

LIBERTY'S TYRANNY

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Published by
Mickey McClain
&
Pickford Studios

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DEDICATION

To Dr. Bruce Manchester, Dr. Sheryl Friedley, Dr. Peter Pober,
Bernis von zur Muehlen & Robert Shafer

True teachers. Life changers.

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WISDOM FROM THE REVEREND

"If you're not a born-again Christian, you're a failure as a human being."

—The Reverend Jerry Falwell

"The Jews are returning to their land of unbelief. They are spiritually blind and desperately in need of their Messiah and Savior."

— Jerry Falwell, "Listen, America!"

ON BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION 1954 SUPREME COURT DECISION:

"If Chief Justice Warren and his associates had known God's word and had desired to do the Lord's will, I am quite confident that the 1954 decision would never have been made ... The facilities should be separate. When God has drawn a line of distinction, we should not attempt to cross that line."

—Jerry Falwell's famous sermon entitled "Segregation or integration: Which?"

"The ACLU is to Christians what the American Nazi party is to Jews."

—Jerry Falwell

"AIDS is the wrath of a just God against homosexuals. To oppose it would be like an Israelite jumping in the Red Sea to save one of Pharaoh's charioteers. ...AIDS is not just God's punishment for homosexuals; it is God's punishment for the society that tolerates homosexuals."

—Jerry Falwell

ON THE CAUSE OF THE SEPTEMBER 11TH, 2001 TERRORIST ATTACKS:

"The pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America. I point the finger in their face and say, 'You helped this happen.'"

—quoted from John F Harris, "God Gave US 'What We Deserve,' Falwell Says," *The Washington Post* (September 14, 2001)

PREFACE

APPOMATTOXINS & LYNCHBURGERS

Like all epic man-made disasters, it seemed like a good idea at the time. A very fine idea. Sick of the Los Angeles rat race, I would move to a small town, a Mayberry if you will, and live out my life in pastoral peace and tranquility.

Regarding Hollywood: everything bad you hear about it these days is true, and all too much of that which was magical and wonderful about the City of Lost Angels is now, well, to coin a phrase, “Gone With The Wind”. Life had become all but impossible to live, behind the Tinsel Curtain. L.A. was crowded and crime-ridden, pretentious and polluted, full of gridlock and rage and drugs and angst. Someone once said of the filthy air there: that’s not smog, it’s the dissipated dreams of millions, settling into the sky and clogging the lungs of all the new people who step off the bus, full of hope, just waiting to be victims of a city that eats people alive.

Oh wait. I said that.

Mostly, the city has kind of sort of gone nuts. As a matter of fact, the entire state is in deep doo doo. They are contemplating chopping it up into a bunch of little, troubled, faux states. And Oregon isn’t much better. As a matter of fact that entire west coast is deeply troubled.

I always Google the news every morning before I write: today, we are still searching for the mysteriously vanished Malaysian Airlines airplane, and buildings have blown up in Harlem, meanwhile the Crimea and Syria remain political infernos, filled with human suffering, with millions of the victims being innocent children.

And what does the Left Coast of Los Estados Unidos have to add to the day’s events? A man called 911 because his cat had trapped his family in the bathroom. And, just in case you’re thinking that the story can’t get any weirder, the police actually answered the call. And, just in case you’re thinking that the story can’t get any weirder, the cat is now in therapy.

Yes, my friends. It was time to leave California, before the gods do the sensible thing and just chuck it into the sea, after one fine flying thunderbolt hurled right at the San Andreas Fault.)

A small town seemed like the ideal solution. I had lived in several major cities, and the advantages had never quite outweighed the negatives. And I had been a Virginian for most of my life. Why not return to the Old Dominion?

Plus, the town I had chosen, Appomattox, was no ordinary small town. Because of

its unique place in history, it was visited by nearly 200,000 tourists a year, so it seemed like the perfect place to launch my new project—although it was, in point of fact, a project I had been working on for a decade and a half: a miniature museum, complete with forty dollhouses, a couple of trains, plus thousands of miniatures crammed into the displays.

Life and a miniature museum in a country hamlet. Living out my days in the town where peace was born. It sounded ideal. It sounded perfect.

Within the first week of my arriving, The Creep Factor reared its ugly head. A fat man with a white bushy beard, known for daily frequenting the Appomattox McDonald's, started bellowing at the top of his lungs about how *"the niggers sure love a good fight!"* and nobody batted an eye. They just kept shoveling their hamburgers into their mouths.

I would go to the Krogers for provisions, and tracts about the anti-Christ started appearing. Some tracts claimed that Obama was the anti-Christ. Some claimed that the Pope was. Some claimed they both were, citing Biblical proof that there are several smaller anti-Christ's who will precede the chief anti-Christ ... proof, to my mind, that Satan is the father of bureaucracy.

The eye candy in front of the house-proud Kroger's changed with the seasons—spring flowers, mulch, pool accessories, barbecue grills, firewood, pumpkins, snow shovels, Christmas trees—but the tracts spewing hate speech never changed, except for that the stacks were refreshed and re-supplied, often. The tracts were always there. Endorsed by the manager, I guess.

My new landlord in Appomattox is full of helpful tips: he warns me that *"the blacks are getting mighty uppity."* On another occasion, he proudly informs me that he's cut off his internet. "Told them to terminate your account?" I asked. *"No, cut it with a garden shears. Too much blasphemy on the web. The government is now claiming there is water on Mars. The government claims this means there might have been life on Mars. This is against the Bible. This is against Genesis. This is blasphemy. The government is trying to kill God. And once that stuff is on the world wide web, you can't get rid of it."*

The local all-Baptist radio station is filled with fire and brimstone: Preacher DJ's regularly rail about how *"all homosexuals are going to burn in hell."* For all eternity, of course. And when the new Matthew Shepherd book comes out, "The Book of Matt", local preachers seize on it; they ridicule Matthew's death, call him a queer and a meth head, and call the circumstances of his death a lie and a cover-up. They roundly mock his martyrdom.

Liberty University professors write papers about gays *"recruiting our youth to the gay way"* and committing *"blood terrorism"* by purposely giving tainted blood and

infusing the national blood supply with AIDS.

Locals post complaints on the internet about ***“all the niggers who play on the basketball team at Liberty University.”*** Yet at the same time, the University revokes the College Democrats’ license, and student review sites on the world wide web complain about the rampant racism at Liberty.

My gay friend Vincent, as I am driving him to work, points to a large black truck that pulls up next to us at a stop light: ***“See that guy?”*** Vincent asks, as the driver gives us the stink-eye. ***“That’s the head of the local Ku Klux Klan. He confronted me one night when I was working swing shift at the all night Huddle House. He asked me if I was gay. He told me what he thought of me...scared me to death.”***

Then, it got creepier still. Linda Wall—local businesswoman and political candidate—goes on television to advocate the kidnapping of children from parents whose lifestyle she thinks is a sin against God. She prays for Hurricane Sandy to smite the state of Vermont, because that is where one particular lesbian on her radar happens to live.

This is after the FBI issues affidavits against Liberty University, and Jerry Falwell’s Thomas Road Baptist Church, charging them with compliance in the infamous Lisa Miller kidnapping case.

And yet, in spite of all of this, in spite of all the Liberty University involvement with RICO violations, the school operates and thrives unscathed, receiving a half billion dollars worth of taxpayer money. More than NPR.

More and more, as my blood grows cold at the thought that this is my new hometown, I am seeing a pattern. This is more than hatespeak oozing out of backwater bumpkins. These thoughts have something darker, and more forceful about them. These thoughts stink of the arrogance of having been validated, corroborated.

Having taught at three different colleges and universities, I decide that it is time to investigate Liberty University a little more closely. First, it had been with an eye toward teaching there.

Now it was with an eye towards having it shut down.

What I learned about Appomattox, Lynchburg, and Liberty eventually made me feel that I had to move the hell out of that town. But it also left me with some unshakeable opinions about Liberty University.

Yes, Bill Maher is right; it is a fake university. Yes, Richard Dawkins, Emeritus, is right, it is ***“an educational disgrace, it is debauching the whole idea of a university, and I would strongly encourage any members of Liberty University who are here to leave and go to a proper university.”***

But it is more than that. You see, the problem with Liberty—unlike most lesser colleges which are sometimes subject to unfair ridicule—is ***not*** what you ***don’t*** learn there. (Pardon my double negative.) The titanic problem with Liberty, my friends, is what you ***DO*** learn there.

Liberty University needs to be shut down. Oh, it won't be. It will probably never be. But it needs to be. Its curriculum is ridiculous, its testing system is perverse, its teachers are brainwashed, and its administration is corrupt. The Liberty University School of Law, if you can imagine it, is being investigated for its part in the international kidnapping plot of a child. Mathew Staver, head of the School of Law, needs to be held accountable for the felonies with which he has been associated for years now. Violation of the RICO act, and all that.

But before I go any further, let me take a few pages to answer to obvious question:

Who am I to make these charges? Who am I to make these demands?

Who am I to write this book? Who, indeed.

Here's who *I know* I am:

PART ONE

DRINKING THE HEMLOCK

CHAPTER ONE

DOCENDO DISCIMUS

“I don't at all like knowing what people say of me behind my back. It makes me far too conceited.”—Oscar Wilde

I was always almost getting fired when I was a teacher. And I knew it, I did it on purpose. I brought it on. I was proud of this, because it meant that I was keeping things edgy in the classroom. The world I created for my students was provocative, confusing, irritating. And I figure that's essential for learning to thrive.

You might say that my flirting with the firing was kind of a Bourgeoisie-urban death wish; after all, who really wants to get fired? Although perhaps saying that I was always almost getting fired is overstating it. But somehow, my superiors always seemed to catch wind of my shenanigans, usually via some disgruntled student, usually a simpering little overachiever who thrived on the predictable and formulaic experiences foisted upon them by their other professors and instructors. Then, some authority figure, some boss of mine, would pop their head in my classroom, or “spontaneously” decide to sit in on one of my classes, and somehow, I always managed to vindicate myself.

Or, to be more accurate, and more humble (?!), my students vindicated me. And my methods. With their performances, their passion, their professionalism. Their chutzpah. It was like “To Sir With Love”, but for the middle class spawn of Yuppies.

Why do I bring all this up?

What you are about to read is a scathing indictment of Liberty University. Liberty University was founded by the Reverend Jerry Falwell, and while I have nothing but admiration for many of the religious learning institutions in this country, I must take extreme exception with Liberty. Fundamentalist dogma suffocates the learning process at Liberty, as you will no doubt see, and to take years of a student's life and tens of thousands of dollars of their money (or the taxpayer's money) under the false pretense that you are giving them a college education could not be more wrong. Or immoral.

Throughout the writing of this book, my detractors have asked me ***“Who the hell am I to write this book?”*** Actually, most of them have not used the word “hell”, as that is an epithet they reserve solely for their vigorous discussions of Revelations and The Rapture, two of their favorite subjects. (I was once counseled by an older and wiser neighbor, when I was bemoaning a lack of funds and an inability to pay the rent on my storage unit which contained the entire contents of my miniature museum, that I should ***“not worry***

about bills anymore. The Rapture will be here within the calendar year."

It's odd. I tried that logic on a few bill collectors, and it did not go over so well.

Nonetheless, ***"Who the hell are you to be attacking Liberty University?"*** was clearly implicit in their inflection. And inflection happens to be a specialty of mine. There was no mistaking their venom.

And so, without further ado, because my attack is acidic, condescending, and ruthless*, I will devote the following mini-chapters to answering that question. Read them, skip them, I don't care. You may want to cut right to my unvarnished ridiculing of these fundamentalist fanatics in the heartland of the Old Dominion, and skip over my admittedly arrogant and lengthy prose CV. But I felt some need to justify a book devoted to vilifying Liberty and its radical religious right.

(*I have taken a close look at the world, and those who populate it, and I would posit that "acidic, condescending, and ruthless" is not only underrated as an approach, but abundantly warranted, in oh so many cases.)

By the way, in case you should find yourself wondering—last I checked, I am not a member of the Democratic Party, or of any other party one would categorize as "liberal".

All that having been said, suffice it to say, I know my way around a classroom.

CHAPTER TWO

THE WHIMSY BEGINS

The reason I was always almost getting fired was the same reason that my students' teaching evaluations of my class were so consistently high. I am not known for my false modesty (ask around, if you don't already believe that, seven pages into this book); my students, with a few exceptions, loved my class, and I am rightly proud of that.

I had been a Speech Communication major, so the courses that I taught as a fledgling teacher were courses like Introduction to Public Speaking, Introduction to Interpersonal Communication, Introduction to Small Group, that sort of thing.

I think that the essence of both the controversy I generated and the success I imparted were inextricably intertwined with the nature of the exercises I assigned.

OPENING NIGHT

You gotta grab 'em.

Here is the truth: Setting the scene.

Except for the few Comm. majors and Journalism students who fancy that this class might be the beginning of a fancy career in politics or broadcast journalism, all of the kids in my class are always dreading it, and hate that they have to be here at all. They are only in those seats because it is a required course. My job is to change that.

So, (not every semester—I didn't want rumors to spread, and for it to become predictable), I would walk into that first night and begin with a traditional lecture format. The usual info, the history of speech and rhetoric, with all the usual suspects: *“Socrates’ Quatrain of Evidence, with its Creditio, Perditio, Logacio, and Typicus ... Plato’s Theory of Cacare et Sterca ... Aristotle’s Book of Mendacium et Iocus ...McDermitt’s Hierarchy of Rhetorical Causes ...Fobicelli’s Folio Speeches on the Perpetuation of the Borgist/Medicial progeny as pertains to the Patronage System ...the Neo-Classicist View of Rhetoric as derived from Latin: Barburrus, Infrunitus, Leviculus, and Laevus-Levus ...The Lincoln-Douglas Debates: three analysis by Hobbs, Krenshaw, and Woolsworth ... the deconstructionism of presidential speeches via the Kippler Disambiguation Approach ...Graphemes, Phonemes and Morphemes, and their impact on modern English ... cross-plotting structure and change in rhetorical by-products ... Post-War Cynicism and its homage to the Romantic Movement of the 19th century ...summary of Diacritical and Paracritical structures in rhetoric ...the impact of the Beat Poets on Democratic debate and speechmaking—*

About now, I would stop abruptly. (Can you see what's coming?) I would always have been talking a notch too fast, forcing the students to scribble frantically as they tried to get it all down; I had made it clear that all of this would be on the first exam. I would be pointedly oblivious to their non-verbal signals that perhaps it might help if I would slow down a tad.

I would allow a beat of silence, then inform them that everything I had just told them was a lie. A big, fat, stinking, ridiculous made-up pack of lies.

And furthermore, the first lesson of this class in Communication is that Everybody Lies. Sooner or later, at some point, about something, Everybody Lies. Class dismissed. Two hours early. Go have fun.

I would leave, confident that I had done right by them, and that it was perhaps the most sensible and useful information they would acquire in four years of college. I wish someone had convinced me of this when I was seventeen. Would have saved me a lot of time, money, embarrassment, and agony.

CHAPTER THREE

OPPOSITE DAY

I felt it essential that my students get to know each other. By the way, I was fortunate enough never to have to teach in those lecture halls packed with hundreds of students, where the student-teacher ratio is Ridiculous-to-One. I would take my two dozen kids (some adults—amazingly, the mean age of the student body when I taught at George Mason was 27 years old), and we would go through the usual garden variety exercises. There had to be some normalcy, after all.

There is the tell-us-a-little-about-yourself with the chairs in a circle thing, there is the give-your-own eulogy approach**, there is the exercise where they bring in a dozen photographs that explain their life, as they talk about why they chose these particular pictures. Better yet, bring a box of objects, like in the beginning of “To Kill a Mockingbird”, and beguile us. And then there is the bucket list: write a list of a dozen things you want to do before you die.

(**Speaking of eulogies and teaching: if you have not read "The Last Lecture" by Randy Pausch, you really owe it to yourself to do so. It leaves a lot of other self-help and new age books in the dust, no pun intended. "Tuesdays With Morrie" falls in the same powerful category.)

But back to my kids all getting to know each other. The above mentioned exercises are old chestnuts, but always effective.

All of this, along with some discussion about what people think about the world they live in today—social and political topics, current events, global issues impacting every single human being—and we were ready.

Time to assign the first debate topics ... with each side of each topic going to the student who *clearly believed in it the least*.

Guys who I had seen get out of pick-ups with gun racks (typical at the Manassas branch of NoVaCoCo) had to argue in favor of gun control. Peaceniks had to argue in favor of gun ownership and Concealed/Carry. Fiercely Christian women with large families had to argue pro-choice. Pro-choice ladies had to argue against abortion. Men in suits who had just come from their business job to a night class had to argue “go green“, and in favor of expanding welfare. Stoners had to advocate workfare. You get the idea. And this is for a big, important grade.

Why torture these poor students? Because they certainly were pissy about it, to be blunt:

1.) It forces you to have an open mind.

2.) It teaches you to work in environments where you staunchly disagree with others, or with your assignment.

3.) It teaches you to fake it. (I can't begin to emphasize how inestimably important this will be in your life, I tell them, almost as important as that first lesson: everybody lies.)

4.) It teaches you—and this is seriously the most important lesson, which seems to be absent from virtually all dialogue in America these days—that the opposition cannot be completely wrong, ridiculous, evil. I never understand this. How so many people in one political party just automatically assume that the entire other half of the country—many of whom many are living educated, sensible, caring, and responsible lives—can just be flat out, 100% wrong. Pick either of the two major political parties and fill in the blank: "*Why do _____ hate America?*" "*Why do _____ hate Americans?*" Those are ridiculous statements. Narrow-minded and ill-conceived, petty and judgmental, inaccurate and dangerous, hateful and useless in advancing public discourse.

Maybe having to argue something from your opposition's point of view might begin to change all that.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHO ARE WE, REALLY?

ANALYSIS OF STEREOTYPES: An in-depth retrospective and examination into pre-conceived conceptualizations and pre-conditioned human templates generated and harbored by those classified as young adults; as manifested in a classroom, laboratory, or other similarly artificially created group scenarios.

The methodology to be employed by this tripartite analysis will be derived in part from the Jungian Theory of Universal Consciousness, and in part from Burke's Dichotomy of the Sublime and Beautiful, with ancillary influences from Gorgias' Sophistic approach as evidenced in his "Defense of Palamedes" and "Encomium of Helen".

It is because of having to come up with titles like the one above that I am happy not to be in Academia any more, writing those obscure little monographs for scholarly journals and quarterlies that only about seventeen people read.

The titles of these excursus have to be lengthy and profound and arduous; you just knew that if your thesis or dissertation didn't have a colon somewhere in the long, rambling inscription, that you were in big trouble, so you always found a way to jam a colon in. Which is appropriate, since so many of these logorrheic disquisitions sound like they come from a colon.

WHO IS THIS STATEMENT?

But I did have a fun exercise that I jammed on my students during those early classes at the beginning of the semester when we were still getting to know each other, and it played on our assumptions and stereotypes that we made about other people, based on knee-jerk first impressions. I made this up myself. (Although I am sure that somewhere else, like at Harvard or Shriners' blow-outs in Vegas, the game already exists, and I just think I invented it.) I think it might be more fun if alcohol was involved, but this is serious stuff. This is college. And we always did just great conducting the Question Game on the straight and narrow.

