though, is the headphone jack has worn to the point that you have to fiddle with it to make it stop humming from a bad ground, and it keeps getting worse. I used to build desktops, but my attempts to disassemble a laptop a few years ago were futile, so I took it to a repair shop. They couldn't find a replacement jack.

A few weeks ago it was really nice weather, so I sat outside on the porch with the door open and the stereo cranked. It wasn't loud enough. I missed the old Kenwood 200 watt stereo I used to have that could wake up folks in the next block. It died, but I'm still using the three way JBL speakers.

It wasn't nearly loud enough, so I went inside, unplugged the little Dell I bought last year (I have a bluetooth mouse and keyboard and use the TV as a monitor, only not when I'm doing commerce) and went to Amazon for a new two hundred watt amplifier.

I had been at war with Sony since they vandalized my computer with XCP when my then teenaged daughter played a CD she had bought from the record store where she worked, until I bought a Sony TV by accident. Then bought a PS4 on purpose, and when I saw that the TV remote worked the Playstation, I was happy to find a Sony receiver advertised at 100 watts per channel RMS, like the old Kenwood.

It came a week or two ago. I'll write a review of it later, but for now the important part was that it had Bluetooth, and I found that it played both my phone and my tablet with no problem. It occurred to me that if that old HP had Bluetooth it would solve the problem of its worn jack.

My ancient Acer that I replaced with the Dell had a marked key combination to turn Bluetooth on or off, but not the HP, so I did a little internet research, which indicated that it didn't have Bluetooth. Okay, I'll just buy a dongle. I thought I'd just run up to Walgreens and get a dongle and a couple of phone memory chips. I bought the chips, but they didn't have the dongle.

I knew Walmart had them, because I'd seen them there. But not today, I searched for twenty minutes, found someone who worked there, who looked where they usually were: they were out.

So I ordered one from Amazon. It came yesterday, as did a charity Covid-19 KSHE t-shirt I had ordered at the beginning of April. The dongle came with a driver CD, and a URL for where you could get the drivers from the internet, and actually had a small sheet of paper with printed instructions written by someone who was obviously a foreigner who didn't know English very well, but it was still readable and unnecessary.

I followed the directions, installing the drivers, and was informed there would now be a Bluetooth icon by the clock icon. It was there. Clicking it gave a menu, one item was to add a device.

Leave it to Microsoft to not follow standards, even if it means doing some things ass backwards. Anything else calls it "Pairing", which I turned on on the receiver. The computer then started loading drivers and other Bluetooth tools, and the stereo timed out before it finished. I never could get it to pair. I struggled with it for hours before discovering that it already had Bluetooth, when I was digging around in Control Panel. It

had been disabled; I had no idea why, I bought the computer second hand and hadn't needed Bluetooth until then.

So I unplugged the dongle, did a system restore to get rid of what I had just installed, went back in the control panel to enable the built-in Bluetooth, waited for its drivers and stuff to install, and tried again to pair it with the receiver. And failed again.

I gave up last night. I'm pretty sure it's a Windows problem, so I'll just solve both of that computer's problems by installing Linux.

I hope.

The next morning I realized that I actually already had Broadcomm Bluetooth drivers, in the dongle's install CD, so I uninstalled the Bluetooth drivers that were installed, and installed drivers from the disk; or rather, the network drive I had copied them to.

Apparently the old Bluetooth chip doesn't support the new drivers. So I again uninstalled the Bluetooth drivers, disabled the Bluetooth chip, plugged the dongle in, and installed the drivers yet again, rebooted, and...

It was worse than before, as if it had no Bluetooth whatever. A look at the device manager showed why—it only showed the disabled internal chip, and not the dongle. Stupid Windows!

Time for Linux. I went to the Kubuntu site and downloaded the ISO. As it was downloading I scrolled through Facebook and discovered a post from Lulu saying that they had just done a huge site redesign and there may be trouble.

Half of my books seemed to be missing. I wasn't going to be installing Linux today!

A couple of hardcover books were listed as paperback, and with the hardcover's prices. A couple led to 404s. I did a search on Lulu's site for one missing book, searching for its ISBN, and was led to some book by someone else.

Fortunately they were still for sale at Barnes & Noble and Amazon, so I simply changed the “buy” URL on the books’ pages.

By then I had forgotten all about Linux, running across a magazine article about the Roman Plague Emperor, who was a philosopher. “Hmm,” I thought, “I haven’t added any new books to my site in a while”, and a philosopher’s musings about a plague Rome was enduring was pretty timely, so I went to Gutenberg; it should only take a few hours or so to format it for the site.

There was a problem: it was almost unreadable. Darmok at Galadra. It was translated a few hundred years ago, and the language was more archaic and obscure than the King James Bible. And it got worse; each page was littered with archaic words, many of which I needed to look up in more than one dictionary because it was missing from Webster’s and OED. One word Google couldn’t even find. On top of that it appeared that whoever scanned it left all the OCR errors in. There were a lot of words starting sentences that weren’t capitalized, and words that were that shouldn’t have been. And every speck of dirt on the scanned page became a comma, making it sound like William Shatner playing James Kirk, and far less readable; “The koala eats, shoots, and leaves.”