Each student would write down on a card some juicy tidbit that they wouldn't mind having the rest of the class know about them. The cards would then be gathered by myself, and we would read from them randomly. Students would then have to figure out to whom each confession applied. (Sometimes, if the entire class seemed amenable, we would put money in a kitty, and then have a hierarchy of small cash prizes for the people

most intrepid at guessing correctly the dirt about their peers.) Here are some of the more memorable statements. I swear they are all true:

I have recently been shot in the stomach by my husband.

I am a fireman. For real.

I just got back from my honeymoon last night.

My girlfriend really believes I work for the CIA, but now I love her and I'm uncomfortable with the lie.

I have three balls.

My father is Sam Donaldson.

I had an abortion when I was 13.

I am a retired New York City Police Officer.

I am going to have a baby.

I can walk digitigrade.

I once won a blue ribbon at the state fair for my pie.

I have been convicted of grand theft auto.

I am a virgin, and proud of it.

I used to be a heroin addict.

I have a Pez collection containing five hundred different dispensers. It is the third largest collection in the world.

I was born on an airplane.

I have been to prison.

I masturbated into potato salad once when I had to take something to a party where I hated everybody.

I am a cutter.

I am a millionaire.

I can wiggle my ears, even each independently of each other.

I am recording this conversation.

My grandfather worked with Albert Einstein.

I can juggle.

I own a boa constrictor. And I will be bringing it to class for my first speech.

I just got back from Desert Storm. I killed people.

I am picturing you naked right now.

The assignment was a blast, as you can imagine. It is all rather self-explanatory, if you have an imagination. That's about all I have to say about that.

CHAPTER FIVE

“I KNOW IT WHEN I SEE IT”

"The only things that is obscene is censorship."

—*Craig Bruce*

"Censorship is advertising paid for by the government."

—*Federico Fellini*

I always seemed to be closest to getting fired when I was doing the pornography assignment. The point of this exercise was, once again, to determine definitions, criteria, standards, methods of analysis and evaluation—all elements crucial to any kind of understanding, and to any kind of true communication.

(Why not just avoid controversy, you may already be asking, and rather than debating pornography, instead argue the merits of welfare versus workfare, or the pros and cons of bailouts or billboards, or term limits or tax reform, or food additives or factory farming, or the lottery or lobbying. Simple: most people really don't give a rat's ass about those things. (I mean, we should. Sure. But most of us don't.)

But pornography? Everybody's got an opinion about that. And my job, after all, is to get these kids talking and thinking. (Or preferably, thinking then talking, although the former order of it is more attuned with human nature, in my experience.)

I would bring in a Playboy, a Hustler, some big art books of classical paintings, and a curious book that my best friend Susan Trout and I had found in a chain book store at Tysons Corners Mall. It consisted of black and white photographs of children in playful behaviors, all in various stages of undress. A certain faction of the population would no doubt label it as pornography, but another segment would just as vehemently assert that it merely shows the beauty of kids being kids, of kids at play. Still another segment has gone on record as certifying the book as art photography in its highest form, employing exquisite use of light, shape, texture, and subject, in the oft preferred minimalism of black and white. Most of the parents in the world have probably taken pictures of their kids in similar poses: kids splashing around in a bath, kids running around in their swimming suits or just their underwear, playing with bubbles or running through sprinklers. Children peacefully asleep at night. Children dressing up like mom. Children sneaking a cigarette. Kids skinny-dipping. The closest example from today that I can give is Sally Mann's book "Immediate Family", which is, quite simply, photographs of her children

caught in the act of being children.

Thus armed, with all these visual aids, we would proceed to have a very heated class discussion about which of these various images did or did not constitute pornography. Almost everybody agreed that the "classical art" in the fancy art books was not obscene, and most agreed that the Playboy and the Hustler were obscene, even if Playboy was on a lesser level. (Some guys, of course, held out that the Playboy nudes were art.) The book of the semi-nude children got everybody hotly divided. Some maintained that a three year old in a diaper staring dolefully into the camera was hard core child porn, others said they had taken pictures just like it of their own children.

Then, someone, usually a parent, would make the next obvious point: It is one thing to take these pictures for a parent's own private joy and memory, quite another to show that same picture to the general public, for we know all too well that there are those in that populus who, sadly, will derive some perverted pleasure from a picture like that.

Which raises the question: is it pornography because of how an individual reacts to it? Shouldn't the intention of the creator of the image come into play? After all, most porn mongers are completely clear about the fact that they are making porn—that's why they hide their studios in dark basements, that's why they have to pay any models who are not under duress so much money, that's why their work generates so much money. That's why so many of them drink and do drugs, so that they can live with what they do for a living. So they can sleep at night. Whereas the classical painters and sculptors were not only public and proud, they had patrons, they often worked with the church, they were the celebrities of their day. Nothing subterranean about them and their art.

But wait just a minute. Is that true?

But not so fast—back to the classical art—how come that gets a pass? "***Because it's painted.***" "***Because it's carved.***" "***Because it's really old.***" "***Because it's in a book that says 'art' in the title.***" Those answers were actually floated out, on trial balloons. In response, I countered, "***Then what about the Gabinetto Segreto in Naples, and the notorious secret rooms in the British Museum?***" These contained classical, priceless carvings and paintings, some of which depicted Pan copulating with a goat, for Pete's sake. The Gabinetto Segreto displays phallic oil lamps. The art of the ages, for that matter, is filled with filth and obscenity, as many people would define those terms. Rape, women pleasuring themselves, bestiality, virgin sacrifice. Greek dinnerware shows men penetrating each other in playful rings around the soup tureen, as casually as your grandmother's cream pitcher might show a shepherdess tending to her sheep. The art salvaged from Pompeii shows men with penises half as tall as they were, when fully erect. Artists from every culture and epoch painted and carved fucking and fucking and more fucking, no way around it. And for pure genitalia explicitness, you can't beat Michelangelo's David. David's exquisite junk hangs up there like a bunch of beautiful grapes, and even if Michelangelo may have been gay, any woman in the Galleria dell'

Accademia can't help but hope that David didn't share his creator's sexual proclivities. If The David was on The Bachelor, I'd make an exception to my rule and watch that season.

Don't think for a moment that everybody from the past viewed the art of their time as special and sacred. Dig deep enough, and you will find that classical paintings were part of the onanistic process for both artists and the public alike, and some of the more priggish and powerful were doing everything they could to stop it. (Case in point: The Bonfire of the Vanities. It's more than just a Tom Hanks movie.) They knew this was pornography, pure and simple, even if the artist, the art world, and posterity all would staunchly disagree.

Some examples of classical censorship in action:

Speaking of The David, his naughty bits have caused a stir all over the world, since his original unveiling in 1504. As recently as the twentieth century, at Forest Lawn Memorial Park in California, the penis on a reproduction of Mr. David was masked with a fig leaf from 1939 until 1969; its removal caused complaints. In 1969, a poster of David in a book shop in Australia was seized by the Sydney vice squad. And for decades, a box with a fig leaf was positioned behind the copy of the statue of Davie at London's Victoria and Albert Museum, for any occasion when women were present.

Michelangelo's "Last Judgment" fresco in the Sistine Chapel proved controversial even before its unveiling in 1541. Blaylo de Cesena, the papal master of ceremonies, warned Pope Paul III that its nudes were "better suited to a bathroom or roadside wine shop than to a chapel of the Pope." In 1933, a New York court declared a set of pictures of Michelangelo's fresco obscene.

The Venus De Milo might as well have been a lap dancer, according to a number of censors. In 1853, in Mannheim Germany, she was renamed "Venue the Goddess of Liberty", and she was given a little outfit to wear. Palmolive soap ads using her image were subjected to censors who put dots over her nipples. In Hungary, her image has been repeatedly seized from bookshops and burned. In 1955, in Winona Lake, Indiana, a full-scale reproduction was covered in poison ivy by a puritanical housewife hoping to disguise the statue's nudity. And maybe punish the hussy Venus with a nasty rash on her private parts.

Obviously, one could write an entire book enumerating the instantiations of censorship throughout history, perpetrated upon some of the world's greatest works of art, no less.

So are we starting to question the blanket assumption that all classical art is just that, art, and not obscenity? The only reason that some of these salacious images were painted and carved is that George Eastman hadn't been born yet, and I bet old George had a few racy tintypes that he kept under his pillow for his special alone time.

So much for painting and carving as criteria.

So, if the medium is *not* the message, in this debate, and if the manner in which the

image is conveyed does *not* determine its level of obscenity, couldn't a tasteful Playboy picture, where no actual nipples or other genitalia are displayed, be considered art, and not obscenity? *"Of course it's obscenity!"* shout both genders of students. *"Everybody knows the whole point of that magazine is to use it to—"* and then, depending on the chemistry and dynamics of the class, varying degrees of explicit or vulgar phrases would follow.

You can't say I hadn't gotten my students to open up.

But then, if it is the intention of the creator, not the medium, which determines whether or not it is pornography, then we must go back to calling the book of nude children art, even if it does arouse a sick portion of the population. The artists who took these pictures will tell you that their aim is not to arouse, but to show the beauty of children. Or to awaken awareness about children exploitation, or to show the difference between modern times and Victorian mores. Etcetera. Many of these artists have had their shows raided and shut down, but the artists maintain—and much of the art world believes—that the artists' motives were hardly prurient or lascivious.

At this point, everybody was talking at once. Hardly the apex of decorum for a small group class, but during that stage when you are trying to get students to slime their way out of their shells, this is a triumphant moment. Often, about now, some superior, the head of the department or whatnot, would stop by, alerted by the noise, the bickering, the laughter—or quite often, tipped off by some little weasel during break that Langford's idea of teaching was to show dirty pictures all through class. More than once I myself had to go the principal's office (Department Chair—same difference), and I would explain the assignment with that winning charisma for which I am so famous—when I decide to use it. (Although it's a rare occurrence indeed; I much prefer the private peace of annoying the world writ large and keeping the hoi-polloi at a distance.)

Then, I would get the question:

"Is it true that you are showing your students Playboy Centerfolds?"

"Look, Nits", I would say to Anita last-name-withheld-for-her-privacy, "By the age of eighteen, the average American child will have seen 16,000 simulated murders and 200,000 acts of violence. Hell, ten years ago, half the kids in my class would have been in a foxhole in Vietnam. These kids grew up watching that war on television—the wounded, the dying, the dead, bodies blown apart, executions, children running naked and burning from napalm, in the most graphic display of the reality of war in the history of humankind, and all during the dinner hour. One out of every three adults abuses alcohol during their lifetime, giving these kids Vegas odds that at least one of their parents has a drinking problem. Nearly half of these kids have tried pot. Nearly ten percent of them have tried cocaine. In ten years, that percentage will leap to twenty-five percent. Ten percent of them have been abused by a parent. Most of the finest scientific minds in the world are telling them that if they manage to survive

Global Warming, their children and grandchildren will not But you think if they roam into a Northern Virginia Community College night class and get a peak at a nipple, I've scarred them for life?"

I was always almost getting fired.

My students and I almost always came to the same conclusion at the end of this exercise, regarding definitions, criteria, critical thinking, analysis, and judgment. We had to go along with Supreme Court Justice Stewart Potter: to paraphrase the good judge in his definition of pornography, ***"I have a hard time defining it. But I know it when I see it."***

"Pontius Pilate was the first great censor and Jesus Christ the first great victim of censorship."

—Ben Lindsey

CHAPTER SIX

JUDGMENT DAY

I have saved this example for last of the group ice breakers, because it just might be my personal favorite small group exercise that I conjured up. But even though I mention it last, I generally assigned it right at the beginning of the semester, before people were on to me, as it were.

After dividing the class into their small groups by the random drawing of straws (lest all the overachievers tend to cluster together, or the jocks, or the more senior students—this ruining the random nature of many small groups, and the point of the class), I would, without extensive explanation or further flourish, assign them to "DETERMINE WHO IS THE BEST PERSON IN YOUR GROUP."

Not surprisingly, this brought on a riot of questions and protestations, and demands for elaboration. *"What the hell kind of small group assignment is that?"*, was the general outcry, the unanimous consensus. But I stuck to my guns. People make judgments every day of their life; a large majority of these judgments are rash and inaccurate, cruel and flawed, and clearly made without first discovering the facts. What should be the big deal about this assignment?

Nobody actually walked out—I think because my reputation for fairness and whimsy preceded me—but it made for some mighty surly dynamics, for the beginning parts of those long evening classes.

In the three hours that ensued, several things happened. All of which, by the way, were the precise point of the assignment.

(FALSE) ASSUMPTIONS EMERGED:

1.) The most prominent assumption, of course, and usually the funniest, was the assumption adopted by certain persons (personalities) in the group that the point was "to win". To be voted "The Best Person in the Group". The ensuing behavior on their part always had a distinctly "Honey Boo Boo" feel to it, as though at the end of the evening, a series of diamond festooned crowns on velvet pillows would be produced for the winner in each of the small groups.

2. THE GROUPS WERE SOMEHOW IN COMPETITION WITH EACH OTHER:
As in, a kind of Triple Crown was operating here. First, you won the race to be Best Person in Your Group. Second, your group had won the race to be The Best Deciders of Best People. Thirdly, as a crowning result of achieving victory in races One and Two, you went on to be the Best in Life. Trust me, I've met a lot of upstarts on college

campuses who were just that snarky and competitive. I suppose a lot of people would say that I was one.

There were people in the groups who were actually manifesting these kinds of comments, attitudes, and personalities. These are the kinds of people who go on to be big despots in tiny countries, or Donald Trumps in the making, or beauty queens who somehow parlay that sparkly crown and that perky rack into a position as News Pundit Extraordinaire (and damned hot, with your blonde hair and your tight red suit), who can deliver news stories on the shirtless Putin or the heartless Bashar al-Assad or the ruthless Mahmoud Ahmadinejad without hardly (maybe just a little) flubbing a syllable. Power hungry little snots.

3. Most prevalent of all, though, in addition to the assumptions ... THE ELUSIVE SEARCH FOR A LIST OF CRITERIA TOOK OVER THE GROUP. And now here is the part that I always found amusing. The Group itself—or sometimes the group became fractionalized and split on this—began to take a glass-half-full, glass-half-empty approach to this challenge, meaning that some would try to decide which person in the group had actually *done the most good in their life*, and others would try to decide *who had done the least bad in their life*. Keep in mind that sometimes I taught at community colleges, where the mean age might be as high as 27 years, and trust me, by that age, the fact that there exist bad acts that you have done, to weigh against the good acts that you have done, becomes simply a truth of life.

From this, of course, spun out all the obvious discussions, debates, and conundrums. What of the people who had done bad things, but who had also then done many good things to atone for them? What of the people who had done nothing bad, honestly, they promise, but could come up with not one pro-actively good thing—of significance—that they had done? (Twenty years later, this would become the premise for "Drop Dead Diva", an amusing enough sit-com that provokes both thought and chuckles, after enough Appletinis.)

And hey, what are the definitions of "good" and "bad" anyway? Uh-oh. This is hard. My brain hurts. Teacher, when is break?

There was a hell of a lot of hell raising going on, those nights. (I almost always taught night classes, just one night a week, but they were three grinding hours long. I tried to make them fun for everyone. Or if not fun, at least infuriating enough to keep everybody awake.)

Of course, none of the above was the point of the assignment. That is to say, revealing assumptions was one of the points, but only so that those assumptions could later be rendered as ridiculous as they appeared to be, in hindsight. The true point of the assignment was simply to overcome one of the biggest hurdles in Small Group 101—to get kids talking, and, more importantly, to get personalities to emerge. And, of course, to get them to think analytically: How are we defining our terms? Our criteria? What is our

methodology? How do we keep all of this organized? How do we determine, finally, who IS the best person in our group, and assuming that will be by vote, what kind of vote? Unanimous? Majority? If majority, what kind of majority?

Usually, about halfway through, a percentage of the students—some of whom were really still just kids, while others were adults returning to school—began to get it. The dialogue was flying fast and furious, and personalities were emerging. There were always two or three people in each group who just had to win. And of course there was the person who went into overwhelm because of the flurry of people talking over each other, and hence became what they would no doubt go on to be in life: The Organizer. This person, usually a female for some reason, would whip out pad and pen, take notes, and make lists—she would always hold up her hand because someone was talking too fast; she wanted to get this all down just right. Even shy people felt they needed input into such an important topic—*who is the best person?*—and all voices wanted to be heard. And of course, each group had its token class clown.

I would cheerfully remind them, as we debriefed at the end of the night, of all that we had accomplished, of how far we had come, both as groups and individuals. Personalities and chemistries had emerged, been established, and sometimes morphed. And everybody would remind each other that this was really just a grand parody of something we do every day—judge each other. Judge, judge, judge, even as most of us claim we certainly do not do that.

Anyway, all of these things, all these grand things were accomplished, from struggling to determine "WHO IS THE BEST PERSON IN YOUR GROUP".

This is the point of Intro to Small Group, after all, and that is what the assignment accomplished. Speaking of the Best, when it comes to my classes, they were all my kids, and I was so very proud of them, because I thought that they were, indeed, The Best.

CHAPTER SEVEN

“NEVER TO FORGET”

List after list, study after study, poll after poll all indicate that public speaking is everybody's Number One Fear, so it seemed flat out wrong to teach an Introduction to Public Speaking class without providing the kids with a few fine examples first. But it couldn't be some savvy, slick, Tony Robbins type speaker. That would, more than likely, only intimidate them further. It had to be an ordinary person who had, for some reason, decided that she or he had something extraordinary to say. Only in this way, I figured, could my kids find any real hope or inspiration. After all, these kids—and adults—were terrified.

Well, when it comes to ordinary people having something extraordinary to say, you can't find a more powerful group than Holocaust survivors. This all took place at the tail end of the last century, so there were many Holocaust survivors in the metropolitan area of Washington D.C. who were willing to step up.

It seems almost a disservice to attempt to describe these speeches, except that I feel it would also do them short shrift if I didn't stop and point out that these personal memoirs, each one of them, to a man, to a woman, ran the gamut: they were gritty, they felt real, they were horrible, fascinating, terrifying, emboldening, inspiring, and yes, even funny.

Some of the more horrible stories still haunt me to this day. And why shouldn't they?

The stories of the not-quite-dead from the gas chambers being shoved into the crematoria alive, the stories of Dr. Mengele's torturous experiments, the stories of being eaten alive by rats because you were too weak from hunger to even brush them away. The stories of what happened to children and infants in the camps, these had to be the worst—you know, you've seen Sophie's choice. Taking them by their legs and smashing them into walls, taking a newborn, holding its nose, and dunking it in a bucket of water until it was dead. For me, personally, I think the most jarring story I ever heard took place during one of those mass shootings. Jews were forced to dig their own mass grave, then they were lined up on the edge of the trench and shot. One baby, being clutched in its mother's arms, survived: it crawled towards her breast and tried to nurse, seeking milk. There was none. It slowly starved to death in the trenches, through the long night, while Nazis watched and smoked cigarettes. This from the few who had fled, and watched helplessly from a vantage point in the woods nearby.

And of course, there were the stories of courage, bravery, and inspiration. Whether it was on a large scale, such as the Jewish Resistance and the uprisings, or a small scale,

like people who were so weak that they could barely wave away the flies somehow managing to keep secret diaries of the daily horrors, so that someday the world might know. Or the rows of people who knew full well that they were being marched to their death in the gas chambers, yet nonetheless, with bravado and panache, marched into those gas chambers singing, flummoxing the sadistic Nazi guards. Or the man who was to be hanged, on SS orders, by a fellow inmate. He stood with the noose around his neck, looked at his unwilling "executioner", and said "Thou Shalt Not Kill", and then jumped to his death—so that his friend had one less burden to bear in his soul.

But, unbelievable as it may seem, there was also humor. Lots of it—well, "lots" may be an imprecise and relative term, but in-depth interviews with survivors indicate that there was enough humor to keep them going from one day to the next, and perhaps that is the very definition of "enough". Needless to say, most of it was gallows humor, ranging from scatological to forced to morbid, but survivors say it was their ability to create laughter in the midst of the unthinkably horrific that gave them the will to survive.

There seemed to be four kinds of humor.

First, the jokes:

Two Jews devise a plot to kill Hitler. They study his habits every day, and realize he walks by a certain street corner every morning at the same time. On the day they plan to kill him, Hitler doesn't show. They wait. Hitler doesn't show. They keep waiting. Hitler doesn't show. They wait an hour. No Hitler. Finally one Jew looks at the other and says, "Oh dear, I hope nothing's happened to him."

Alright. It's not Henny Youngman headlining at the Catskills. But it's humor. It's very brave.

The second kind of humor was found in the shows. Most people don't seem aware of the fact that there were frequently staged entertainments, many of them of amazingly high quality, since the tragic fact is that the camps were filled with talented people, brilliant artists of all kinds. Even the S.S. would sit and watch many of the sanctioned entertainments, and there are documented stories of shows which even mocked Hitler. By eyewitness accounts, the S.S. guards laughed and slapped their thighs. In one case, the show kept playing for months, intermittently, until Berlin got wind of it, and then it quietly shut down.

The third kind of humor came in the form of small victories over the enemy. Arnost Lustig, who was a teenager in the camps, and, like so many interred youth, had a bit more bravado than the adults, tells of the time that a guard fell asleep while guarding the commissary, where the good food was stored to feed the camp staff and guards. To hear Arnost tell it, the smell of this food baking was its own unique form of torture for the inmates, who were literally starving to death. Arnost and his buddies fashioned a very long stick by tying smaller sticks together, then attached a primitive hook to the end of it. Together, noiselessly, oh so carefully, they passed the stick over the snoring guard's head,

through the barred windows of the commissary, snagged a cooling meatloaf, and pulled it back out, oh-so-carefully, over the guard's head. They snagged two dozen meatloaves that day. Finally, some people ate meat for the first time in years. And the guard was severely punished, oh, said Arnost, it was beautiful! The guard was sent to the Russian front.

The fourth kind of humor was the humor of imagining: Victor Frankl, the brilliant psychiatrist, survived the camps to have a brilliant career, and write the landmark tome, "Man's Search for Meaning." That is probably one of the most ambitious book titles in the history of publishing since Gutenberg, but if anybody would have an insight into that topic, surely it would be a person who had survived the Holocaust and its death camps. Frankl would daily urge his fellow inmates to imagine a time in the future, when they had survived the camps, and had returned to some vestige of a normal life, and imagine something funny that would transpire in their future. It is the same kind of fantasizing about a future, about a return to home and hearth, family and normalcy, that has helped countless desperate souls to survive unthinkable conditions, from the men of the U.S.S. Indianapolis floating in shark infested waters for five days, to American POWs imprisoned in bamboo cages which were too small for them to even lie down or stand up in.

So yes—as yet another nod to the indomitable nature of the human spirit, there was, indeed, humor in the camps.

And then, lastly, there were even the stories of the occasional kindnesses on the part of the camp guards: the guards that helped Jews get extra food, the guards that found ways to avoid torture orders—even guards that spoke more kindly to the prisoners, and thereby helped the imprisoned Jews retain some of their personal human dignity.

Prisoner Rudolf Brazda, thrown in the camps for his homosexuality, talks of two different guards who saved his life—one by getting Brazda reassigned to a less deadly work detail, the other by helping him hide when exterminations were ordered. Brazda suspected that the help was forthcoming because these guards, themselves, may have been gay.

We all know the true story of Schindler's List, but few know the story of Anton Schmid, an average man with a radio shop in Vienna, Austria who was forced to become a guard for the Germans after the Anschluss. He helped save 250 Jews by sneaking food, hiding them, and helping them forge papers. Although he was executed for his efforts, he is considered a hero by history.

And there are many, many such stories of personal risk and sacrifice, taken by Jews and non-Jews, Germans and other ethnicities, so that the human toll of the Holocaust might be just a little lessened, in the great scheme of things. Seek these stories out, if you are feeling sorry for yourself, or pessimistic about life in general.

And as far as the kindnesses of Nazi guards is concerned, although such acts were few and far between, it is crucial to remember them, so that we might understand that

even the Nazi guards were human beings, and some of them simply could not be dehumanized by the Nazi system to the point where they took relish in the Final Solution. If we begin to believe that—in the dehumanization of all guards, or of all soldiers, or of all Germans—then we run the risk of going down the same slippery slope that brought about the creation of the death camps in the first place ...that is how one speaker explained it.

I have made a great many mistakes in my life, but seeking out these proud and strong people, and having them speak in my class, to my students—whom I confess I cared for very deeply—this is one thing I can look back on, and know I got right.

It meant everything to me when I would look out at the kids and see, in that other dimension, the light bulb go on over their heads: you do not need to be Tony Robbins or Donald Trump or Suzie Orman or anything like them to stand up and give a speech that makes a difference. You just have to talk about something you care about desperately. And that is not as hard as you think.

It wouldn't be right though, ending this chapter with words of my own. Few people can speak about life as can survivors of the Holocaust—or of any genocide, for that matter. Perhaps because these people, having come so close to death, have a more profound understanding of life than most of us will ever attain.

I believe that the most powerful advice, given the times we live in (so crass, so superficial, so selfish, it seems) comes from Victor Frankl.

And so I leave you with this:

"Again and again I admonish my students both in America and Europe: Don't aim at success—the more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended side-effect of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the by-product of one's surrender to a person other than oneself. Happiness must happen, and the same holds for success: you have to let it happen by not caring about it. I want you to listen to what your conscience commands you to do and go on to carry it out to the best of your knowledge. Then you will live to see that in the long run—in the long run, I say—success will follow you precisely because you had

CHAPTER EIGHT

FLAT TIRES AND WONDER BRAS

There is a myth that apparently everybody in the world believes but me. Happily for me, I am right and the rest of the world is wrong. I realize that under normal circumstances, such a statement would be a fine basis for, and compelling evidence of, some kind of pathology: Narcissism gone rampant, megalomania, sociopathology, psychopathology, delusional behavior.

But not this time. Hear me out:

The myth that everybody believes, and which is touted in study after poll after finding after list, is this:

PUBLIC SPEAKING IS THE SINGLE GREATEST FEAR A HUMAN BEING CAN FACE.

There is even a scientific term for it. Glossophobia.

Oh yes, I will concede that it would *appear* to be true, from all the studies and data. And from asking anybody who is anticipating speaking in public, it would appear that they are terrified of public speaking.

Bullroar.

Think about it. *Almost everybody on the planet runs around running their mouth off in public all the time.* You can't swing a dead cat in a public place (although I am sure that very few people, only maybe Satanists, spend much time swinging dead cats, and then it's in the privacy of their own homes), without hearing someone, a stranger, friend, neighbor, colleague, blabbing, rambling, jawing, nattering, *speaking* on and on about something that they are an authority upon—at least they imagine themselves to be at that moment.

And remember, this *speaking* is taking place in *public*.

It is in *public* that they are *speaking*. And very loudly, sometimes, and they sure sound sure of themselves.

You could be in line at the store or a bank, you can be waiting for your to-go order at the restaurant, you can be on a bike at the gym, you can be catching up on your tan at the beach, you can be imprisoned on a bus having to sit next to that blue collar expert on Middle Eastern affairs until finally the bus arrives at your stop and you can flee from that hell ...you can be sitting at a jolly public event enjoying a picnic or a parade or a car show, and trust me, just try to tell me I'm wrong, tell me this isn't the truth, exactly the way it is ... the minute you step your foot out the door of your house, it seems one is

surrounded by a teeming horde of humanity that has absolutely no qualms, compunctions, reservations, rules, modesty, hesitancy—or FEAR of speaking it up in public.

The one thing that the experts maintain we are all so afraid of, I maintain we cannot *escape*:

People speaking in public.

And it's not just people with whom we have a comfort level, either, not just family, friends, our peeps from work. It could be someone you have never seen before. Trust me, if you have to sit at that airport gate for the next two hours because it's crucial that you don't miss your flight, I PROMISE you that cruel fate will visit you with one of the millions, nay billions of cloned Del Griffith's that are roaming the planet with a bag of Funyons in one hand, dragging an oversized steamer trunk in the other, and each one of them is absolutely convinced that you are fascinated by what it is they have to say.

Get my point? Do I sound as crazed, as pathological, as I did when I started out this chapter about teaching public speaking?

THE PROBLEM, you see, is subtler than that. Yes, most of us have a humongous fear of public speaking, but it's not really the simple act of public speaking that terrifies us. What terrifies us are the **three bugaboos** that most of us never expect or consider when we open our big fat yaps to start mouthing off in the marketplace:

- 1.) This time, what we are saying actually matters. The stakes are high.
- 2.) This time, people are actually listening.
- 3.) This one is my secret. I can't tell you everything, that would render me useless, and subject to assassination.

Let me clarify. People aren't terrified of speaking in public. In fact, most people, although they would never admit it, are so in love with the sound of their own voice, and more importantly, their own opinions, that they can't wait to speak (even to strangers) in public. They relish it, it's part of their daily routine, their *joi d' vivre*.

The kind of terror that the experts are talking about, the kind known as Glossophobia, only occurs when all of a sudden, you have been assigned by some aspect of fate to talk about some particular subject, and ***all eyes will be on you***. The fact that this terrifies us, and that all other kinds of public speaking do not terrify us, is both chilling and revelatory: oh, we're happy to natter on ***if*** we figure nobody is really paying attention. ***If*** what we are saying will have no real impact on the world. ***If*** we will never really be held accountable down the road for what we say. We're just intruding on the world's peaceful silence for the fun of it. But when something hangs upon what we are saying—a grade, a promotion, a policy, an election, sales, the salvation of a soul, a speeding ticket, a verdict, custody of a child, innocence or guilt of a human being, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera—then, the nerves hit.

And when we know people are listening, that's also when the nerves hit. After all, most of us know that when we walk out our front door, and open our mouth on and off

over the course of the day, nobody is really paying attention. If you don't believe me, try telling the truth the next time a clerk or an 800 operator, or even a neighbor or the person one cubicle over casually asks, "How are you?"

Give them the real answer, and one of two things will happen: he/she will either be (mildly) shocked, and not quite know how to react. Or two: they will find it liberating. **"Ah, we're telling the truth today, we are actually answering the most clichéd question in the world honestly,"** is the nonverbal subtext, and suddenly **they** start opening up about the kind of day they are having. They seem to find it therapeutic and cathartic, to be able to get it off their chest, to vent, to unload.

Employees at any Wal-Mart seem particularly susceptible to this, in an endearing way. I am assuming that they are assuming that the eye-in-the-sky can't lip-read, because if you approach a Wal-Mart clerk correctly, and ask them with genuine concern just how their day is going, they will go off on a therapy session-like monologue as they scan your monthly provisions that make you feel like a combination of Freud, Jung, Kinsey and that brilliant psychiatrist Hannibal Lecter combined.

Here is a little exercise for you, if you feel like the whimsy of it—although it requires a bit of discipline, so be forewarned. For one week, don't initiate conversation or respond unless it feels relatively significant, and make absolutely sure that your answer, however lengthy or succinct, is honest. It is a fascinating exercise in human communication. Oh, your relationships and your job and maybe even certain things in your physical environment may not survive it, but hey, that's not my problem.

All of the above prelude is my way of telling you how I got kids to break cherry in the world of public speaking. Knowing as I do (having dragged my ass around this pebble of a planet for several decades), that **everybody** has something which they are passionate about, I would spend the first couple of class sessions divining just what that was, and THAT was what they were to give their first public speech on. (Pardon me ending my sentence with a preposition. I'm on a Joycean role here.)

I would have to confess that one of my favorite examples of this was a guy who was a young mechanic at a local garage. Skinny with long hair, and perennially smelling—albeit subtly—of weed, he looked about as much like a Public Speaker as I look like Our Lady of Fatima.

But he had the one thing that all truly successful public speakers must have: a passion for his subject. He had a passionate hatred for Fix-a-Flat. He felt this hatred because a friend of his had been terribly maimed from a tire filled with Fix-a-Flat exploding in his garage. You see, back in the day, Fix-a-Flat and products like it were made with gasses such as butane and propane, which are, needless to say, highly flammable and explosive. Usually, a tire brought into a garage would be fixed by reaming out the puncture hole with a barbed probe; the threat was that a spark created as the probe contacted the steel cord in the tire would ignite the flammable vapor present from the

Fix-a-Flat and cause an explosion. Many tragic accidents came out of this.

(In defense of Fix-a-Flat, they have changed their formula, and claim it is completely safe to use; this is, however, the reason you should never buy no-name brands off the boat from China at the 99 Cents Store. A trot over to Google Images will confirm this grisly truth, but while you are browsing, don't miss out on that Darwin Awards nominee, a woman who allowed herself—her bootie, to be specific—to be injected with Fix-a-Flat, because her unlicensed plastic surgeon was too cheap to spring for Botox.)

But back when I was teaching, this was a very real danger. And this shy, surly, mopey young mechanic came alive on the topic. (Why was this character in college at all? His dad had decided that a business degree would help when it was time for him to take over the family business. And I couldn't help but admire the kid.) Anyway, when the time came for him to give his speech, he stood up in the middle of the classroom. He was trying so hard. He was wearing this skinny tie, and this was during the early eighties, when ties were ridiculously wide, by the way. It looked old, like it had been tied and untied about a thousand times, and it had a shine about it, not from the fabric but from use, as some cheap pants acquire. I think it was brown. It might have been gold at one time. It looked like a tie that a proud World War II vet might have worn on job interviews after making the very best use of his G.I. Bill College Voucher. It was all very Willy Loman.

It was a night class, you remember, so it was dark outside, save the streetlights shining on the pavement. He led us all outside into the parking lot, very somberly, as though he needed witnesses to a hit and run or something.

Then—I don't know if this was some Chippendale-esque nod to grabbing our attention, especially that of the ladies, or maybe he just realized the ludicrousness of wearing a white short sleeve shirt and necktie for what was about to happen, but suddenly he yanks at the tie, pulls it off, unbuttons his shirt, whips that off too, and so he is standing there in his t-shirt. I would be omitting an important visual if I didn't admit that he had some nice muscles on him.

Anyway, after a two minute screed about the horrors of Fix-a-Flat and producing some amazingly grisly pictures of his maimed friend, he proceeded to demonstrate to everybody—and he wanted the flibbertigibbet girls to pay particular attention—how to change a tire. There is no excuse for Fix-a-Flat! There is no excuse for Fix-a-Flat! There is no excuse for Fix-a-Flat! This mantra was to his oratory what "*Lass' sie nach Berlin kommen*" was to Kennedy's famous *Ich bin ein Berliner* Cold War speech delivered in Germany, but meant for Moscow. And trust me, this kid was as committed to fighting the dangers of Fix-a-Flat as Kennedy was committed to fighting the spread of Communism. (And no, Kennedy did not screw up and call himself a jelly donut. Urban myth.)

Anyway, he made several girls go through the routine after he had demonstrated it, just to make sure everybody got it, and when he finally finished, there was a big round of

applause. He positively glowed. He went way overtime, and while some of the students seemed relieved to have their speeches postponed till the next week, their happiness could not touch his elation at having hit it out of the park. In the weeks that followed, whether he talked about gun control or solar energy, he did it standing tall and proud, without a quaver in his voice. Damn, I was proud of him. And as for me, the teacher, I fix broken kids, baby, I am your handyman. As for him, he was proud of having fixed himself: *"Ich bin der Mechanize."*

And the semester went on like that, in that fashion. One zaftig girl, insecure with big glasses, had a secret and profound disgust for how so many women seemed to pick the wrong bra for themselves. Wrong cup size, wrong construction, wrong support mechanisms. She worked at Victoria's Secret, and her speech consisted of something that the world needs more than one might initially imagine: tutoring about how to buy a bra that properly supports you. *"So often, with these bigger passengers, they bought a seat in coach when they just should have sprung for first class."* Strangely enough, even though most men do not wear brassieres, they were equally rapt.

One girl made the class a Fregan feast, and almost everybody indulged. I will not elaborate here, as I am writing a book about being a Fregan myself, to be published in the near future.

One guy who taught a course in Women's Self Defense taught the females in the class some new moves. He had instructed them a week earlier that if they wanted to participate, come wearing sweats and be ready to be bold. Mats were laid out, and the guys helped in the mock attacks.

One pretty little Latina girl, nervous about talking in class because she knew her English was not up to par, could speak volumes with her body. She taught us to Salsa, Samba, Rumba, and Cha Cha.

One guy who we couldn't help but notice was painfully shy also turned out to be amazingly brave: he was a fireman, and had carried no less than seventeen men, women, and children out of burning buildings, along with four cats and six dogs. His demonstration speech consisted of him showing all the parts of a fireman's gear—much more complex than I would have guessed— and then he showed us how quickly he could suit up in case of a fire alarm, while we held a stopwatch to him.

We were shown how to ride a horse, train a dog, line dance, juggle, make marionettes, and grow beautiful crystals from simple household chemicals. We learned how to make our own kaleidoscopes and lava lamps, pop-up books and stained glass. We became masters of tie-dye. We discovered the secret of how to make our own beer, make our own wine, and do magic tricks. A re-enactor and a belly dancer both shared their talents. We learned how to do yoga, taxidermy, and origami (it's far more amazing than you think). We became experts in making kites, balloon animals, and fashioning musical instruments out of vegetables. Yo Yo Man, eat your heart out.

Fueled by their passions for these odd hobbies, private fascinations, noble vocations, and amazing avocations, my students were simply wonderful. Almost all of them could not believe how well these initial speeches went over, and how much easier it was than they thought it was going to be. But why should it not have been a breeze and a triumph? After all, this was a pet subject for them, a topic that they knew and loved oh so well.

I was proud of them—and yes, of myself as well. By the end of the semester, they were all quite amazing, each in their own way. All in all, it's a damn shame that fate and corruption conspired to keep me out of the classroom forever.