I decided to edit it and make it my own, making the unreadable prose readable, understandable, and if I do it right, maybe a pleasant read. I’ve been working on it all week, and am about halfway through the first pass.

But yesterday I remembered the Bluetooth/plug problem again when it annoyed me trying to find some music among all the commercials every radio station was playing, so I burned the ISO on a DVD and started the Linux installation.

Or thought I was. I couldn’t find the right key to get to the BIOS; I’ve seen F2, F9, F10, and F12. So I looked it up on Google. I changed the boot sequence to start with the DVD and exited. Windows started booting. WTF??

My bad, the DVD tray was open.

When it got to the part where it was ready to write to disk, there were only two options: try Kubuntu, or wipe the drive and install it. This was really unusual. I started using Linux when Mandrake came out a couple of decades ago, installing different distros on different computers, but every single time I could either use the whole disk, or dual boot. I finally figured the hard drive was nearly full.

I shut off the power, opened the DVD drive and rebooted, just to make sure that I hadn't trashed Windows, and it came up all right. So I closed the drive bay and rebooted. Half an hour later when it had only been at the opening Kubuntu screen, it reverted to text mode and displayed an error message that seemed to indicate that it couldn't read the DVD.

Maybe it just got too hot to read, I've seen that before. I hope so, if the DVD has gone bad it will be hard as hell to install Linux, since it will have to be from a thumb drive, and I'm not sure it's possible on this machine; I saw no external drives in the BIOS' drive list.

At any rate I shut it off to let it all cool and decided to watch Star Trek, so I went to "Movies" on the TV, went through to the directory where the movies are stored, and Star Trek was gone.

Damn. Star Wars was there, but not Star Trek. So I got on the computer, since the TV sometimes misses things, and it really was gone. So I plugged in my backup drive, which now has four full-system backups. The most recent backup was missing Star Trek. I finally found it on the oldest backup, started the HP back up since it has a network jack, the Dell only has Wi-fi.

It will take days to copy all those movies and TV shows. So it will be a while before I start the next attempt at getting Linux on the HP.

I completed the backup, shut the HP down to let it cool, and then tried to get it to run Linux from the DVD. It locked up

before it got to the part where it asks if you want to try it or install it, so apparently the DVD is as worn as the headphone jack. Maybe I can find a USB drive with Kubuntu on it already, but I'm not hopeful.

For a week or so I used my phone's Bluetooth to hear KSHE, using the Dell to play OGGs. Not an ideal solution. Then I remembered that I still had the old phone, although it no longer has a carrier. The KSHE app was already installed on it, so I started using it.

In the two months since I replaced it I forgot how often it crashed when it used Bluetooth. So that was out, and went back to using the new phone. Then I thought "wait a minute, I can use the headphone jack." I dug out a stereo RCA cable and couldn't find an adapter.

Digging through the fire drawer; the kitchen drawer with matches, light bulbs, and other assorted fire stuff for an adapter, I found the old Wi-fi dongle I'd searched for and couldn't find. Now I have two I don't need.

But I did find an an adapter and plugged it all up and into wall power, and tried it out.

With the headphone jack it was all bass. It only took a few minutes to come up with a solution; there must be an equalizer app available.

There was. It took a little fiddling to get the sound right, and it's still not quite as good as from bluetooth or the computer, but it will do.

That was written quite some time ago. Since then, the old phone crapped out and I've been using the tablet's bluetooth. Then today I wondered if Windows 10 had fixed Bluetooth? I googled it, and strangely enough, they had. Really unlike Microsoft, I didn't expect that.

So now the Dell notebook feeds KSHE to the stereo with Bluetooth. It's accomplished! But I have two unneeded dongles...

Where's My Picturephone?

Fifty one years ago the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey* brought us the picturephone. Never mind that it had been forecast for forever. But we still don't have one half a century after science fiction said we would have it nineteen years ago.



Yes, there's Skype and the others, but we don't have picture-phones, and it's stupid. Phones all have cameras, screens, and the internet. I shouldn't have to subscribe to something. Every phone has an IP address; its internet "phone number". Why is this even a question? This could be done with open source.

This is especially annoying to me because they could have had this a decade ago, yet they removed half of Springfield rabbit ear users' TV stations for "5G" which, guess what? Still doesn't have the picturephone we were promised... uh...

Can anybody tell me what 5G provides that actually makes up for losing half my TV stations?

Now, I have an antenna tower with an old, rusted, unconnected 300 ohm twin lead antenna. I can afford to replace it with a modern 75 ohm antenna to get the stations back, but many others can't. A renter is stuck with either rabbit ears or the obsolete and stupidly expensive cable, as is someone who owns her house but can't afford an antenna installation.

Why are MY representatives writing laws that favor phone companies over phone customers, over citizens? Over VOTERS?

You can't fix this by being partisan. Vote candidate, not party. Don't be a Democrat or Republican, be an American.



After buying copies of books from my book printer, finding errors to correct, and giving the bad copies to my daughter, who wants them, rather than discarding them I realized I was stupid. It would be a lot cheaper to buy a laser printer.