CHAPTER NINE

"TO AN ATHLETE DYING YOUNG"

I know my way around a classroom. I know that I know, because I understand that there are times when you have to stop being the Bohemian grad ass instructor, the cool Sutherland teacher from "Animal House", the teach' who is everybody's pal—and you have to start being the bastard. The drill sergeant. The prick.

I was up to it: I gave low grades. I insisted on do-overs. I failed people. I turned them in for cheating. And they got convicted.

I remember one particularly thorny semester. I was done with all of my PhD course work. I had done well. I had quite nearly a 4.0. Annoying little overachiever that I have always been, I had taken more than enough credits to graduate. I love being in school. I could happily be "a lifer". Myself and my seemingly congenial committee had been through four drafts of my dissertation, "Resignations in Protest", so it was all but rubber-stamped. The orals, as is often the case in the liberal arts, should have been something of a rubber stamp as well.*** Life was good.

***I know some may disagree with this. But at the time, at the University of Maryland, if you had hashed through years of your Masters (which I had gotten at The American University in Washington D.C.) and then a doctoral program, followed the protocols, and dutifully rewrote and revised whatever they told you, whenever they told you, it was usually a matter of course that you would finally be awarded your doctorate. The precious PhD.

I was teaching some intro courses for the speech department, to whittle the tally off of my giant tuition bill, and I will never forget the day that two gigantic black kids strode into my class. Man, these guys were huge. I figured they had to be part of the Maryland Terrapins, and it turned out I was right. No big deal. I loved teaching. Everybody and anybody. All kinds of students provided all kinds of challenges, and often it seemed to me that I learned more from them than they did from their teacher.

I remember one jock in particular, a football player named Aziz Abdur-Ra'oof, who came to me at the beginning of that same semester and told me that he knew being a professional athlete was a brutal career which could be all too short, and he wanted to get all he could out of this speech class, so that he could have life after football. Because Aziz was a great guy, and a dedicated student, he got both: a pro-ball career with the Kansas City Chiefs, then he won a prestigious appointment to the post of Director of Student Welfare and Career Development at the University of Maryland. I remember

during that semester, he received some razzing about losing his shoe while on the field, during a game with Clemson. But seriously, this was a great kid. This is how it's done.

But back to the other two Terrapins.

Sometimes, when I am blue and feeling powerless in the face of a big evil world, I like to think that I was personally responsible for toppling a Monolithic and Corrupt Empire called the Lefty Driesel Athletic Department.

What is so very cool about this fantasy is that a.) It is true.

b.) And if I happen to be a whit wrong, and it is not *entirely* true, then I know it to be *mostly* true.

It happened like this:

1.) These two tall, handsome ball players who strode into my class that first day of semester? These guys happened to be named Tony Massenburg and Len Bias.

2.) They never came to class. (Actually, that is not entirely true. In a class that met Monday-Wednesday-Friday, three times a week, meaning about 48 class meetings per semester; they each came to class about three times. Total.)

3.) When I received in my teacher's IN box a couple of evaluation forms, requesting a summary of how they were doing in the class, I wrote "F" in large red letters across both of their forms, explaining that they had never come to class except for that first day.

4.) They both immediately showed up for the next class, along with two bright kids, white sidekicks, who, as it turns out, were their tutors.

5.) Within days, both students—Bias and Massenburg—turned in papers that sounded like acceptance speeches by Pulitzer Prize Winners in Journalism.

6.) I grew suspicious.

6b.) Let's be real. There was no practical way to bust them on this. Oh, sure, I could have cornered both of them, and cross examined them about "their" papers—the ideas they put forth, the vocabulary they used, etcetera. (In fact, that same semester, there was a psych professor who sprang a pop quiz on his whole class, the entire purpose of which was to use the big words that each of his power athlete students had used in "their" papers. All the athletes got all the words wrong. Of course.) But me, I had a back-up plan. There were some in-class essay exams coming up in my class, and there was no way that they could fake those. And as for the group exercises—well, if the athletes didn't show up to participate in them, they didn't show. The "F's" would hold. It's not that I wanted to fail these kids. In fact I hated it. That meant, by implication, that I had failed them. It's just that the papers which were turned in, allegedly written by the athletes, were insultingly transparent. And *never* come to class? I mean, really.

Then, things got more interesting. Not that I needed this to sway my plan, but other

students began to approach to me, wanting to talk privately, wanting to know if I was going to pass these kids with their tutor-written papers and their perpetual absences. I remember one kid distinctly. He had the bad skin and perennially greasy hair that only comes from working in a fast food restaurant twenty, thirty, forty hours a week. I know because I was that kid once. It seems that no matter how much you bathe, you can never get the grease from the fryer out of your hair or your pores. No matter how hard you scrub, you always reek of that distinctive stench that only wafts from one sordid source—the dumpster of a fast food restaurant. It smells like nothing else in the world.

I knew this kid was killing himself, working full time and going to school full time. And he had watched, over the semesters, as all the tall, beautiful athletes strode around campus, but rarely into class, driving scholarship sports cars, living large, being treated like celebrities, and never being held accountable. ***"You aren't going to pass those two guys just because they're on the team, are you?"*** he asked me. I will never forget that kid's eyes. It was the look of a kid who knew, just knew, that life was full of injustices, and that he was usually going to be on the wrong end of them.

7. Mid-Semester came, and I turned in more "F"s, to reflect the continued absences from class of Len and Tony. Lefty had even stooped to sending their tutors to my class, in lieu of the students, to take notes, can you imagine the nerve?

8. Then, it got creepy. Seriously. After class, I would be accosted by these creatures, following me down the halls, out to my car. I was never clear if they were athletes or tutors; what was made clear is that if these two basketball players had "F's" coming out of my class, it was jeopardizing the ability of these two athletes to continue playing. They had to maintain a certain GPA, they couldn't be flunking a class, or they couldn't play. ***I*** was threatening the whole team. ***I*** was going to cost Maryland the Championship. Clearly, ***I*** was the problem.

And all of this, by the way, meant Maryland losing the chubby bucks. I cannot, in all honesty, say that they threatened me with anything as awful as physical violence. They just kept saying how much it would mean to the school if I could just give the boys some passing grades, and how that would be good for everybody, good for all of us. Them and me. The conversation always went the same way. I said they needed to come to class. They asked couldn't I give the boys a break? What kind of a break, I asked? I was willing to work around the game schedules, whatever they needed. But still, the two athletes were no shows.

9. I start getting weird hang up calls at night.

10. It's decision time: I hold out and give Len a failing grade. I swear to God, this isn't personal. How could it be, I never knew the kid. From the few times he came to class, he did seem like a hell of a nice and charismatic guy. But he just never came to even one tenth of the total classes that semester.

11. Then, it happened. Tony Massenburg did a really boneheaded thing. Even more

boneheaded than having a Pulitzer Prize level paper turned in on his behalf. Even more boneheaded than cheating on a multiple choice question. He copied verbatim the essay answer of the honor student sitting next to him. Cripes.

Of course, I had no choice. I turned him in. He was found guilty and narrowly avoided total expulsion, but he was benched from the team for a year. With Len graduating, Massenburg had been the team's great hope. I was a pariah, to say the least.

12. THE TRAGEDY. Within a couple of weeks, Len Bias—considered by so many people to be the most talented and promising college hoops player of all time—was dead of a cocaine overdose. And this just hours after he was riding high on his triumphant signing with the Boston Celtics; he was nothing less than the second overall pick of the 1986 NBA draft. He was a god to his fans. He was wearing the Laurel on his head, and Reeboks on his feet, and from the way he could dunk, it would seem those Reeboks surely had wings. He had just signed a 1.6 million dollar contract with the famed shoe company, and he announced that his first plans with the money were to buy his mother her long overdue Mercedes. But, upon returning to D.C. from Boston, he partied a little too hard. *Sic gloria transit mundi*.

13. Within a couple of days of that, I received a letter asking me to remove myself from the graduate program. They had determined that I had flunked out.

THE FALLOUT

But with all of these tragic endings (Lenny's death tore us all up; he was so young and promising), there was also a beginning. The beginning of questions, of a search for answers, and of an excoriating investigation by the authorities.

Wendy Whittemore, the basketball team's academic counselor, resigned her post over "philosophical differences" with Lefty. Perhaps the kind of philosophical differences that Wendy had were decisions like the one Lefty made on the night of Len Bias's death: Lefty called Len Bias's roommate in the middle of the night, and told him to make sure that all drug paraphernalia was removed from the same room where Len Bias had overdosed just minutes earlier.

Lefty Driesel knew damn well that his players were on coke, and if that made them run faster, jump higher, and score into the stratosphere, then so be it. Swapping urine samples for drug tests was a joke, it was so easy, and no athletes were held accountable for anything, as long as they got the ball through the hoops, and continued to rake in the revenue. (Never has there been a coach more polar opposite to the Wizard of Westwood than Lefty Driesel.)

Lefty Driesel treated his black players, all his players, like—like plantation workers, before the war. You know the word I am thinking of, but it is not a word I use.

Here it is: all you have to do, if you're a jock, in order to have a half-way decent life

after college, is get a C- average as a physical education major.

But it was common knowledge—and this is born out by statistics—that Lefty didn't give a good goddam if his boys graduated. Year after year, kids used up their eligibility without graduating. The practical reality and harsh translation is this: they had played the allowed four years of ball, but had no degree to show for it. Even though they could have lowered their sites to being phys ed majors, and gotten through with the help of a legitimate tutor, and still have gotten their degree scraping by with a "C-" average, Lefty cared so little for his players that to hell with them, he didn't even see to it that they accomplished something as minimal and manageable as that. What happened to their futures after they had finished winning for the Terrapins, Lefty just didn't care.

Len Bias, for example, was a full twenty one credits short of his graduation requirements at the time that he used up his eligibility.

That means that these poor exploited kids, superstars for a brief and shining moment, won't even be able to get a job teaching high school ball after college.

They can't even be Ken Tanaka.

It was a sad and confusing time in my life. Not very much bad had happened to me up to that point. But let's not forget, it was a much sadder time for the parents of Len Bias.

Imagine being Len's Bias's dad. In a scene so wrought with emotion that it seems like something out of a movie, Lenny's father was beyond grief, pacing back and forth at the hospital, crying and calling out ***"Not my son, not my boy!"***

And as if the entire story is not tragic enough, what many do not know is that Lenny's brother was shot just a few years later. A good son, without a troubled history, he was caught up in a jewelry store altercation. He had done nothing wrong. It wasn't gang related, it wasn't a robbery. The jealous husband of a clerk felt sure that Jay Bias was flirting with his wife, and was angry enough to ambush Jay in the parking lot and put a bullet in his brain.

James Bias, the father of Lenny and Jay, has reacted to all of this tragedy in the most pro-active and positive way I can imagine: he has dedicated himself to speaking out for stricter hand gun laws.

Imagine being Lenny's mom. Amazingly, Lonise Bias has spent her life making the best out of an unfathomable nightmare, traveling the country, talking to schools and communities about staying off drugs, and about striving for excellence, as did Lenny on the ball court ... and about maintaining one's faith in God, no matter what. I called her on the phone, once, and she told me that she thought Lenny's life had come to mean as much in death as it would have if he had lived. Surely she is living testament to that; her

strength and her courage stand as inspiration to anybody who hears her story. Who hears her speak.

I can never forget Lenny. Oddly enough, our birthdays are less than one day apart.

I remember the denouement to this story so very vividly: I was surrounded by the Len Bias tragedy for a few days after it happened. One afternoon, just to escape—I needed desperately to escape all this—and so I went alone to a matinee. The movie "Out of Africa" was playing. Imagine how stunned I was when it got to the end of the movie, and Meryl Streep, as only she can, reads this poem over the grave of her dear lost beloved:

To An Athlete Dying Young
The time you won your town the race
We chaired you through the market-place;
Man and boy stood cheering by,
And home we brought you shoulder-high.
Today, the road all runners come,
Shoulder-high we bring you home,
And set you at your threshold down,
Townsman of a stiller town.

I stumbled out to my car. I remember I just sat there for a long time, thinking.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
From fields where glory does not stay,
And early though the laurel grows
It withers quicker than the rose.

Finally the emotions that had been building up that entire semester broke through. I had a good cry. Actually, it wasn't that good. It was pretty bad. Raw.

Eyes the shady night has shut
Cannot see the record cut,
And silence sounds no worse than cheers
After earth has stopped the ears.

I knew then. Somehow, some way, we had all failed Lenny, just a little. The matinee had been a long one. The sun was setting. It was a beautiful sunset.

Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that wore their honours out,

*Runners whom renown outran
And the name died before the man.*

But it was time to get home. I had a team of my own to coach.

*So set, before its echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,
And hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge-cup.
And round that early-laurelled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.*

I couldn't finish my Raisinettes, and I cried all the way home.

CHAPTER TEN

L'AUDACE, L'AUDACE, TOUJOURS L'AUDACE!

The Liberty University School of Law needs to be closed down. In fact, if I had my way, the entire university would be shut down.

Just who do I think I am, to say that? To write this book?

Here's who *I know* I am:

I know my way around a classroom—and, in deference to the memory of Len Bias, I know what it is like to struggle with the balance between classrooms and competitions. The insane schedule, I mean. The Terrible Terrapin Tutors, a corrupt bunch all, used to whine to me that their athletes had to travel on so many weekends, and hence had to miss so many Friday classes.

The fact that I was willing to totally work with them and around their crazy schedule is now beside the point; what *is* the point is that I knew exactly what it was like to be on an intercollegiate team, on a team which has to take off in a stinky college van in the wee hours of the morning on a Friday, only to return very late Sunday night, maybe Monday morning, with biology lab awaiting just hours away.

I can actually remember dissecting frogs, a pig, and even a sheep eyeball at a Monday morning 8:00 a.m. lab, after driving all night back from a tournament in south Jersey. (Me and my lab partner followed the most hated cheerleader on campus across the quad to the cafeteria and stuck the sheep eyeball in her designer bag, so that when reached for her little change purse to pay for her stupid little lettuce salad with dressing on the side, she actually pulled out the sheep eyeball, screamed, and hurled it somewhere into the kitchen. I am fairly sure it landed in the soup d'jour. True story. Now, as for the dissected piglet, we hung that from the speech team supply room lighting fixture, so that our coach would walk smack into it when striding in there for one of his endless stacks of 3x5's. It was all very "Lord of the Flies." But that is another story, from a lifetime ago...)

Here's my point: college being a simulation of life—rehearsal for it, at least—the classroom turns into a team room sometimes, and nobody was more in a position to understand the competitive pressures than I was.

You see, I know my way around a team room, too. I know my way around competition. At the risk of being accused of blowing my own horn (and where's the harm in that, by the way?), I will let the statistics speak for themselves.

I AM GEORGE MASON FORENSICS. By that, I do not mean to imply that I am its Alpha and Omega, quite the opposite, in fact. I fully concede that it was my parents,

Robert Shafer's Madison Madrigals (Shafer being an internationally renown Grammy winning composer and conductor), and the GMU experience which made me anything good that I am; the bad stuff is all on me. GMU Forensics was amazing. The countless things that it taught me now influence me positively each and every day of my life. From GMU Forensics, I learned about discipline and tenacity, creativity and courage, teamwork and tirelessness, about being fearless in the face of crushing and unfair odds. About "never say die", about "going for the brass ring" about "winning isn't everything, it's the only thing". Although apparently it didn't teach me to shun clichés as completely as a good writer ought.

By the way—for those of you who think from television shows that forensics has to do with cutting up dead bodies, let me disabuse you of that notion. Forensics is a kind of mental Olympics, where individual students each compete in a myriad of events, some having to do with speaking, the others having to do with the eloquent interpretation of literature. And by the way, it has also been excellent training for some very fine actors, artists, and pillars of society. Soak it up: James Earl Jones, Kelsey Grammer, John Laroquette, Arsenio Hall, Shelley Long, both Jim and John Belushi, Brent Mintz ("Data" on "Star Trek"), William H. Macy, Adam Sandler, Steve Buscemi, Roger Ebert, Jane Pauley, Tom Brokaw, Kofi Annan, Bruce Springsteen, Margaret Thatcher, Sonia Sotomayor, Stephen Breyer, Lee Iacocca, Oprah Winfrey, and Nelson Mandela, to name but a few. A recent survey indicated that over 60 percent of all Senators and Representatives have participated in forensics and/or debate, although that may diminish the high impression I am attempting to impart here.

The list of events in which you can compete at a forensics tournament is long and full of variety, including but not limited to Persuasive Speaking, Informative Speaking, After Dinner Speaking, Impromptu Speaking, Extemporaneous Speaking, Rhetorical Criticism, Epideictic Speaking, Oral Interpretation of Prose, of Poetry, of Individual Dramatic, of Dramatic Duo, of Mixed Media, of Original Writing—you get the idea.

If someone excels in many events, there is a big prize. Just as there is the Decathlon in the Olympics, so there is Pentathlon in Forensics, although the prefix "Penta-" is misleading, since Yours Truly competed in sixteen events at one time—well, not literally at one time. But in one weekend, over the course of three days. You have to give each of the 16 speeches about 2 to 6 times, depending on how far you advance. And no notes, please, you had better have them all memorized if you want any kind of a chance at winning.

What I mean when I say that I am George Mason Forensics is that I think about those kids all the time; they really did become—and always will be—family to me. I remember standing there with nasty 7-11 coffee, waiting for the van at 4 a.m., because we had to haul ass from Virginia to Maine in one day. I remember listening to Simon and Garfunkel at 4:00 in the morning about 72 hours later, when we were heading home from a

tournament, living the very words they sang: *"Counting the cars on the new Jersey Turnpike, We've all gone to look for America..."*

I remember knowing, knowing somewhere deep in my soul, that life would never be as good as it was at that moment.

I ended up being right—sort of. It was never that good again, not in a purely happy sort of way ... oh, sure, it has gotten better. Much better. I have had some amazing moments. Achievements. Blessings. But now, since the days of the Turnpike, and of Simon & Garfunkel, it has always been just a bit tainted—with loss, misunderstandings, embarrassment, money worries, mortal fears, massive screw-ups, encroaching cynicism, unintentional infliction of harm ... Life is now permanently tainted with, for lack of a better word—reality. Trust me, my failures have been titanic, my misjudgments colossal, my capacity to offend epic, and my humiliations the stuff of legend.

But I have my good days.

And I have my great memories.

I am sure that you, too, have such halcyon days from your youth. I am thinking “Gladiator” in the wheat field. “Elysium”. “Honor him”. “Now we are Free”. If I had the power to make it so, that’s what you would be hearing as you read this, and revisit your glory days. But before I wax too emotional here, let me return to cases.

Now, it is for the most part impossible to compare forensics with college sports. Why? First of all, the playing field isn't level. In football, basketball, baseball, etcetera, each team gets the same number of players. In forensics, you can have as many competitors and coaches as your budget will allow. That means that a dinky little community college may send some dewy-eyed youth who is paying for his hotel room and gas money and registration fees out of his own pocket; these underlings are not mocked on the circuit, but rather revered for their sheer chutzpah. Then there are the monoliths, the Death Stars, we call them (although they are not evil), like Bradley University, Eastern Michigan, and Kentucky. Many was the year that those teams had as many coaches (one per event) as we had kids on our entire team, and often the ratio of competitors (them to us) was four or five to one. They had a couple hundred entries spanning the events, we had maybe a couple dozen.

So, unlike sports, it is far from a level playing field, but I guess that was part of its challenge.

And George Mason University has never failed to rise to the challenge. As you read this, please consider the following: if we were a sports team with the following stats, we would have a massive fan base, you already would have heard of us, and the name “George Mason” would be on the lips of everybody who loves a good competition, especially when it is won by an underdog. But that is the oxymoron of the college and university experience: because we in forensics do not dribble, dunk, slide, score touchdowns, or knock one out of the park (except metaphorically), my alma mater’s team

languishes in far more national anonymity than it deserves. That's a damn shame.

In point of fact, out of the thousands of forensics teams which compete across the country, George Mason has never been out of the top 35 since 1975. That's quite impressive, considering that we have often been significantly outmanned, out-moneyed, and outgunned.

I was lucky enough to be coached by two of the best—Dr. Bruce Manchester and Dr. Sheryl Friedley. Dr. Manchester took over the same year that I enrolled as a freshman, and what a job Doc, and his co-coach Dr. Friedley, did of coaching the team: Over the next eighteen seasons, Drs. Manchester and Friedley would guide the GMU team to ***winning eighteen consecutive East Coast Championships, sixteen "Top Five" national rankings, and more than 9,500 trophies and awards.***

In 1993, when these two Yodas finally retired, the reins of power passed to other younger assistant coaches, who then became head coaches themselves. Now the power seems to have found permanent tenure in the hands of Director Peter Pober, whom I hold in the highest esteem. All in all, under the above named coaches, ***George Mason University has ranked in the Top Ten in the Nation twenty five out of thirty-three times, in the last third of a century.***

Again, if GMU were a sports team, imagine the legendary status they would have among people everywhere—that, I think, is the fame that they, in truth, do deserve.

So, as far as what I know about academia, competition, and excellence, as in ***"Who the hell is she to write this book?"***

In addition to being a fine teacher, I am an even finer coach. As assistant coach to Dr. Manchester and Dr. Friedley, I have seen my protégés take national rankings and become national finalists in Prose Interpretation and After Dinner Speaking—the two events I coached. Before I affiliated myself with the team, we had never cracked the Top Ten in the Nation. Since then, during my affiliation, we reversed that trend: ***while I was competing on the team, and serving as a coach on that team, we never dropped out of the Top Ten.***

I have won several hundred awards in public speaking, in a range of events including Persuasive Speaking, Informative Speaking, After Dinner Speaking, Impromptu Speaking, Extemporaneous Speaking, Rhetorical Criticism, Epideictic Speaking, Oral interpretation of Prose, Poetry, Individual Dramatic, Dramatic Duo, Mixed Media, and Original Writing.

I have outscored speakers from all across the country to make Quarter Finals, Semi-Finals, and Finals at both the National Forensics Association Annual Tournaments, and the American Forensics Association National Tournaments. Getting to the uppermost echelons in these events: be it the top 24, the top 12, or the top 6—required exhaustive pre-qualifying at tournaments throughout the year, and beating out literally thousands of other competitors. Also, ***I was named the Number One Speaker on the East Coast two***

years in a row.

I was a National Finalist in Poetry twice, one of those being a National Championship, Number One in the Nation in Poetry Interpretation. I did that with a piece of my own poetry, a very rare accomplishment. I have also been a National Finalist (top 6 in the Nation) in both Rhetorical Criticism and Informative Speaking. I have been National Champion, Number One in the Nation, in both Persuasive Speaking and After Dinner Speaking. In 2010, I was inducted into the National Forensics Association Hall of Fame, partly due, no doubt, to my finest achievement: Not once, but for two years running, I was named the ***Number One Pentathlon Speaker in the Nation at the American Forensics Association Annual Tournament***, capturing the highest honor that can be accorded a public speaker, a rhetorician, and a forensicator.

That record has never been surpassed.

Oh, and the second year that I was named Top Pentathlon Speaker at the annual competition was also the year that George Mason University was also named the National Champion University at the American Forensics Association Annual Tournament, making me the Number One Speaker in the Nation, and George Mason the Number One University in the Nation.

We have a technical rhetorical term for that: The Best.

.So ***that's*** who I am, to write this book.

PART TWO

LIBERTY & JUSTICE FOR ALL?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

OF POOLS, SCHOOLS, AND GOLDEN RULES

But now, let us return to the tiny town of Appomattox, and its sister city just down the road, Lynchburg. You have already heard of my early, grim adventures amongst the Appomattoxins. Already, then, you can begin to see how I was nervous about the decision I had made, to move my entire life and my beloved museum to the "cooperative, caring, and conscientious" town of Appomattox.

(Those words in quotations are taken directly from their welcoming town website "Mission Statement". Liars. Read on.)

The word "Nigger" was already flying around everywhere, all the time.

On my first visit to the new thrift shop catty-corner from the McDonald's, there was a very large rusty circle hook screwed into a piece of a tree, with a chain hanging from the circle hook. It had seen a lot of wear and tear. A lot of wear and tear. I should have bought it, I thought in retrospect. At least if I had it, nobody else could use it ever again.

It was already, all very, creepy. It was creepy as spiders in your bloomers. Creepy as waking to clowns smiling down at you in bed. Creepy as Salad Fingers. It was very, very creepy.

Appomattox, Virginia. The Civil War town where peace was born and now, the home of the annual Railroad Festival—where the Politically Correct Train ironically never stops—was now my new home town.

When I started nosing around about joining political organizations in the town, the first thing that came up on Google was a news story that had gone viral: The local skinhead white supremacists had defaced the Obama campaign signs on the lawn of a local black family; "KKK" and "NIGGER" were spewed across Obama's name in ugly, eerie black spray paint.

"The true Negro does not want integration."

— *Jerry Farwell*

Sometimes, if you get sick of hearing the "N-Word" flying around Appomattox, you can drive a few miles east or west of town, where you will arrive at either Farmville or Lynchburg. Farmville's fascinating response to Brown v. Board of Education is

chronicled in “Wigger”, the companion book to this cheerful epistle.

Lynchburg we explore right here, right now. Lynchburg’s jewel-in-the-crown is Liberty University, the pride of Jerry (“*Christians, like slaves and soldiers, ask no questions*”) Falwell.

Also, I can confirm for you that what you are asking yourself right about now is true: that is *exactly* how Lynchburg got its name. (They couldn’t get together on the village green and lobby for Appleton or Deerville? Sheesh.)

Well, our chapter today starts out like this...

...One hot July day in 1961, a group of seven negro children stared longingly through the chain link fence to the cool, refreshing community pool beyond. They were not welcome there. Signs made this perfectly clear. Could these children not read? And when, as children will, they ignored the warnings and jumped in the pool, they caused a bit of an outrage. The citizens of Lynchburg, in their righteous indignation, decided that the appropriate response to this affront was simple. They filled each of the swimming pools up with cement. Problem solved.

Talk about cutting off one’s nose to spite one’s face. The Lynchburg newspaper responded with its usual panache. On July 8, 1961, Philip Lightfoot Scruggs (is that a Grand Ol’ Opry fiddle pluckin’ name or what?), editor of *The News* wrote:

“In reference to the above story of pools being closed because negroes sought admission: Now, each of these pools has been drained. Negro leaders forcing the issue knew that this would be the result of any attempt to integrate either of the pools used by whites. Perhaps, today, they are proud of their accomplishments and consider their ‘sense of justice’ somehow satisfied. If so, we suspect that all the other swimmers, both Negro and white, question the value of the accomplishment and wonder a bit at such a strange ‘sense of justice.’ ”

(End newspaper excerpt.)

These days, of course, everyone is able to enjoy the city’s public pools. After all, it’s the 21st century, don’t you know. But those arrogant, narrow-minded attitudes haven’t disappeared, rather they have been institutionalized.

“I hope I live to see the day when, as in the early days of our country, we won't have any public schools. The churches will have taken them over again and Christians will be running them. What a happy day that will be!” — Rev Jerry Falwell, America Can Be Saved, 1979 pp. 52-53, from Albert J Menendez and Edd Doerr, The Great Quotations on Religious Freedom

Today, black students are welcomed at Lynchburg's Liberty University, which was founded in 1971, just ten years after the swimming pool incident.

Liberty's stated purpose is to mold "Champions for Christ". Now, they don't much care for the foolish ramblings of one Charles Darwin at the school Jerry Falwell built. But the Federal Government says that if a University wishes to maintain its tax exempt status, it must teach not just what is printed in the "Good Book", that is to say Creationism, it must also teach Evolution. Liberty University's solution to this dilemma shows that old ideas die hard. Instead of providing a balanced, factual presentation of both sides of the issue, Liberty teaches Creationism with great passion, while at the same time arming those same students with the "truths" they will need to defend themselves against those who would try to promote the "Lies of the Evolutionists".

Editor Scruggs would surely have approved of this logic.

And nowadays, since, at lovely Liberty University, they are *currently* teaching that people rode dinosaurs for sport and that there were teenage dinosaurs on the ark (true story), you can see that not much evolution (joke) has gone on there since 1961. Or 1971, for that matter.

CHAPTER TWELVE

DAMNING DARWIN: AT LIBERTY TO BELIEVE IN EVOLUTION?

The Bible is the inerrant ... word of the living God. It is absolutely infallible, without error in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as well as in areas such as geography, science, history, etc.— Jerry Falwell, Finding Inner Peace and Strength

I will grant you that I am a bit of an odd duck.

As a person who spends most of their life researching, editing, proofreading, writing, etcetera, I am as likely to start up a conversation about the Bonfire of the Vanities or Joshua Norton or Boadicea or the annual Avon Ohio Duct Tape Festival or the fact that certain moths drink elephant tears as a source of trace minerals and protein, as I am likely to chat it up about, oh, say, interest rates on housing loans or the latest fad diet or the mileage that a Prius gets on streets versus highways. And by that, I am not attempting to subtly suggest that I am somehow more interesting than other people. I know a large number of folks who will tell you I am quite dull. Plodding and loquacious, droning and domineering in most conversations.

That having been said, I have traditionally kept my more offbeat notions to myself. (Up until now, at least.) My beliefs in reincarnation, in the potential for untapped brain powers such as telekinesis, and the probability that there have most likely been close encounters of the third kind on this planet—those matters I do not bring up, except with my closest friends. But there is one kooky, “out-there” theory that I *do* discuss from time to time, as a part of pop culture dialogue, or when events in the news seem to warrant it.

Here it is. I believe in... .

EVOLUTION.

The year was 2009, and a very fine British film was making its way through some smaller art house theaters and onto DVD. The name of the film was “Creation.” It was a biopic, as in, while not being a documentary per se, it was a feature film based very literally on the life of Charles Darwin, and it had many factual details about both his personal life and his work woven into the powerful fabric of the story.

In addition to learning a lot of fascinating stories regarding the man about whom I had known very little, I believe that what moved me most was simply watching the arc of his life as he struggled with developing one of the most impactful notions that any human

being has ever stumbled upon: it is right up there with the idea of the printing press, space travel, medical miracles, and that entire invisible world of radio waves and microwaves and—well, I think you get my point.

When we hear of men like Darwin and Bach, Galileo and Cervantes, Adams and Jefferson, Lincoln and Leonardo, Moses and Michelangelo, we tend to get this picture of old bearded men, wise and a bit tired, very accomplished and respected—but in the sunset of their years. We tend to forget that they were once wild and young, bursting with the energy and hubris of youth. And all that that implies.

What astonishing adventures their strong personalities must have launched them forth into! The imagination reels!

And we, the people, are the beneficiaries of their life's work. Of their brave, crazy, life's work.

So it was interesting to see Darwin as a young man, full of love for his beautiful wife and darling children, embarking upon this great adventure aboard *The Beagle*, but most importantly, creating a massive tome that would change the way we think about—well—everything, from our origins, to picking a mate, to the relationship between T-Rex and chickens, to the impact of global warming.

It did not occur to me until I saw the movie what a frightening and dangerous and brave thing he was doing by putting forth such brazen notions as evolution and natural selection.

It did not occur to me that most of the people of his time would see him as a villain, in league with the Devil, for assaulting God and the Bible and Creationism.

Most people also wouldn't know that, given the health challenges his daughter battled, Darwin was wracked with guilt for his entire life, because Darwin eventually understood enough about genetics to know that his decision to marry his own cousin might well have been the cause of his daughter's agonizing and tragic struggles with her health—of physical anomalies that left her barely clinging to life, for much of her young life.

So compelling did I find the film that naturally, when folks were making small talk with me in town—*what have I been up to?, how was my weekend?, did I do anything interesting?*—naturally I effused. About “Creation.”

MAN OH MAN, did I get a lecture.

Now, as I have said before, I believe in God, in my own version of a Higher Intelligence, and I am even aware of the wording in the end of Revelations: ***“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.”***

But I also know about the controversies swirling around the Council of Nicaea. That discussion is obviously for another time; suffice it to say that my profound belief in a Higher Power is not in conflict with my personal reluctance to believe that the planet Earth was created in just seven calendar days. Most people would probably add a joke here, but I find that to be both irrelevant and irreverent.

But here is what is *extremely* relevant. From the time I brought up the topic of evolution in Appomattox, things changed. And I was naive enough not to understand the implications of getting into this debate with a number of my neighbors and fellow citizens. Particularly with the young people—the *children* of these neighbors and citizens.

I have lived all around the world, spent much of my life in Northern Virginia, and have come to associate religious, political, and social polemics as part of the friendly sparring which is integral to the life of a person who is paying attention to the world. As part of the life of a citizen in the modern United States of America, of someone who is involved in the socio-political process. Dialogue? Town Hall Meeting? Theatre? Circus? What is the correct term these days?

I can remember back when I was still living with my folks, being fascinated by the people they would invite to parties: personages of some gravitas representing various countries and clashing cultures in the Middle East, hashing it out around the kitchen table at two in the morning, following a big dinner, and a lot of drinks. It was fascinating, informed, impassioned, but never ugly.

Since the Darwin debacle in 2009, I have learned exciting new things about my new home town. It explains a great deal about Appomattoxins:

The crowning achievement for a parent is to send one's child to Jerry Falwell's own Liberty University, a Christian fortress high in the mountains, perfectly positioned to defend itself against atheists, agnostics, faggots, Jews, Catholics, Muslims, Hindi, Buddhists, and apparently, Negroes, to read some of the university's forum postings. Basically, Liberty takes issue with anyone who takes issue with the dicta of the Southern Baptist Convention. (The SBC called for all Baptists to boycott Disney, for Pete's sake.)

(An important aside here is my defense of all the parents of Appomattox whose dream is to see their kids go to Virginia Tech. There is a heck of a lot of burgundy and orange around Appomattox, and as the daughter of an engineer, I can see why any parent would puff up with pride at the thought of their child getting a degree from VT. Apart from the fact that, as an alumni of the nationally renown George Mason University Forensics Team, I know we could kick Hokie butt in that area of competition—but otherwise, I have nothing but respect for the school, and especially for the brave and graceful way that they survived and revived from the horrific shootings of a few years ago. Kudos to you, Virginia Tech. Ut Prosim.)

But back to Liberty University.

JURASSIC PARK, FOR REAL?

“Textbooks are Soviet Propaganda”

—Jerry Falwell

Did you know that human beings used to ride on dinosaurs?

Bottom line: Liberty University teaches students that the world was created in seven days, that evolution is hogwash, and that the consequences for disagreeing with this stance are harsh, both in this world and the next one. And when it comes to your GPA at Liberty. (Just wait till we get to their situational relativistic stand when it comes to sanctioning kidnapping, if it involves taking a little girl away from her gay mother. Go, RICO!)

And if you doubt that all of this is so, the above facts about Liberty University and its stance on evolution are perhaps the most ubiquitously corroborated set of facts I have ever found on the world wide web. Even its founders and practitioners shout it from the mountaintops:

“We with God’s help, want to see hundreds of our graduates go out into the classrooms teaching creationism - of course they’ll be teaching evolution - but teaching why it’s invalid and why it’s foolish, and then showing the proper way and the correct approach to the origin of the species.”

—Jerry Falwell, 1982

“Satan has fathered this monstrous lie of evolution, for he is the father of lies.”

—Henry Morris

From Liberty University’s own FIGHTING FUNDAMENTAL FORUMS:

Thread: Dragons, Fantasy, and Evolution

“Evolutionists take very limited information and make up the most incredible stories based on what they find. How come they can figure out exactly how dinosaurs lived 65 million years ago, including how they socialized, hunted, courted and mated all based on the sparsest evidence, but they can’t solve a criminal case with the same amount of information?”

THE INFILTRATOR: KEVIN ROOSE

Once upon a time, a kid named Kevin Roose, who was a sophomore at Brown

University (a liberal institution, to say the least), decided to switch gears in a most radical way, and transfer to Liberty University, the world's largest evangelical Christian college.

From his website: *“Hoping to connect with his conservative Christian peers, Roose leaps across the God Divide and embeds himself among Liberty’s 10,000 undergraduates, who call themselves “Champions for Christ.” At Liberty, he sings in Reverend Falwell’s church choir, takes classes like Evangelism 101, and makes surprising discoveries about the true nature of America’s culture war. The chronicle of Roose’s journey is timely, hilarious, and thought-provoking, and will inspire and entertain believers and non-believers alike.”*

Bottom line: Roose’s journey—and his book—are complex, bold, sometimes wonderful, and for another time and place. But for our purposes, his witness (no religious pun intended) was personal and real; he experienced first-hand what I would term the egregious ridiculousness of what passes for science study at Liberty University.

This may be my favorite tidbit that we learn from his book:

“Kevin Roose describes a True or False question on a ‘History of Life’ exam at Liberty University that asks ‘whether Noah’s Ark was large enough to accommodate various species of dinosaurs?’ The acceptable Liberty University answer is ‘true’ based on the conjecture that dinosaurs and humans cohabited the earth after the flood—though the professor allows that Noah may have gathered teenage dinosaurs to make more room”

And elsewhere, on his webpage blog, Roose offers more glimpses into the examination process at Liberty University. This is a direct quotation from Roose’s website:

Here, I’m pasting a partial list of the questions I was asked to answer on the first midterm for that class, ‘CRST 290/History of Life.’ You decide if Liberty’s scientists are holding anything back:

- 1. True or False: Noah’s Ark was large enough to carry various kinds of dinosaurs.*
- 2. True or False: Science is the only way to truly know truth about the world.*
- 3. True or False: Margaret Sanger [the founder of Planned Parenthood] was a promoter of eugenics [selective breeding, a practice commonly associated with the Nazi Party].*
- 4. True or False: Evolution can be proven using the scientific method.*

The correct answers (according to Liberty)!

- 1. True*
- 2. False*
- 3. True*
- 4. False*

(End excerpt.)