An inkjet wouldn't work for me. The printer is going to be sitting idle most of the time, and inkjet nozzles clog; I've had several, and all clogged if you didn't use them at least every other day. Plus, the ink dries out in the cartridges. Being a powder, toner has no such problem.

So I went looking at the Staples site, and they badly need a new webmaster. This little four year old laptop only has a gig of memory, and a lot of people have far less. The poor little machine choked. That damned web site took every single one of my billion bytes!

Or rather than firing him, make him design his websites on an old 486. Or even a 386.

So what the hell, I just drove down there; I didn't want to wait for (or pay for) it to be shipped, anyway, I just wanted to see what they had.

Buying it was easy. They had exactly the printer I was looking for; Canon, a name I trusted since we had Canons and other brands at work, wireless networking, and not expensive. They had a huge selection of lasers; it's a very big store. I paid for the printer and sheaf of paper, and man, lasers sure have gotten a lot less expensive. I expected at least \$250 just for the printer, maybe without even toner, but the total including tax and paper was just a little over a hundred.

When I got home, of course I pulled out the manual like I do with every piece of electronics I buy—and it was worse than the “manual” that came with the external hard drive I ranted about here earlier. Cryptic drawings and very little text. At least the hard drive didn't need a manual. All there is is a network port, a USB port, a power socket, and an on/off button. Plug it in and it just works. With the printer, I really needed a manual.

Kids, hieroglyphics are thousands of years out of style and I don't know why you're so drawn to emoticons, but there was an obvious reason for these hieroglyphics: globalization. Far fewer words to be written in three different languages.

I could find nothing better on Canon's web site. So I followed the instructions in the poor excuse for a manual for unpacking it and setting it up, as best as I could.

I couldn't find the paper tray.

I've been printing since 1984 when I bought a small plotter and wrote software to make it into a printer. Afterwards I had ink jets at home until now, and lasers at work. All the lasers were different from each other in various ways, usually the shape of the toner cartridge, but all had a drawer that held the paper no matter what brand of printer.

I couldn't find it. Sighing and muttering, I opened the lid to the big laptop and copied the CD's contents to a thumb drive to install the printer on the smaller notebook. There's no

reason to make two calls to tech support, because an installation screwup is never unexpected when you've been dealing with computers as long as I have.

And why send a CD? Fewer and fewer computers have CD or DVD burners any more. Why not a thumb drive? All computers have USB ports these days, and have had for over a decade.

The installation was trouble-free but still troubling; I didn't think the wi-fi was connecting, as it said to hold the router button until the blue light on the printer stopped flashing. I held the button down until my finger hurt and was about to call tech support, but as I reached for the phone the light stopped flashing and burned steadily.

Maybe it was working, but I'd have to find the paper tray to find out. But it had installed a manual, one I couldn't find. So I plugged the thumb drive back in and searched it visually with a file manager, and found an executable for the manual. Running it took me to an offline web page which wasn't too badly designed, but I would have far preferred a PDF, as I could put that on the little tablet to reference while I was examining the printer in search of where to stick the damned paper, instead of a bulky, clumsy notebook.

I finally found it, and it wasn't a tray, even though that's what the documents called it. I haven't seen anything like it before, and the documentation was very unclear. But I did manage to get paper in it, and sent a page to it, and it worked well.

Meanwhile, I wish Staples would fix their web site, and Canon would fix their documentation.

When did clear, legible documentation go out of style? Hell, the lasers we had at work didn't even need docs. Good thing, too, because IT never left them when they installed crap. Another reason I'm glad I'm retired! Work sucks.

At any rate, a few hours later I printed the cleaned up scans of *The Golden Book of Springfield* so I could check for dirt I missed looking on a screen. I saved it as PDF and printed it

from that. And amazingly, this thing prints duplex! It only took fifteen or twenty minutes or so to print the 329 pages.

I'm happy with it. Man, progress... it just amazes me. But when I went to print from Open Office, the word processor I've used for years, I didn't try sending the print job to the printer, but it looked like Oo won't print duplex.

Then I discovered that they may stop developing Open Office because they couldn't get developers; the developers were all working on Libre Office.

Damn. The last time I tried Lo it didn't have full justification, which was a show stopper when I'm publishing books. I'd tried it because someone said it would write in MS Word format. I was skeptical, and my skepticism was fully warranted. It could write a DOC file, but Word couldn't read it. Plus, of course, the show stopping lack of full justification.

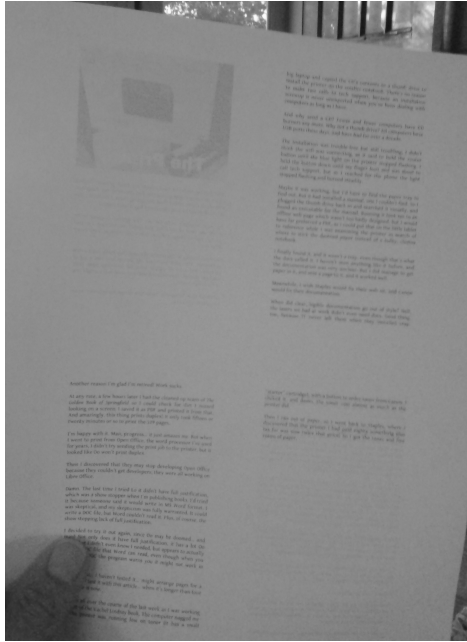
I decided to try it out again, since Oo may be doomed... and man! Not only does it have full justification, it has a lot Oo lacks that I didn't even know I needed. It appears to now actually write a DOC file that Word can read, even though when you save it in DOC the program warns you it might not work in Word.