DAVID DEWITT

David DeWitt is the driving force behind the anti-evolution Creationism teaching that goes on at Liberty, and I believe that the excerpted article below tells you everything you need to know about him, for our purposes. You can, of course, dig up more about him, even read his fascinating research papers, but I believe that a great deal is revealed just by reading this excerpt of an interview with DeWitt conducted by John Safarti for Creation Ministries International at Creation.com

THE ARTICLE (EXCERPTED): BRAIN SCIENTIST DEVELOPS YOUNG CHRISTIAN MINDS!

Dr. David DeWitt has a B.S. in biochemistry from Michigan State University and a Ph.D. in neuroscience for research in Alzheimer's Disease from Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, USA. For the last 12 years, Dr DeWitt has been teaching biology and creation apologetics at Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, USA.

Like many Christians who studied naturalistic science, he explains that at first, *"I believed that God used evolution to create and I also believed in billions of years in a harmonizing fashion."* So what changed his mind? He tells us:

"One day, I read Psalm 18:30 and was struck by 'the word of the Lord is flawless.' The same is repeated in Psalm 12:6 which I also read the same day. The impact of those verses weighed very heavily on me as I considered the compromise with the Word that I was trying to promote. If the word of the Lord is flawless, then who am I to depart from what it so plainly says? If I claim to believe the Bible and that it is flawless, then I should believe every single word and not pick and choose."

The other vital issue for Dr DeWitt was the origin of death and suffering, as he explains:

"Evolution requires millions of years of death for natural selection to work its magic for amebas to evolve into college students. But the Bible was clear that death came as a result of Adam's sin. Therefore, death came after man rather than as a means to make man..."

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASES AND A GOD OF LOVE

Back to the issue of death and suffering, it's clear that one of David's own fields (the study of Alzheimer's is his specialty) is highly relevant. So I asked, how would he explain Alzheimer's Disease if there is a God of love? He answered: *"The fact that we live in a fallen world is best evidenced by disease. God is love, but He is also holy and*

just. Since God had given Adam dominion over creation, when Adam sinned, God cursed the whole creation (Genesis 3:19, Romans 8:19–23). I believe that Alzheimer’s Disease is really caused by a breakdown of cellular systems in the brain; a consequence of living in a fallen world.”

END OF EXCERPTED ARTICLE

We learn from Dr. Dewitt, among many other intriguing theories, two important points. First, that evolution is impossible, because there was no death until Adam sinned in the garden about 6000 years ago (according to Biblical scholars). And secondly, if you are one of the millions coping with the heartbreak of having a loved one afflicted with Alzheimer’s, it is because we live in a fallen world.

Fascinating.

Dewitt’s students adore him, though. Listen to some of their comments:

THE STUDENTS COMMENT ON DR. DAVID DEWITT

“Dewitt is absolutely brilliant. He really knows what he’s talking about and provides great facts that help dispute the evolutionary lies.”

“I think his testimony is awesome for this class. Once an evolutionist and now a creationist! Can tell he’s passionate about it. But yeah his voice can lull you to sleep. He seems like he just needs a friend.”

“DeWitt may be monotone, but he knows his stuff and loves the Lord. He gets excited about students being interested in the Lord through creation.”

“Dr. DeWitt is a very smart man with a big heart for God. It’s nice to see a scientist taking time to teach others about God’s creative process. He might be a bit monotoned but his lectures are worth a lot after you leave Liberty. The things you learn in this class will aid in fighting anti-creationists.”

THE FIELD TRIP

Last but not least, you should know that in addition to getting nearly half a billion dollars in Pell Grants, (receiving MORE of your taxpayers dollars than NPR), Liberty University offers one last perk to students who study and proselytize about Creationism. They get to go to the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History and make fun of it.

DAVID OLSEN of THE PRESS ENTERPRISE
COVERS ONE SUCH TRIP IN HIS ONLINE ARTICLE:

Here is it, excerpted per copyright guidelines:

“Liberty University, an evangelical Baptist institution in Lynchburg, Virginia, offers a minor in Creation Studies and teaches the biblical six-day, 24-hour explanation for creation alongside evolution in biology classes,” said David DeWitt, a professor of biology at Liberty. Students discuss what DeWitt views as the flaws in evolutionary theory and in the way most scientists measure the age of fossils.

They plan to become doctors, researchers and professors, but these students from Liberty University, an evangelical school, also believe that God created the Earth in a week, around 6,000 years ago. Each year, a group of biology students at the Christian university based in Lynchburg, Virginia, travels to the Natural History Museum in Washington to learn about a theory they dismiss as incorrect, “Darwin's Theory of Evolution.”

The young Creationists examined a model of the Morganucodon rat, believed to be the first and common ancestor of mammals that appeared some 210 million years ago. Lauren Dunn, 19, a second-year biology student, was unimpressed. *“A million years, that’s arbitrary. They put that time to make up for what they don’t know,”* she said.

Creationism and evolutionism have different ways of explaining the evidence. The Creationist way recognizes the importance of biblical records, said Marcus Ross, who teaches paleontology. He teaches his students that dinosaurs were wiped from the face of the Earth 4,000 to 5,000 years ago during the flood that Noah survived by building an ark. He says carbon-dating techniques that have been used to suggest the Earth is in fact billions of years old are simply not reliable.

END ARTICLE

What a wonderful way to spend our tax dollars.

But lest you fear that there is lack of gratitude among these students, these future scientists, we leave this chapter with a few posts from those inspiring Fighting Fundamental Forums. This is what they are being taught at Liberty University, in lieu of evolution. Yes, I think it is fair to say that evolution has come to a screeching halt at Liberty.

POST NUMBER ONE:

“I want to thank you for your excellent post on evolution. I once considered myself to be an atheist, largely because I was deceived by the dirty ol’ devil’s story of evolution. I was taught evolution as a young man by crafty scientists and “teachers” and became blinded by Satan’s lies. I believed that my ancestors were monkeys. It hardened my heart and I was unable to feel Jesus’ love for me and kept me from truly seeing that it was the almighty Lord who created all things in heaven and on earth.

After years of wandering in the valley of sin and despair, kind and loving

Christians, like yourselves, helped me to see the truth. They showed me that it's impossible for a watch just to come into existence. And if it's impossible for a relatively simple thing as a watch, then it must be impossible for something as complex as life. Life just can't self assemble over billions of years. My ancestors aren't monkeys at all. We were all created by the almighty Lord. I couldn't believe that I had been so deceived by science. It truly is a tool of Satan. I hope someday we can outlaw the teaching of evolution in our public schools. It's a shame that our public schools are tools for the dirty ol' devil to distribute his filthy lies."

*May God bless you two
wonderful boys.
Your friend in Christ*

POST NUMBER TWO:

"If in evolution, only the strong survive, why do the tree hugging nature lovers keep trying to save weak, stupid animals such as whales that beach themselves. Leave them alone and let evolution take its course."

POST NUMBER THREE:

"Dinosaurs lived in the days of Adam and Eve and were able to live to thousands of years old also and we all know that reptiles never stop growing until they die which accounts for their size. Any disputation on this subject will be gladly argued. I know I'm right."

And perhaps my favorite one, because it connects sinners with balding, your humble "Wigger" author offers you

POST NUMBER FOUR:

"I don't believe in evolution as taught in our public schools. I believe the God of the Bible did it. We have evolved into something ugly because of our own choices, is my real opinion. Those ruts on our faces and thinning hair could be a result of many years of worry caused by the consequences of our sin. But it is evolution in progress, don't you agree?"

I have already spoken about the somewhat incestuous relationship between the population at Liberty University and the citizenry of Appomattox, and of the dangerous Trifecta operation therein: Instruction, Corroboration, and Validation. Suffice it to say that this Trifecta goes a long way towards explaining the next bizarre event which happened not in Lynchburg, but twenty miles down the road, on my home turf.

Here is a real gem: Steve told me that he decided there was just too much trouble to be had from using the internet—he'd heard of marriages being ruined by people sparking up old Facebook connections, and he also had a 14 year old daughter to worry about, so he said "I just cut it off."

Actually my response was to applaud him, because Steve leads a simple landscaper's life, (and there is internet at the local library, if he really needs it), so there is actually no reason that he needs to expose his daughter to the potential dangers of the world wide web, and himself to a fifty dollar a month internet bill.

"So you just had it cut it off?" I said, semi-impressed.

"No," he said, "I mean I cut it off. I got a big pair of garden sheers and went out back and cut the cable."

He was serious. How he did not electrocute himself, I do not know.

At first I secretly applauded this Ludditic stroke, until I realized that this is the modus operandi for most of the Appomattoxins. I.E., evolution is a lie, gays will burn in hell, the Pope is the anti-Christ, the internet is evil, even many PG movies should be banned, etcetera.

It was only when I probed further that I found out specifically why Steve had his internet cut off: because the government was using it to circulate a big hoax that there had once been water on Mars.

Steve ranted to me about how he was very upset, having read that ***"now they are talking about the possibility of water on Mars! From this, they're gonna try to convince us that there was once life on Mars, which is a repudiation of Genesis, which is an attempt to completely undermine the Bible, which is all part of the government's plot to kill God."*** Plus, Steve is getting very angry, almost foaming at the mouth, because ***"now that they put that story about water on Mars on the World Wide Web, you can never get that garbage off the Internet. That's how the government is going to try to kill God for the people...It's all part of this big plot, you see..."***

(Later, Steve's son will turn out to be a proud graduate of Liberty University. Are you with me so far? Also later, I was to learn that this matter of water on Mars has the Baptist Fundamentalists in an uproar, but their version of the "scientific community" has come rushing to the rescue, with some fascinating explanations. Here is one of my favorites, from the FIGHTING FUNDAMENTAL FORUMS, which you will find on Liberty University's own website:

"When God created the universe he created it replete with beams of photons in place to give the impression that those photons have been traveling in space for billions of years. The universe in only 6000 years old, plus or minus." (Sneaky ol' God!)

(de-emphasis added)

And this next poor forum poster is almost apoplectic; I am afraid he/she is going to burst a vessel explaining all the reasons there just can't be water on Mars OR life on other planets:

From fixed earth.com

Mars Missions, Part III:

NASA's Latest Lies Seek To End The Evolution Debate And
Declare Victory...Over The Bible's Origins Scenario

NASA's press releases have given the impression world-wide that the pictures and soil and rock analyses from Mars confirm water-dug canyons and lake-beds that are now dry craters... People everywhere now believe that science has proven that Mars was awash in liquid water at some point and that some kinds of microbial life forms have evolved there in the last four Billion years. That's the message the world has received...and the message it believes to be a scientific fact.

Do taxpayers know how many billions of their taxes are spent to finance this continuing avalanche of pseudo-scientific propoganda about water and evolving life in the universe?? Do they know that this whole massive effort is geared solely to destroying the Bible's Creation Account and the God of the Bible? *I don't think so.*

Do they know that the means of destroying faith in the Biblical Creation and its God rests on establishing factless evolution mythology as a "scientific" explanation for the origin of the universe, Earth, Mankind? I don't think so...Additionally, acceptance involves rejection of the anti-evolutionary Biblical cosmology where the universe is 6000 years old and no more than one light day thick.

(Emphasis added.)

POST SCRIPT: I decided ***not*** to leave this particular chapter with our baldness being explained by our Fall from Grace in the Garden of Eden. (After all, what does that say about people like Ted Bundy and Jeffrey Dahmer and Son of Sam and Charles Manson and Richard Ramirez and Rodney Alcala aka The Dating Game Killer—they all sported full, thick heads of hair. And they dismembered people and ate them. In fact, an inordinate number of death row killers have tresses to be envied.)

Instead, I offer you quotations from scientists who found their faith reaffirmed and heightened by having the courage to look more and more deeply into the cosmos, as God reveals it to us:

“The impossibility of conceiving that this grand and wondrous universe, with our conscious selves, arose through chance, seems to me the chief argument for the existence

of God.”

—Charles Darwin

“A knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate, of the manifestations of the profoundest reason and the most radiant beauty - it is this knowledge and this emotion that constitute the truly religious attitude; in this sense ... I am a deeply religious man.”

—Albert Einstein

“I find it as difficult to understand a scientist who does not acknowledge the presence of a superior rationality behind the existence of the universe as it is to comprehend a theologian who would deny the advances of science.”

—Verner Von Braun, German-American rocket scientist

“Science can have a purifying effect on religion, freeing it from beliefs of a pre-scientific age and helping us to a truer conception of God. At the same time, I am far from believing that science will ever give us the answers to all our questions.”

—Neville Mott, English physicist, awarded 1977 Nobel Prize

“From religion comes a man’s purpose; from science, his power to achieve it. Sometimes people ask if religion and science are not opposed to one another. They are: in the sense that the thumb and fingers of my hands are opposed to one another. It is an opposition by means of which anything can be grasped.”

—William H Bragg, British physicist, chemist, mathematician.
Awarded Nobel Prize in 1915

“Science is not only compatible with spirituality; it is a profound source of spirituality. When we recognize our place in an immensity of light-years and in the passage of ages, when we grasp the intricacy, beauty, and subtlety of life, then that soaring feeling, that sense of elation and humility combined, is surely spiritual...The notion that science and spirituality are somehow mutually exclusive does a disservice to both.”

—Carl Sagan, American astronomer, astrophysicist, cosmologist, author

“What I have done is to show that it is possible for the way the universe began to be determined by the laws of science ... This doesn’t prove that there is no God....”

—Stephen Hawking, English physicist and cosmologist

“If evolution really works, how come mothers only have two hands?”

—Milton Berle

“A commonsense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question.”

—Fred Hoyle, English mathematician and astronomer.

“I am very much a scientist, and so I naturally have thought about religion also through the eyes of a scientist. When I do that, I see religion not denominationally, but in a more, let us say, deistic sense. I have been influenced in my thinking by the writing of Einstein who has made remarks to the effect that when he contemplated the world he sensed an underlying Force much greater than any human force. I feel very much the same. There is a sense of awe, a sense of reverence, and a sense of great mystery.”

—Walter Kohn, American physicist, awarded Nobel Prize in 1998

“I am very astonished that the scientific picture of the real world around me is very deficient. It gives a lot of factual information, puts all our experiences in a magnificently consistent order, but is ghastly silent about all and sundry that is really near to our heart, that really matters to us. It cannot tell us a word about red and blue, bitter and sweet, physical pain and physical delight; it knows nothing of beautiful and ugly, good or bad, god and eternity.”

—Erwin Schrödinger, Austrian physicist, awarded Nobel prize in 1933

“It was not by accident that the greatest thinkers of all ages were deeply religious souls.”

—Max Planck, German physicist, noted for work on quantum theory

“Everyone who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the universe - a spirit vastly superior to that of man, and one in the face of which we with our modest powers must feel humble. In this way the pursuit of science leads to a religious feeling of a special sort, which is indeed quite different from the religiosity of someone more naive.”

—From Einstein’s response to a letter from sixth-grade student Phyllis Wright,
regarding the existence of God

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DOWN WITH DISNEY! IS MICKEY MOUSE THE TRUE ANTI-CHRIST?

We're fighting against humanism, we're fighting against liberalism ... we are fighting against all the systems of Satan that are destroying our nation today ... our battle is with Satan himself.

— Rev Jerry Falwell (source unknown)

“As Bible-believing Christians, we believe that the Pope is an antichrist, and we believe that the Roman church is identified in Revelations 17, but we believe that many other people in the world are antichrists as well (see 1 John 2:18). We will stay with Scripture as to the identity of the Antichrist—he is yet to be revealed, after the Rapture of believers (1 Thessalonians 4:13—5:11; 2 Thessalonians 2).

—Norman A. Olson, as published in *Baptistbulletin.org*

Appomattox is a small town (1707 last I checked) in a sparsely populated county: about 14,000 people live there—as opposed to other counties in the Old Dominion, which have a more thriving population. Campbell County, for example, just southwest of Appomattox County, has over four times as many citizens, roughly 65,000.

Yet there are 21 Baptist churches serving the 2.2 square miles which constitute the town of Appomattox, and the rest of the county, which is only about ten miles in any direction, until you hit another county line.

What made me particularly curious about all of this was the number of church representatives who dropped not donation money, but church business cards with church addresses and service schedules, into my museum contribution jar on opening day.

Twenty-one (21) Baptist churches! And a lot of invitations to attend them. I was Scarlett O’Hara at the Twelve Oaks barbecue.

So, since so many people, including my landlord, seemed very politely insistent that I attend (but the problem is, I learned, if you attend one, you risk alienating the rest...dogmatic differences, and all that), I decided that I would learn a little more about the Baptists in Appomattox, and Southern Baptists in general.

So I went to the horse’s mouth, so to speak, the Southern Baptist Convention website, sbc.org, which is where all obedient Southern Baptist churches go to learn the official church stance on all matters which—well, on all matters. Let’s just leave it at

that.

It was fascinating. Oddly though, that fascination did not draw me towards any of the lovely country churches, come Sunday morning.

Here, excerpted for you, is a listing of some of their more curious “Resolutions,” which are added to and amended annually at the Southern Baptist Convention.

(AUTHOR’S ADDENDUM: “Scientific Creationism is a doctrine that the biblical account of creation is supported by scientific evidence.” —Merriam Webster Dictionary. As in, Scientific Creationists believe that the world really was created in six days, and that the world is approximately six thousand years old. Only.)

RESOLUTION ON SCIENTIFIC CREATIONISM

June 1982

WHEREAS, The theory of evolution has never been proven to be a scientific fact, and

WHEREAS, Public school students are now being indoctrinated in evolution-science, and

WHEREAS, Creation-science can be presented solely in terms of scientific evidence without any religious doctrines or concepts, (???? ***Confusion question marks added by Wigger Author***) and

WHEREAS, Public school students should be taught all the scientific evidence on the subject of the origin of the world and life, and

WHEREAS, Academic freedom and free speech should be encouraged rather than inhibited.

Therefore, be it RESOLVED, That the Southern Baptist Convention in session in New Orleans, Louisiana, June 1982, express our support for the teaching of Scientific Creationism in our public schools.

(emphasis added)

ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY

June 1984

WHEREAS, We, the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Kansas City, June 12-14, 1984, recognize the authority of Scripture in all matters of faith and practice including the autonomy of the local church; and ... The New Testament does not mandate that all who are divinely called to ministry be ordained; and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures teach that women are not in public worship to assume a role of authority over men lest confusion reign in the local church (1 Cor. 14:33-36); and

WHEREAS, While Paul commends women and men alike in other roles of ministry and service (Titus 2:1-10), *he excludes women from pastoral leadership (1 Tim. 2:12) to preserve a submission God requires because the man was first in creation and the woman was first in the Edenic fall (1 Tim. 2:13ff) ;* and

WHEREAS, Women are held in high honor for their unique and significant contribution to ... the building of godly homes ...

Therefore, be it RESOLVED, That we not decide concerns of Christians doctrine and practice by modern cultural, sociological, and ecclesiastical trends or by emotional factors; that we remind ourselves of the dearly bought Baptist principle of the final authority of Scripture in matters of faith and conduct; and that *we encourage the service of women in all aspects of church life and work other than pastoral functions and leadership roles entailing ordination.*

RESOLUTION ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN

June 1981

We reaffirm Resolution No. 21, On Women, made by the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in St. Louis, June 12, 1980:

WHEREAS, Through responsibilities in the family and in multiplied avenues of service, women have made immeasurable contributions to the home, society, and the Kingdom of God, and

WHEREAS, Contemporary pressures are forcing men and women to make difficult decisions regarding priorities and responsibilities.