And it *might*... I haven't tested it... might arrange pages for a booklet. I'll test it with this article... when it's longer than four pages, as it is now.

This was all over the course of the last week as I was working on a PDF of the Vachel Lindsay book. The computer nagged me that the printer was running low on toner (it has a small "starter" cartridge), with a button to order toner from Canon. I clicked it, and damn, the toner cost almost as much as the printer did.

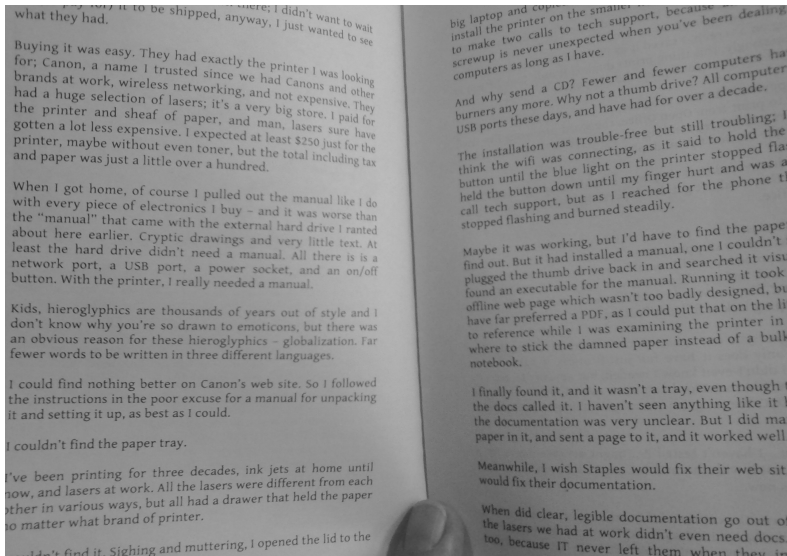
Then I ran out of paper, so I went back to Staples, where I discovered that the printer I had paid eighty something plus tax for was now twice that price! So I got the toner and five reams of paper.

At any rate, I tried to print this as a booklet, and this is what came out:



It's backlit; the picture on the top left and the grayed text on the bottom right are on the other side of the page.

But a little fiddling and yes, it will print booklets. It isn't Libre Office doing it, it's the printer itself! I like this printer.



I've figured it to about a penny per page, and I don't think that's too expensive, considering a page is both sides.

And then I had this document open in Libre Office, tried to insert a graphic (the second one in this article), and it simply didn't insert. Maybe it doesn't like JPG files, I don't yet know. A little googling showed me that I'm not the only one with this problem, and none of the fixes I found fixed it. I have Open Office open now.

And here I was going to uninstall Open Office. I'd better not, I guess. I'll need it if I want to insert a graphic; inserted in Oo they show in Lo. Puzzling.

A week later and I've found that sometimes it will insert a graphic, but only if you go through the menu; using text shortcuts never inserts it. And sometimes it simply doesn't insert the picture, and sometimes it says it doesn't recognize the format when I'd just put the same graphic in another Lo document.

Well, I'm not uninstalling Open Office yet, anyway. Not until Lo solves the graphics show-stopping bug.

I wrote that a few weeks ago, and have been using both. Libre Office has a horrible problem with keyboard shortcuts, and those shortcuts save a LOT of time. But except for its horrible bugs, it's a better word processor than Open Office. So both will remain installed.

It's possible I may uninstall Microsoft Office, depending on how well Lo's spreadsheet works. I haven't even fired it up yet, but Oo's spreadsheet is almost useless.

The above is several months old now. Lo does lack one important thing Oo has: controls to move to the next or previous page. Not good when you're writing books. Also, it still has graphics problems. Often, simply opening a document in Lo removes any graphics.

After sitting idle for a month or so, I needed to print a return label. I'm starting to become wary of buying anything from Amazon. I'd bought a new battery for this laptop a year or two ago, and the battery came from someone other than Amazon, and it was the wrong battery. I got the right battery directly from Acer.

Then I ordered a long throw stapler to make booklets with, and staples for it. The stapler came a week later; no staples. So I bought a box from Walgreen's. A week later, the staples came, again not from Amazon, and they had simply thrown the box of staples in an unprotected envelope. The box was smashed, the rows of staples broken.

Then I ordered a DVD, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. I watched the first six, put the seventh in the DVD player—and it was region coded for the UK! Some company from Florida sent it. WTF is wrong with people? So I needed a return label.

It wouldn't print; it just hung in the print queue until it timed out. After a little digging, I found that the router had assigned a new IP address to it.

So after a lot of googling, I gave up and cringed; I was going to need tech support, which is usually a nightmare. I wind up on the phone talking to someone with an accent so heavy I can barely understand them, if at all, who is ignorant of the product and reading from a checklist.

I found Canon was one of those few companies that actually care about keeping their customers happy. Support was over email, painless, and effective.



I have to say, it's the best printer I've ever owned.

Words

I am convinced that the written word is far more understandable than the spoken word, although I know this isn't true for anyone who suffers from dyslexia. This makes me grit my teeth whenever I see "R" for our, hour, are, or; or "UR" for you're, your, and all the other stupid, lazy shortcuts. I blame texting and Twitter with their 140 character limit.

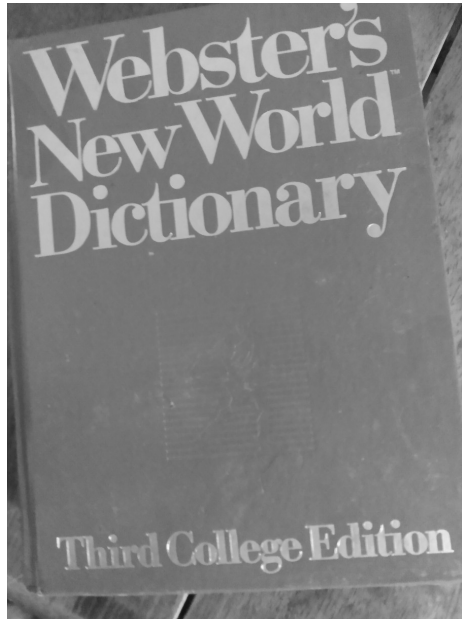
The first hint, to me, was song lyrics; I always get them wrong. I heard *Bad Moon Rising* at least a half

dozen times before I realized he wasn't singing "third bathroom on the right". It was years before I realized Aerosmith was singing "Dude looks like a lady" and not "Do the Black lady".

Did the Beatles sing "let's all get up and dance to a song that was a hit before your mother was born," or "let's all get up and dance to a song—that was a hippie four, your mother was born?" At the end of *Nights in White Satin* did he say "we decide which is right, and which is an illusion" or "we decide which is right, and which isn't illusion" ?

And then there was the controversy over *Woolie Bullie* and *Louie, Louie*.

It is well illustrated by the title of the song *Isle of Debris*. Here are some phrases that simply cannot be understood when spoken, but reading them is a whole other story.



That is, except the last one, which is a perfect illustration of why spelling and punctuation matter. Have someone read it out loud to you.

All right, now, I'll write now:

I knew the new gnu.

Are there pleasure crews on a pleasure cruise?

He pares pairs of pears.

Nick, a teen, is addicted to nicotine.

The fare at the fair isn't fair.

He attacks a tax on tacks?

What does dew do when it's due?

A flyswatter isn't a fly's water.

It rains on the reins of the one who reigns.

Teaching your fan to see is a fantasy.

Jim's gyms are gems.

The hoarse whore says "horses".

Is the Board of Education bored of education?

Extrasensory perception is not extra sensory perception.

Windsor winds are blowing.

Would the Finnish finish the wood finish?

Is it intense in tents?

Two more beers aren't tumor beers.

Did the flea flee?

Wreck creation is not recreation.

Amino acid isn't a mean old acid.

Worcestershire sauce is at worst, a sure sauce.

Most tourists have two wrists.

I've indicated I vindicated it.

Are you thunderstruck by thunders' truck?

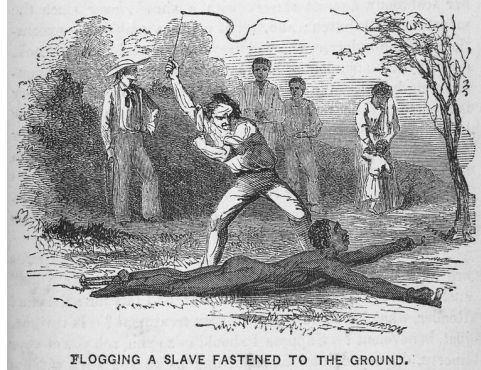
Fun razors can't raise funds.

How long has the world whirled?

I am sofa king, Wee Todd Ed!

The Horrible Reason Most Professional Sports Players Are Black

Most people today, including Blacks, don't really understand how horribly evil slavery was. The poor enslaved people were afforded no more dignity than a horse or a hunting dog, although like dog owners, some slave owners were kind, and some were cruel. Some slaves were even allowed to work for pay for others, when they weren't busy with a task the master had set. But like a dog or horse then, the slave was there to make a profit from.



There are some today who posit that there were White slaves from Ireland. There weren't. When the potato famine hit, many signed contracts to work for only room and board for a set number of years. These people were not slaves; they were not property, nor were they considered animals. If you murdered an indentured servant, you would likely go to prison or the gallows.

A real slave had no more rights than a horse or a dog, which was absolutely no rights at all. Remember that only in the last century was there any organized opposition to cruelty to animals. Slaves were considered subhuman animals. The only penalty for murdering a slave (which wasn't considered murder, since slaves weren't considered human) was the price he paid for the slave. If he killed someone else's slave, a civil court would make him reimburse the slave owner, and a criminal court might possibly fine him for misdemeanor vandalism.