Therefore be it RESOLVED, That we express gratitude to God for the contribution made by women in all avenues of service, and we call on Christian women to follow the pattern of Jesus and the teaching of the Scripture in determining priorities and responsibilities, and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we encourage all persons to be sensitive to the contemporary pressures facing women, and

Be it further RESOLVED, That for women who need or want to work outside the home we urge employers to seek fairness for women in compensation, advancement, and opportunities for improvement.

Be it finally RESOLVED, That this Convention, *reaffirming the biblical role which stresses the equal worth but not always the sameness of function of women, does not endorse the Equal Rights Amendment." (emphasis added)*

RESOLUTION ON WOMEN IN COMBAT

June 1998

WHEREAS, The President and Congress have moved the United States military service to abandon their historic policy of limiting combat military service to males, and

are now recruiting, training, and assigning women to combat roles; and ...

WHEREAS, God, by creating Adam first (Genesis 2:18; 1 Corinthians 11:8) and by creating woman “an helpmate for him” (Genesis 2:18, 20, 22; 1 Corinthians 11:9), has set the gender-based role and responsibility of males ... to be that of leader, provider and self-sacrificial protector (also cf. Ephesians 5:25; 1 Peter 3:70, and likewise has set the gender-based role and responsibility of females to be that of help and nurture (Genesis 2:18) and life-giving (Genesis 3:20) under male leadership and protection (cf. 1 Peter 3:7); and

WHEREAS, The purpose of combat is to inflict deadly harm upon an enemy, and the essence of combat is to use force against an enemy in order to kill, damage or destroy—a purpose and essence aligned with the male role but opposed to the female role; and

WHEREAS, The pattern established by God throughout the Bible is that men, not women, bear responsibility to serve in combat if war is necessary (Genesis 14:14; Numbers 31:3, 21, 49; Deuteronomy 20:5-9; 3:14; Joshua 1:14-18; 6:3, 7, 9; 8:3; 10:7; 1 Samuel 16:18; 18:5; 2 Samuel 11:1; 17:8; 23:8-39; Psalm 45:3-5; Song of Solomon 3:7-8; Isaiah 42:13); and

WHEREAS, Biblical examples that record women serving in combat (Judges 4:4-23) are presented as contrary to proper and normal gender-based distinctions, and result from a shameful failure of male leadership (Judges 4:9-10; Nahum 3:13); and

WHEREAS, Willful rejection of a gender-based role distinction that limits combat military service to males is a foolish social experiment that ... risks the nation’s military security by scrambling the moral framework defining male/female relationships.

Therefore, be it RESOLVED, *That messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting June 9-11, 1998, in Salt Lake City, Utah, do, with loyal respect and deep concern, warn against and oppose the training and assigning of females to military combat service because: it rejects gender-based distinctions established by God in the order of creation; it undermines male headship in the family by failing to recognize the unique gender-based responsibility of men to protect women and children; and it subordinates the combat readiness of American troops, and the national security of the United States, to **the unbiblical social agenda of ideological feminism; and ...***

Be it finally RESOLVED, That we call upon the President, Congress, and military leaders to reverse the present policy and to restore the limitation of military combat service to males only.

ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

June 2003

WHEREAS, The Vermont legislature established “civil unions” which bestow the rights of marriage on same-sex couples; and

WHEREAS, Since the law became effective in July 2000, eighty-five percent of the more than 5,600 civil unions performed in Vermont were for out-of-state homosexual couples; and

WHEREAS, The legislative Assembly of the state of California has passed a bill that says registered partners “shall have the same rights” that are “granted to and imposed upon spouses”; and

WHEREAS, Courts in Massachusetts and New Jersey currently are considering the legalization of same-sex “marriage”; and

WHEREAS, The Full Faith and Credit Clause of the United States Constitution requires that marriages solemnized in one state be recognized in all fifty states; and

WHEREAS, The Vermont experience indicates that if same-sex unions are recognized as “marriage” in a state court, then same-sex couples wishing to marry will inundate that state to “marry” and return home demanding that their states recognize “marriages” and provide all rights and benefits afforded to traditional marriages ...

WHEREAS, Same-sex “marriages” are now legal in Belgium and Holland; and

WHEREAS, Newspapers are beginning to recognize homosexual unions by publishing announcements of same-sex commitment ceremonies; and

WHEREAS, A vast segment of the entertainment industry has pursued an agenda of legitimizing homosexual relationships; and

WHEREAS, Public school textbooks and curricula are beginning to portray families with two homosexual “parents” as equivalent to families with a mother and a father; and

WHEREAS, Jesus states that marriage is a sacred, lifelong bond between one man and one woman (Matthew 19:4–6); and

WHEREAS, Legalizing same-sex “marriage” would convey a societal approval of a homosexual lifestyle, which the Bible calls sinful and dangerous both to the individuals involved and to society at large (Romans 1:24–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; Leviticus 18:22); now, therefore, be It

RESOLVED, That we call upon all judges and public officials to oppose the legalization of same-sex unions; and be it further ...

RESOLVED, That we call on Southern Baptists to stand against same-sex unions, but to demonstrate our love for those practicing homosexuality by sharing with them the forgiving and transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ ...

ON HATE CRIMES LEGISLATION

June 2007

WHEREAS, The U.S. House of Representatives has passed the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007, H.R. 1592, and a similar bill has been introduced in the U.S. Senate; and

WHEREAS, ***These bills create special protected classes of homosexual and***

transgendered persons; and

WHEREAS, The Bible is clear in its denunciation of homosexual behavior (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:21-28; 1 Corinthians 6:9) ...

WHEREAS, Proponents argue that the establishment of such protected classes is a civil rights issue, yet neither homosexuals nor transgendered persons constitute a class like race, ethnicity, or gender because their identity is based upon a lifestyle choice; and

WHEREAS, Such hate crimes legislation violates the U.S. Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment guarantee of equal protection under the law by extending special protected status to certain groups of people that is not available for others; and

WHEREAS, Such hate crimes legislation criminalizes beliefs as well as actions, creating a form of thought crime; and

WHEREAS, In some jurisdictions where such thought crimes laws have been passed, they have been used to actively punish Christians who peacefully voice their moral opposition to homosexual conduct; and ...

WHEREAS, Pastor Ake Green of Borgholm, Sweden, was sentenced to a month in jail in 2003 for "inciting hatred" based on that nation's hate crimes laws when he preached a grace- and truth-filled message concerning homosexuality, comparing the sins of Sweden to the sins of Sodom; and

WHEREAS, Many Christian leaders and pro-family groups are alarmed at the prospect of a law in which a person's thoughts or opinions alone—particularly disapproval of homosexual behavior—would lead to federal prosecution; and

WHEREAS, The inevitable application of this legislation would abridge our First Amendment freedom of speech and thus criminalize biblical preaching and speaking truth about homosexuality, achieving a key goal of homosexual activists and their allies, which is to muzzle the church in its moral opposition to their sinful lifestyle; now, therefore, be it ...

RESOLVED, That we strongly urge the members of the U.S. Senate to reject this and any other bill that creates a special protected status for certain groups, violating the U.S. Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment guarantee of equal protection; and be it further

RESOLVED, That if Congress passes this hate crimes bill, or any similar bill, we strongly encourage the president to veto such unconstitutional legislation because it undermines the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection guarantee, and its application poses a direct threat to the First Amendment freedom of speech of those morally opposed to homosexuality; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge all Americans to avoid acts of hatred and violence toward homosexuals and transgendered people, but to instead treat our fellow citizens with the kind of civility we would prefer to receive ourselves (Matthew 7:12); and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we encourage all believers to love and show compassion toward homosexuals and transgendered persons, sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who is able to bring true freedom from error and to set free captives of sin (John 8:34-36).

ON HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE MILITARY

June 2010

WHEREAS, President Obama has promised repeatedly to repeal current law and to change policies that prevent normalizing the open presence of homosexuals in the armed forces; and

WHEREAS, The chairman of the joint chiefs of staff has told Congress that he favors normalizing the open presence of homosexuals in the military because he thinks it is morally “the right thing to do”; and

WHEREAS, The House of Representatives voted recently to normalize the open practice of homosexuality in the military by authorizing the repeal of current law, and the Senate Armed Services Committee has also passed the repeal language; and

WHEREAS, The Defense Department working group tasked with preparing a plan to normalize the open presence of homosexuals in the military must accept input from various sources including ... religious groups such as the Southern Baptist Convention; and

WHEREAS, ***Homosexual behavior cannot be normalized without rejecting God’s moral standards*** (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10) ...

WHEREAS, ***The Bible describes homosexual behavior as both a contributing cause*** (Genesis 18:20-21; Leviticus 18:24-28; Jude 7) ***and a consequence of God’s judgment on nations and individuals*** (Romans 1:18-32); and ...

WHEREAS, Attempting to normalize ... homosexuals in the armed forces while fighting two wars demonstrates ***willingness to jeopardize national security in favor of the radical agenda advanced by the homosexual lobby, and substitutes a therapeutic ethic (one measuring everything by self-satisfaction) for the sacrificial ethic (one placing duty over personal survival)*** essential for sustaining national security and social survival; and

WHEREAS, Normalizing the open presence of homosexuals in the armed forces will result in pressuring Southern Baptist and other biblically faithful military chaplains to restrict or redefine the gospel message, first by censoring their teaching of the biblical definition of sin, and second by trying to change their beliefs about what is sinful and immoral by requiring them to attend “sensitivity sessions” meant to indoctrinate personnel who resist normalizing openly present homosexuals in all aspects of military life; and

WHEREAS, Those who would equate the normalizing of homosexuality with the right and just action of President Truman ... to undo racial segregation within the armed

services in the mid-twentieth century wrongly confuse the indulgence of immoral behavior with God-given civil rights; and ...

RESOLVED, That the... Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Orlando, Florida, June 15-16, 2010, affirms the Bible's declaration that *homosexual behavior is intrinsically disordered and sinful*, and we also affirm the Bible's promise of forgiveness, change, and eternal life to all sinners (including those engaged in homosexual sin) who repent of sin and trust in the saving power of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:9-11); and be it further

RESOLVED, That we oppose changing current law to normalize the open presence of homosexuals in the armed forces. . .

RESOLVED, That we commend Southern Baptist efforts to engage in loving, redemptive ministry to homosexuals and encourage all Southern Baptists to consider how they might assist those struggling against same-sex attractions to find spiritual, sexual, and emotional wholeness in Christ.

ON THE EMPLOYMENT NON-DISCRIMINATION ACT

June 2010

WHEREAS, Christians face a series of challenges to religious liberty—such as “hate crimes” laws around the world that would criminalize the preaching of the gospel, laws requiring Christian orphan ministries to facilitate adoptions to homosexual couples, the erosion of conscience clauses enabling health care workers to refuse to participate in abortion-related activities, and so forth; and

WHEREAS,... The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) that has been introduced in the House of Representatives (HR 3017, with 202 co-sponsors) as well as in the Senate (S 1584, with 45 co-sponsors) would radically alter the idea of protected classes in American law, granting such things as sexual orientation the same employment protections as gender and race, placing these immoral and aberrant behaviors on the same level as the immutable traits of gender and ancestry; and

WHEREAS, ENDA would make it illegal for businesses and organizations with fifteen or more employees to fire or to refuse to hire or promote an employee because of his or her actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity; and

WHEREAS, Such legislation jeopardizes our First Amendment freedoms by establishing in law the principle that disapproval of homosexual conduct is a form of bigotry, equivalent to racism; and

WHEREAS, Homosexual persons are not our enemies but our neighbors whom we love and wish to see find the same forgiveness and freedom we have found in Christ; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Orlando, Florida, June 15-16, 2010, express our profound opposition to Employment

Non-Discrimination Act and any similar legislation ...

"He is purple — the gay-pride color, and his antenna is shaped like a triangle — the gay pride symbol." –from a "Parents Alert" issued in Jerry Falwell's National Liberty Journal, warning that "Tinky Winky," a character on the popular PBS children's show, "Teletubbies," may be gay.

RESOLUTION ON MORAL STEWARDSHIP AND THE DISNEY COMPANY

June 1997

WHEREAS, Many entertainment providers including, but not limited to, The Disney Company are increasingly promoting immoral ideologies such as homosexuality, infidelity, and adultery, which are biblically reprehensible and abhorrent to God and His plan for the world that He loves; and ...

WHEREAS, We realize that we cannot do everything to stop the moral decline in our nation, but we must do what lies before us when it is right through a proper use of our influence, energies, and prayers, particularly when it affects our nations children;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, ...*That the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Dallas, Texas, June 17-19, 1997, urge(s) every Southern Baptist to ... refrain from patronizing The Disney Company and any of its related entities,* understanding that this is not an attempt to bring The Disney Company down, but to bring Southern Baptists up to the moral standard of God; and ...

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, ... That we urge all Southern Baptists to graciously communicate the reasons for their individual actions to The Disney Company and other companies. ...

RESOLUTION ON DISNEY COMPANY POLICY

June 1996

WHEREAS, Southern Baptists and their children have for many decades enjoyed and trusted The Disney company's television programming, feature-length films and theme parks which have reinforced basic American virtues and values;

WHEREAS, in recent years, The Disney Company has given the appearance that the promotion of homosexuality is more important than its historic commitment to traditional family values ... and

WHEREAS, ... Disney's moral leadership has been eroded by a variety of corporate decisions, which have included but are not limited to:

—Establishing of an employee policy which accepts and embraces homosexual relationships for the purpose of insurance benefits; ... Publishing of a book aimed at teenage homosexuals entitled Growing Up Gay: From Left Out to Coming Out ... connecting Disney to the promotion of the homosexual agenda ...

WHEREAS, These and other corporate decisions and actions represent a significant departure from Disney's family-values image, and a gratuitous insult to Christians ... who have long supported Disney and contributed to its corporate profits; and ...

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we affirm the employees of The Disney Company who embrace and share our concerns; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we encourage Southern Baptists to give serious and prayerful reconsideration to their purchase and support of Disney products, and to boycott The Disney Company and theme parks if they continue this anti-Christian and anti-family trend; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Convention requests the Executive Committee to send a copy of this resolution to Michael Eisner, CEO of The Disney Company, and ***to encourage the Southern Baptist family to support this boycott with our purchasing power, letters, and influence.***

RESOLUTION ON THE REALITY OF HELL

June 2011

WHEREAS, Rob Bell, in his 2011 book, Love Wins, has called into question the church's historical teaching on the doctrine of eternal punishment of the unregenerate, and ...

WHEREAS, God must judge the unregenerate because He is a holy God whose judgments are altogether righteous (Psalm 96:10; Romans 2:1-5; Revelation 15:3); and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures affirm that this judgment of the unconverted is a judgment unto conscious, eternal suffering apart from the steadfast love and grace of God (Matthew 7:23; 25:46; Luke 16:22-25; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10); and

WHEREAS, Jesus Christ and the apostles, out of their love for lost people, affirmed the reality of Hell in their own preaching to urge sinners to receive the grace of God, to repent of their sins ... (Matthew 10:28; John 10:10; Acts 17:30-31); and

WHEREAS, The prospect of fellow human beings, created in the image of God, spending eternity in Hell grieves us deeply; and ...

WHEREAS, The Baptist Faith & Message affirms the biblical teaching that "Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment" (Article X. Last Things); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention do hereby affirm our belief in the biblical teaching of eternal, punishment of the unregenerate in Hell; and be it finally ...

RESOLVED, *That out of our love for Christ and His glory*, and our love for lost people and our deep desire that they not suffer eternally in Hell, *we implore Southern Baptists to proclaim ... the reality of Hell*, and the salvation of sinners by God's grace alone, in Jesus Christ alone, to the glory of God alone.

And that's enough from them, for right now.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

PRAY AWAY THE GAY!

One day, I am driving Vincent to work. (Not his real name.)

Vincent and his partner Josh (also not his real name) live together just across the field from my miniature museum. Vincent does not have a car, so I drive him to work when I can, especially when the weather is inclement.

Then, one day, just outside McDonald's, we stop at a red light, right next to an ominous black pick-up truck, and Vincent informs me that the man driving said truck is nothing less than the proud and publicly proclaimed head of the Appomattox KKK, and that he confronted Vincent late one night at the Huddle House Diner about his sexuality. *"You really a faggot?"* and all that kind of thing.

This is just one of many horror stories I have heard about gays being harassed in this area. Southern Baptists are very clear about their feelings regarding homosexuality. Personally, when I hear stories like this, I can only think of one thing that makes Vincent's story different than that of Matthew Shepard: alcohol.

What happens when one of these good old Appomattoxins gets liquored up?

I remember driving by that black truck, and the squinty-eyed man behind the wheel. He eyeballs Vincent, then me. I have never gotten a look like that from anyone in my life. It was bone chilling. The stare he gave me...

A few days later, Vincent is fired from his job at the Appomattox Wendy's for "stealing". He tells me, near tears (Vincent is the most honest man I have ever met) that not only is he innocent, they have no proof. And interestingly enough, Wendy's does not file charges, does not press charges. It just wants him gone, apparently. At the same time, the other "known gays" are fired from other local Wendy's restaurants.

Meanwhile, this from a Wendy's in the Carolinas:

"A major Wendy's franchise owner wants Chick-fil-A, the fast-food chicken chain embroiled in a blowup over its CEO's anti-gay comments, to know it's not alone. Signs at a number of Wendy's franchises in the Carolinas read, 'WE STAND WITH CHICK-FIL-A', appearing on Wednesday, according to photos submitted to Reddit. The signs have since been removed. Jim Furman, CEO of Wendy's franchise Tar Heel Capital in the Carolinas, one of the largest Wendy's franchises worldwide, told WBTW that the company decided to post the message. He said the signs were later taken down because Wendy's 'felt it was time to go back to their marketing message.' Wendy's pushed back on Twitter, saying that an independent franchisee posted the signs and

that the burger chain proudly serves all customers... Bearing that in mind, this franchisee has decided to remove the messages from his restaurant signs.”

—Melissa Jeltsen, Huffington Post

There may be hope for my fag friend Vincent, though. The miracle happened for long time single-spinster business woman Linda Wall, who has acquired her exhaustive knowledge of the free enterprise market economy through her entrepreneurial triumph, Linda's Buttons and Fun Fotos, which exists somewhere in the 2.2 square miles which constitute the town of Appomattox, but I have never seen it in the two years I lived there, and there is no way one can find her business or contact her on the internet. Yet she wants to serve her fellow citizens by offering her services as a custodian of our government. She wishes to be a part of the body politic.

Breaking news, Appomattox County
From the newspaper News & Advance, Lynchburg
Story by Scott Leamon, excerpted:

Appomattox House candidate says God cured her of homosexuality!