Most Americans were horrified when the Trump administration tore immigrant children from their parents' arms and put them in cages, but what happened to slave children was far worse.

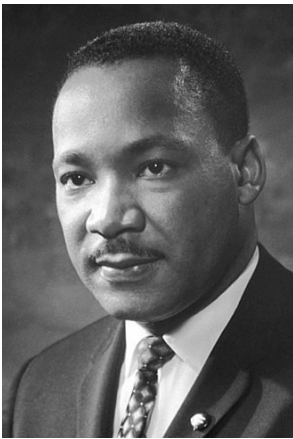
If you were a child of slaves, you were your parents' owner's slave. And your parents, one or even both, could be sold to someone hundreds of miles away. You had no rights. You, yourself, could be sold. But not even this was the worst.

Human beings were bred like dogs for hundreds of years. They were bred for size and strength, like other farm animals, and were bred to be easy to teach. They were bred to be cheap to feed and otherwise maintain, to tolerate extremes of heat and cold. They were bred to be sold.

It was American eugenics. The slaveholders unknowingly, over hundreds of years, bred a superior breed of human. Humans who are mostly larger (although like dogs, some were bred to be small), stronger, needed less food, could stand more heat and cold.

The white supremacists have it backwards, and have since not long after they started collecting slaves from Africa.

You might think "wow, I wish I was Black." That would be incredibly ignorant. Slaves weren't bred for longevity, since once the slave was sold, he no longer mattered to you. You made your filthy profit. Physically, Blacks are more prone to heart disease and other diseases than other races, although it's far more than family traits; institutional racism probably has far more to do with it than genetics.

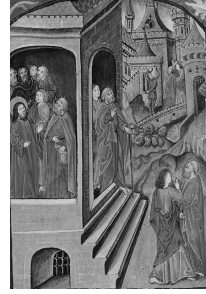


Racism needs to stop. It's stupidity incarnate. Especially stupid are the White people who think they're superior to people who were unknowingly bred to be superior by the inferior people who stupidly bred them to be better people than themselves.

The Passover

There is a very odd “coincidence” this year, one that I think is actually God’s will. Make no mistake, He is very angry with us.

Now, a few unchristian preachers are blaming this plague on homosexuals. That’s not just unchristianly hateful, it’s stupid. God is not going to punish you for a gay’s sins, you have enough sins of your own to repent. Some say abortion, but God is not going to punish you for an operation you never had and never performed.



Judge not, lest ye be judged yourself. Worry about your own sins, not someone else’s.

The coronavirus Covid-19 began in China, where God is against the law, around Hanukkah and Christmas, which came at the same time last year. This does happen occasionally, but is actually uncommon. Before 2019 the last time was 2011.

It made its way to the rest of the world, thanks to rich jetsetters who worship money. If this disease had happened a century ago, it would likely had been confined to China, since there were no jets, and no airplane had ever flown across an ocean.

The first place the plague hit after escaping China was Italy, home of the wealthiest Christian religion in the world, a religion whose leaders had sheltered priests who had done unspeakable things to children.

The first place in the US it hit was Utah, home of the Mormons, who have begun to speak of allowing gay “marriage” despite the Bible saying that homosexual acts (not the homosexuals themselves) are abomination. The Methodists may be next. Yes, I said the plague wasn’t about homosexuality, it was about sin. “Judge not” means tolerate, but tolerance is not acceptance. Accepting what God calls “abomination” is a huge sin in itself.

Apparently the Mormons don't take stock in Jesus' words, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God", since hundreds of Mormons stupidly greeted missionaries at the airport, despite city orders, common sense, and Jesus' words. My Mormon ex-wife is no different, joining hundreds panic shopping at Hy-Vee when the Governor was to say the state was closing, then visiting friends fifty miles away two days later.

My daughters are livid. Their mother is stupid.

The importation of the plague started shortly before Lent. During this time it spread quickly to New York, the holy city of money worshipers. The Bible says the love of money is the root of all evil, and the love of money is idolatry, the worst of sins, the sin that took down the ancient Israelites time and time again. New York, money-worshiping capital of the world, is being hit hard as I write, and has been since before Lent.

On Fat Tuesday revelers spread the virus nationwide, but especially in New Orleans, where Mardi Gras is most heavily partied. They are now being hit hard, I believe because it has ceased to be a religious observance and has become a secular party day and a huge cash cow for many. Perhaps those who put ashes on their foreheads the next day were spared.

I'm not one to observe Lent; I was probably an adult before I knew of it, and heard it was a Catholic thing. I don't think I've ever seen the word "Lent" in the Bible. But this year, everyone is observing Lent.

We gave up the St. Patrick's day parade, and the bars first closed here on March seventeenth and remain closed. I and many others will be giving up our birthday celebrations. High school seniors will be giving up the prom, high school and college graduations will be pushed back. We are all forced to give up socializing.

Some are forced to give up paychecks, their god being taken away forcefully by God. The faithful know that God will not forsake them in this needy time.

The President wants it all to end on Easter, what the Pagans call their fertility celebration. Worshiping the fertility goddess Oester with her symbols the rabbit and the egg has become an American tradition.

We Christians who don't worship money will be thinking of the ancient Jews, whose prophets said that they must have a certain sacrifice, sacrificing a lamb, and putting its blood on the doorposts and lentils and staying indoors so God's plague would spare them. The eldest son of everyone who didn't do this died from disease.

As the Passover is coming, with this biblical plague coming with it, it is good to read your Bible. Isaiah 26:20-21 says "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation (God's indignation) be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain."

Praying to God to stop a plague will do you no good as long as you continue to worship the golden calf. And it might not be a bad idea to hold communion with yourself, making sure there is no yeast in your house and eating unleavened bread with wine, for communion, then painting your doorpost and lentil with a little of the wine.

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matthew 26:26-28.

"This is my blood." The blood of the lamb; the lamb that was sacrificed at the Passover those thousands of years ago, and the lamb, our Christ.

But painting the door frame won't help you if you continue to worship money. This plague is showing us just how powerless money is, against God, at least.

Our Sick Society

Back in the late 1970s when I was a long haired, bearded college student, one day I was accosted by a preacher who was holding the Bible he was getting ready to thump. He told me my long hair was a sin.

“Where does it say that?” I asked. He showed me the passage in Deuteronomy that says a man isn’t supposed to make himself look like a woman. “You’re the sinner, not me,” I informed him. “Long hair on the head is a human trait, but a bald face is a female trait. Where’s your beard?”

There is one passage in the Old Testament where some Jewish soldiers are captured by the Philistines, who shaved their faces and sent them home. They were refused entry until their beards grew back.

This man who was supposed to teach the gospel didn’t understand the gospel he wanted to teach, instead following the words of men, not God.

Satan has poisoned people’s souls. We call a beardless man “clean shaven,” but the shaven face is anything but clean. The shaven face and the short hair came about because of a form of idolatry, the love of money, which the Bible says is the root of all evil.

During the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, short hair and especially a clean-shaven face was the sign of a rich man, a man with so much money he could afford to see a barber daily or to hire one full-time. Some men, like my grandfather, bought a straight razor and strap, learned to use them, and did the job themselves.

In the 1920s the safety razor was invented, and men, all wanting to look prosperous, started shaving their faces. Before, a man might visit a barber once a month or so, and may or may not have been shaved, but certainly had his beard trimmed.

I have heard of teenagers, when they first sprout the first shadow of a mustache, who have been forcibly shaven.

When my first mustache whiskers started to appear, my dad insisted that I shave it off.

All the while, men were socially ostracized for wearing any kind of facial hair; In short, making their faces not look like womens' faces. The underground homosexual communities were secretly thriving, despite the fact that sodomy of any sort was illegal. Of course, the Bible says homosexual acts are an abomination to God, who loves all of us but hates what we do. Church people shunned homosexuals, which was actually sick and evil in itself. Their sins are as bad as the homosexuals they hated and shunned.

But it has struck me that since almost all men were removing a man's most prominent secondary sexual characteristic, perhaps the lack of same is a huge contributor of homosexuality? Would a gay man be attracted to a bearded man, or is he confused by the bald face like a woman sports? Science has shrugged, not bothering to study why gays exist at all, considering that it's anti-evolutionary. Where is the curiosity?

It gets worse. Now they allow men to "marry" each other, despite the fact that marriage is supposed to be about starting a family. Now, since not everyone is Christian (maybe Satan worship allows it) it isn't my business, but it points out just how sick the society has...

No, it's even worse. If I told a psychiatrist I was the emperor Napoleon, he would diagnose me with schizophrenia, but if I told him I was a woman he would say I was normal! That's crazy! I have Y chromosomes. That makes me a male and no amount of surgery can change it. If I thought I was a woman (and I thank God I don't), the shrink should figure out why I had that crazy thought and work to correct it, just as he would if I thought I was Napoleon.

"Gender neutral" is a human construct, completely unnatural and devoid of any objective reality when speaking of humans or animals.

But this is not about sexual perversion. The perverts are few in number compared to everyone, and their sins are no more my business than my sins are theirs. Make no mistake, everyone sins, even the Catholic Pope, who makes his face look like an ugly old woman's every morning.

This is about the sin of idolatry, the love of money.

There are "Christian" churches that teach "the wealth gospel." These churches are wrong! They are teaching idolatry and will lead their congregations straight to hell.

There are other churches whose pastors are only in it for the money, the reason L. Ron Hubbard, the failed science fiction writer, started the Christian Scientists. He told other SF writers, "religion's where the money is."

I refuse to wear a necktie. I call it "Satan's leash". The necktie is a symbol of wealth and power, and men who wear them advertise the fact that they worship money.

It saddens me to see so many clean-shaven men in suits and ties attending a Christian church. Because their true love is money, not our God.

I keep hearing and reading about people claiming that America is a Christian country. If it were, these so-called "Christians" wouldn't be talking about Pagan concepts like Mother Nature and karma, wouldn't have the Pagan for Easter, a Pagan goddess of fertility, and her rabbits and eggs, on Christianity's holiest day.

One of the biggest barometers of our sick society is that we no longer know the difference between sex and love. Having sex is NOT "making love" unless a baby is produced, and even then, sometimes in our evil society even the baby isn't loved. Some of them wind up in dumpsters. Making love? You're supposed to already be in love with someone to have sex with them.

I was in a small online debate with an atheist who opined "Intelligent design? Having a waste dump next to a playground isn't very intelligent!"

I replied “It’s not a playground, you dumb kid, it’s a factory! What better place to put a waste dump?”

Then there’s “the greatest generation,” my uncles’ and my late friend Ralph’s generation. That has stuck in my craw since I was a teenager. It was the generation that spawned the likes of Hirohito, Hitler, Rommel, Stalin, Mao, Mussolini. The generation that waged a world war and exterminated millions of human beings. The generation that invented and used atom bombs. The greatest? I’m sure Satan was pretty proud of them.

Satan is certainly laughing at the evangelicals all voting for a man who tried to take away a war widow’s home so he could build a parking lot, who was found guilty more than once of racial discrimination, who settled a fraud case, who lies multiple times daily, who was married three times and committed adultery on all three wives, who said “If you’re famous you can do anything, even grab ’em by the pussy!”

But I suspect that real Christians are actually rare in America. Christ warned us about wolves in sheep’s clothing.



Cash Drawer Bells

Cash drawer bells, cash drawer bells,
It's black Friday in the city.
Ding, ka-ching,
Hear them ring,
Soon it will be Christmas day.

City sidewalks, busy sidewalks.
Dressed in holiday style,
In the air there's a feeling of cash flow.
Children crying,
People fighting,
All in line after line,
And on every street corner you'll hear:
Cash drawer bells, cash drawer bells,
It's Christmas time in the city
Ding, ka-ching,
Hear them ring
Soon it will be Christmas day.
Strings of streetlights,
Even stop lights,
Blink a bright red and green
As the shoppers rush
Home with their treasures.

Hear the snow crunch,
See the kids rush,
This is Christ's sorry day,
And above all this bustle you'll hear:

Cash drawer bells, cash drawer bells,
It's Christmas time in the city.
Ding, ka-ching,
Hear them ring,
Soon it will be Christmas day.

I'm Dreaming of a Green Christmas

I'm dreaming of a green Christmas,
Just like the ones I used to know,
Where the buds all glisten,
And we all listen
To hear the rock and then we roll.
I'm dreaming of a green Christmas,
With every fatty that I light.
May your eyes be all red like I've seen
And may all your Christmases be green!



Oh, Christmas tree

Oh, Christmas tree, Oh, Christmas tree,
I miss the joys of summer.
Oh, Christmas tree, Oh, Christmas tree,
The winter is a bummer.

The icy streets, the blinding snow
The cold, the flu, where did the leaves all go?

Oh, Christmas tree, Oh, Christmas tree,
I miss the joys of summer.
Oh, Christmas tree, Oh, Christmas tree,
The winter is a bummer.



I'm dreaming of a wet Christmas

I'm dreaming of a wet Christmas,
Just like the ones I used to know.
Where the palm trees glisten,
And children listen,
And there ain't no God damned stupid snow!

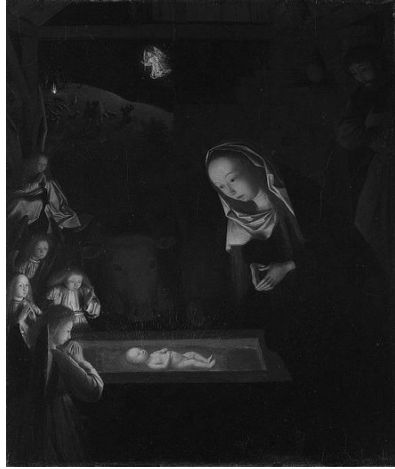
I'm dreaming of a wet Christmas
With every Christmas cookie et.
May your days be all free of sweat,
And may all your Christmases be wet.



War on Christmas?

This time every year there is an outcry over the phrase “Happy Holidays”, and people decry the “war on Christmas”.

This is just silly. Not everyone is Christian, and some Christians refuse to celebrate it because they say it was a pagan holiday called Saturnalia. And a week after Christmas is another holiday, New Year’s.



However, there is a war on Christianity, and it’s been waging for two thousand years. It has been waged by Satan and his army of materialists. They have been fighting God since before the creation of the universe.

Did you ever notice that on the local weather, no matter where in the country you are, when they show the next week’s high and low temperatures, they illustrate Hanukkahs with a menorah, as it should be with a religious holiday. But on Christmas they show Santa or a pagan tree, not a nativity. On Easter they show not a cross, but the pagan fertility symbols eggs and rabbits.

Easter has become not a religious Christian holiday, but secular bullshit devoted to pagan symbols. In fact, “Easter” is a mispronunciation of a pagan fertility god’s name. Why do the weather people always show pagan symbols rather than a Christian cross? Satan was behind it.

This is Satan’s handiwork. So is “black Friday”. Those who worship money have stolen Christians’ second most holy day, turning the day we Christians celebrate into an orgy of commercialism.