Independent candidate for the 59th District (Appomattox County) House of Delegates seat in Central Virginia, Linda Wall, admitted to an Associated Press reporter she had a lesbian affair forty years ago when she was a junior high school teacher with a student.

“When you go into politics you expect your skeletons to come out ... The voters can judge me but I know I'll be judged by the ultimate judge for my mistakes,”

...She called the affair a “youthful” mistake made in her early 20s. Wall said a few years later God cured her of her homosexuality.

“I had a miracle happen in my life through the power of the Lord,” Wall explained. Wall said she speaks to church groups about being “ex-gay” and has appeared in a documentary about the subject.

“I call what's going on today criminal in telling people they're born [gay] when there's no scientific evidence to prove that anymore,” Wall said.

“Most people don't want to go to the ‘s’ word today, which is the word ‘sin,’ but that's how I'm going to label it because I believe the Bible is the word of God.”

Wall acknowledged some people will find her comments offensive. She said she spent two years researching “myths” and “lies” about homosexuality.

“For example,” Wall said, “[a woman] that never bonded with her mother; that mother-daughter bond was never very close.” Wall said that could be one reason why some women turn to homosexuality. “I was heartbroken by a guy and that's another

characteristic ... Many women have been molested in the past or raped. I do not have any of that in my past,” Wall said.

She describes her political views as conservative.”

Ya think???

GOOGLE IMAGES: Linda Wall Appomattox, to put a face on the name. This sturdy woman is ready to fight the good fight against faggots everywhere—and by the way, she also blamed smoking pot on turning her temporarily gay.

Stay tuned for later in “Wigger”, when Linda Wall finds herself embroiled in a consulting service that turns into an international kidnapping and a violation of the RICO act. Yes, you read right. RICO, as in Tony Soprano, Christopher, Silvio, Paulie Walnuts, Big Pussy and all that.

Only this happened at Jerry Falwell’s own Liberty University, and involved the head of their Law School.

(In fact, the kid is still missing. Wait till you find out who knows where she is.)

Heard a few days later, on the local all-Baptist radio station, as I am cruising the 460:

“ ... So when you hear that another homosexual has succumbed to AIDS, don’t cheer and celebrate, and tell people, ‘Hooray, another faggot is burning in hell!’ No, no, no. That’s wrong! You should be sorry for them, that they’re burning in hell. It’s so sad, isn’t it, when a soul can’t be saved for Christ?”

And now, since I find that this little book of mine, “Wigger,” causes me to lose my sense of humor, let us turn to Dorothy and her ruby slippers, ask her to click them three times, and let us leave this chapter with the magic of laughter... .

QUEER ON MY EAR:

Jesse Helms and Newt Gingrich were shaking hands, congratulating themselves on the introduction of an anti-gay bill in Congress. If it passes, they won’t be able to shake hands, because it will then be illegal for a prick to touch an asshole.

—Judy Carter

Homosexuality in Russia is a crime and the punishment is seven years in prison, locked up with the other men. There is a three year waiting list.

—Yakov Smirnoff

There's this illusion that homosexuals have sex and heterosexuals fall in love. That's completely untrue. Everybody wants to be loved.

—Boy George

Labels are for filing. Labels are for clothing. Labels are not for people.

—Martina Navratilova

The Lord is my Shepherd and he knows I'm gay.

—The Reverend Troy Perry

(He was a licensed Baptist preacher by the age of fifteen; naturally, that did not last and his life's history after that time makes fascinating reading.)

Never apologize for showing feeling. When you do so, you apologize for the truth.

—Benjamin Disraeli

The Bible contains six admonishments to homosexuals and 362 admonishments to heterosexuals. That doesn't mean that God doesn't love heterosexuals. It's just that they need more supervision.

—Lynn Lavner

If homosexuality is a sickness, let's all call in queer to work: "Hello. Can't work today, still queer."

—Robin Tyler

I once had a large gay following, but I ducked into an alley and lost him.

—Emo Philips

Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.

—Dr. Seuss

I get sick of listening to straight people complain about, "Well, hey, we don't have a heterosexual-pride day, why do you need a gay-pride day?" I remember when I was a kid I'd always ask my mom: "Why don't we have a Kid's Day? We have a Mother's Day and a Father's Day, but why don't we have a Kid's Day?" My mom would always say, "Every day is Kid's Day." To all those heterosexuals that bitch about gay pride, I say the same thing: Every day is heterosexual-pride day! Can't you people enjoy your banquet and not piss on those of us enjoying our crumbs over here in the corner?

—Rob Nash

If Michelangelo had been straight, the Sistine Chapel would have been wallpapered.

—Robin Tyler

I realize that homosexuality is a serious problem for anyone who is - but then, of course, heterosexuality is a serious problem for anyone who is, too. And being a man is a serious problem and being a woman is, too. Lots of things are problems.

—Edward Gorey

Anita Bryant like Anita hole in the head.

—Graffiti

Homosexuality is god's way of insuring that the truly gifted aren't burdened with children.

—Sam Austin

Soldiers who are not afraid of guns, bombs, capture, torture or death say they are afraid of homosexuals. Clearly we should not be used as soldiers; we should be used as weapons.

—Letter to the editor, The Advocate

I'm a supporter of gay rights. And not a closet supporter either. From the time I was a kid, I have never been able to understand attacks upon the gay community. There are so many qualities that make up a human being... by the time I get through with all the things that I really admire about people, what they do with their private parts is probably so low on the list that it is irrelevant.

—Paul Newman

Straight Americans need... an education of the heart and soul. They must understand - to begin with - how it can feel to spend years denying your own deepest truths, to sit silently through classes, meals, and church services while people you love toss off remarks that brutalize your soul.

—Bruce Bawer in The Advocate, 28 April 1998

I believe that one day the world will judge the witch hunt against homosexuals just as harshly as it judges the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust.

—Mae West

The radical right is so homophobic that they're blaming global warming on the AIDS quilt.

—Dennis Miller

When I was in the military they gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one.

—Leonard P. Matlovich

Why is it that, as a culture, we are more comfortable seeing two men holding guns than holding hands?

—Ernest Gaines

Abigail Van Buren, "DEAR ABBY" Had a pithy response to a reader who complained that "a gay couple was moving in across the street and wanted to know what he could do to improve the quality of the neighborhood?" She quipped, "You could move."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

"JESUS HATES THE HOMOFAGS"

"These so-called Gay Folks would as soon kill you as look at you!"

—Jerry Falwell, at a rally in Miami, Florida, 1977

"You lice infested, tobacco chewing, flip flop wearing, child molesting, cross dressing fag. Get a grip..."

—Posted on Appomattox Forum, TOPIX

Christian Conservatives declare war on "Gay" at Liberty University

by Michael Stone

April 14, 2011

Excerpted from the examiner.com

Last weekend at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, Christian conservatives were caught on tape planning a war not only on gays and lesbians, but a war on the word "gay" itself. The occasion was the Awakening Conference. There, social conservatives, convinced that there is some sort of nefarious "homosexual agenda", planned a counter attack against what they perceive to be a dangerous liberal conspiracy to promote the gay lifestyle ... Ryan Sorba, chairman of the Young Conservatives of California, made the following remarks:

" 'Gay' is a left-wing socio-political construct designed to create grounds for fundamental rights [based on] whimsical capricious desires. Gay identity does not exist. Stop using the word 'gay.' Because, if we give them this term that is grounded in an identity we're giving - we're conceding to the premise that it is an identity and the rest of the debate we're on their ground — we're on their terms. He who defines the terms controls the debate, and by extension, public opinion. What we need to do is state that this is same-sex attraction, or maybe they engage in same-sex intercourse, or sodomy — whatever word you're comfortable using."

(Wigger Author's note: What if we're not comfortable using any of the choices you've offered up?)

Sorba suggests that religious conservatives should refuse to use the word 'gay'. Instead, they should re-brand the term. The American Independent reports that Sorba proposed alternatives to the word "gay," which received approval by a unanimous show of hands by the 40-some audience members:

“Same-sex attraction”

“Same-sex intercourse”

“Sodomy”

“Unnatural vice”

Later in the discussion, it was suggested that gays should also be referred to as “anti-Christian”.

End excerpted article

As the author of this book, I don't think this bears commenting upon; I think the Awakening Conference Speaks for itself.

Now, here is what happens when Liberty University, which receives almost a half a billion dollars in your tax dollars via federal Pell grants, is confronted with gays attempting to tell their side of the story. (The murky waters of Liberty University's odd relationship with the federal government, and their even odder relationship with the Civil Rights Act in its various incarnations, is the subject for another book. Remember, we are focusing on Liberty University only inasmuch as it represents the best and brightest of Appomattox. Which, *I think*, explains a lot.)

Gay Rights Activists Arrested at Liberty University

Published March 10, 2006

Associated Press

More than 20 gay rights activists were arrested on trespassing charges Friday when they stepped onto the campus of Liberty University, the school founded by the Reverend Jerry Falwell. Many of the activists were part of Soulforce, a Lynchburg-based group on its first stop of a nationwide “Equality Ride” tour to promote gay rights at the nation's conservative Christian universities and military academies.

Invoking the memory of the civil rights movement, Soulforce member Jacob Reitan said: “We want to come to the school today to say, ‘learn from history.’ We have a right to be here, because this school teaches that being gay is being sick and sinful,” said Reitan, co-director of Equality Ride. “We have a right to question and to show how we are children of God.” Reitan and other Soulforce members said they did not intend to be arrested at the campus, but just hoped to talk to Liberty students. “If you put a face on a gay or lesbian person, it's harder to discriminate,” said Haven Herrin, the tour's other leader.

Some 60 people, including 35 members of the Equality Ride bus tour, gathered for the late morning rally on a sidewalk outside the school's main entrance. A music group played guitars and sang 1960s peace songs. The 20 activists who actually entered the campus were arrested immediately. Several Liberty students spoke to the Soulforce members.

But the group didn't always find support. Comparing homosexuals to drug users and adulterers, Liberty senior Tray Faulkner said the University disapproves of any alternative lifestyle. "I know you guys don't think it's a sin," he said. "We do."

Campus police charged all of those arrested with trespassing ...they were restrained in plastic handcuffs before being taken to a local magistrate. Falwell, the university's chancellor, had warned the group that it would not be permitted on campus, saying he would not allow his school to be used for a media event aimed at raising money for gay rights.

"Neither will we permit them to espouse opinions or otherwise suggest beliefs or lifestyles that are in opposition to the morals and values that this institution promotes," Falwell said in a statement issued earlier.

END ARTICLE EXCERPT

Of course, this is the same Jerry Falwell who believed that Tinky Winky from Teletubbies was gay because he was purple, the color of gay pride. Jerry Falwell also had this to say about homosexuals and AIDS:

"AIDS is the wrath of a just God against homosexuals. To oppose it would be like an Israelite jumping in the Red Sea to save one of Pharaoh's charioteers ... AIDS is not just God's punishment for homosexuals; it is God's punishment for the society that tolerates homosexuals."

Let me repeat myself: Falwell's Liberty University receives almost half a billion dollars in federal funding, yet does not need to comply with federal civil rights guidelines and legislation. Why? Because of a holy loophole: the school actually receives the money in the form of Pell Grants—as in, the students actually get ***paid*** to learn these fascinating aforementioned tidbits—dinosaurs on the ark, gays burning in hell, etc.

Putting it another way: the school does not actual get the money directly; it woos the students to enroll via gross misrepresentations, then the student applies for and receives the grant, and then the student hands it over to Liberty. Total all the Pell grants, and Liberty gets about 20 million more a year than National Public Radio.

And yet still, the University has nearly gone bankrupt, on more than one occasion. To quote Salon Magazine writer Alex Pareene, *"The school was broke and in debt until God killed Falwell for the insurance money."*

FUN FACT: Soulforce, which must seem like such a radical organization to the likes of Liberty students, was actually founded by the man who not only used to work for Jerry Falwell, but who ghost wrote the books of Jerry Falwell, Oral Roberts, and others.

When Mel White realized that he was gay, he also realized that the church needed to find ways to be inclusive of the gay community—a gay community which in overwhelming numbers very much believes in a Higher Power, and wishes to worship

that Higher Power openly and with dignity. That is one of the many aims of Soulforce.

As for White's lingering connection to Falwell, White and his partner Gary Nixon frequently attend Thomas Road Baptist Church to monitor what Falwell says in the pulpit about sexuality and politics. They have been known to stand up in silent protest when the preacher says something that they believe is wrong.

JENNIFER WRIGHT KNUST

Quite frankly, I think that the brains seeking higher education and deeper wisdom at religious universities such as Liberty need to keep a more open mind. And the news is good: they can do that without straying too far out of their comfort zone.

There is an astonishing woman with so many credits that I get weary listing them; I can only imagine the kind of energy and dedication it took for her to accrue them.

Firstly, she is a woman that Liberty University should be comfortable with because she is, in fact, a Baptist. She has written a book entitled "Unprotected Texts", (yes, very clever), and the primary thrust (no pun intended) is that the Bible is so full of diverse and even conflicting messages regarding certain matters—in the case of the above mentioned book, sex—that we ought not receive it as pure and strict dicta, but rather as a book which opens us up to possibilities—and more importantly, to tolerance.

To put it in my own terms, I am always fascinated at how fundamentalists have arbitrarily decided that certain parts of the Bible which prescribe and proscribe behavior are just automatically more important than the passage which states "Judge Not, Lest Ye Be Judged." (Matthew 7v1.) I always thought that one's own behavior, good or flawed, was a matter to be discussed and ultimately settled between one's self and one's God, as we understand him.

Others do not need to run around judging us; there is probably enough wanting in their own quest for perfection that they shouldn't have much spare energy or time for judging others. (That is, of course, unless it morphs into a matter which causes the police to come knocking. For better or worse, church and state do blur and blend sometimes.)

But, because this book "Wigger" can't help but spend some of its time lampooning Liberty University, I must offer up the credentials in full of Jennifer Wright Knust, as an example of a Baptist that Liberty University and similar institutions should seek out. Hang on to your hat; you'll get tired just reading about her accomplishments. And in her picture (I cannot find her age), she doesn't look over 35. When did she accomplish all these things? Goodness.

From the website goodreads:

Jennifer Wright Knust is Assistant Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at Boston University. She came to BU from the College of the Holy Cross, where she taught Religious Studies for five years. At BU, she is appointed to the faculties of the School of Theology and the College of Arts and Sciences and is affiliated with the Religion Department, Judaic Studies, and the Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies Program.

A graduate of the University of Illinois, Urbana, she earned her Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary (New York) and then served as an American Baptist pastor before returning to New York City to earn her Master of Philosophy and Doctorate of Religion from Columbia University. She has published widely on the New Testament, Christian history, ancient rhetoric, the transmission of the Gospels, and the interpretation of sacred texts by early Christian writers. Her recent publications include a study of sexualized name-calling among ancient writers (*Abandoned to Lust: Sexual Slander and Ancient Christianity*, Columbia University Press 2005), an analysis of the transmission and reception of the story of the woman taken in adultery, ("Early Christian Re-Writing and the History of the Pericope Adulterae," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2006), and a forthcoming volume on sacrifice in the ancient Mediterranean world (*Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice*, edited with Zsuzsanna Varhélyi, Oxford University Press). She was inspired to write her most recent book, *Unprotected Texts: The Bible's Surprising Contradictions about Sex and Desire*, by her mother, who taught her that the Bible should never be used as a cover for cruelty and self-righteousness.

Professor Knust has been the recipient of a number of prizes and awards, including fellowships from the Association of Theological Schools-Henry Luce III Foundation, the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Association of University Women. She has also participated in a number of specialized seminars and research projects, including the Summer Program in Advanced Paleography at the American Academy in Rome and the Summer Program in Medieval Greek at the Gennadius Library, Athens. A recipient of various teaching awards, she teaches graduate and undergraduate courses on the New Testament, early Christianity, the history of the Bible, gender theory, women and religion, the Gospels, and ancient Greek.

Ordained by the American Baptist Churches, USA, Professor Knust remains an active member of the First Baptist Church of Jamaica Plain, where she directs the children's Sunday School, and maintains close ties to her home church, the First Baptist Church of Mount Vernon, Maine. Together with her partner Stefan Knust, she has raised two wonderful sons, Axel and Leander.

END BIOGRAPHY.

I am not going to natter on at length about her book, except to suggest that if it

sounds interesting, give it a look; certainly the very closed minds at Liberty University should consider doing so. It is my belief that books like Knust's, along with a basic understanding of the political power brokering which transpired at the Council of Nicaea, would go a long way towards calming down fundamentalists and the extreme way in which they cling to those passages which support their social, political, and fiscal agendas, while blissfully ignoring those passages which are "inconvenient."

Here is some food for thought from Knust's book:

"Whatever I am teaching, however, I usually begin by asking participants what they wish the Bible said about the topic at hand. Do we wish that the Bible would reject war as a political strategy? Or perhaps we believe that the Bible should support defensive if not offensive wars. Do we wish that the Bible would confirm gay marriage, instead of rejecting it as so many Christians insist? Or perhaps our concern has to do with the role of women. Perhaps we wish that Paul had not told women to be silent and learn from their husbands at home, especially since talkative and independent women can be found throughout the Bible just as often as silent, obedient women. Whatever we wish for, I point out, probably can be found somewhere in the Bible, which is why it is so important to admit that we have wishes, whatever they may be. We are not passive recipients of what the Bible says, but active interpreters who make decisions about what we will believe and what we will affirm. Admitting that we have wishes, and that our wishes matter, is therefore the first step to developing an honest and faithful interpretation.

Once upon a time, the followers of Jesus knew that they were interpreting the Bible, not simply extracting truth from a set of divinely inspired texts."

And to "bookend" this excerpt from "Unprotected Texts," I will also add this comment of Knust's made during an interview that took place in February 2011 between the author and Stephen Prothero:

"...We are human beings, not God. By claiming that we can be certain about matters that we only partially understand, we are placing ourselves in the role of God. From a Christian perspective anyway, this is a serious sin. Certainty is not granted to us. As an American Baptist, an heir to both the radical Reformation and abolitionist American Protestantism, I would affirm the interpretive perspective adopted by anti-slavery activists in the 18th and 19th centuries and insist that loving one's neighbor is God's chief requirement."

The forums on the Liberty University website are not quite like anything I have ever encountered. They remind me of how I feel when I am listening to the illogical world of Wonderland as portrayed in Jefferson Airplane's "Go Ask Alice," while I am tripping on acid, except for that I have never done acid, which is good, because the Liberty

University Honor Code forbids that kind of thing. You can't even drink at Liberty. Handholding is the ONLY acceptable form of personal contact. A woman can't wear a top that has straps less than two inches wide at Liberty. Men's hair should be cut in such a way that it does not come over the ears. The Residential Director can spot check rooms for inappropriate posters or other art. Students may not attend "R" rated movies. Some PG-13 and PG movies are also considered inappropriate and are not to be viewed; the Division of Student Affairs will keep you posted with a specific list. Hefty fines, suspension, and expulsion are the price that will be paid by scofflaws.

Then again, the Liberty Way Handbook actually uses the word "horseplay." You just gotta love an Honor Code that still uses the word "horseplay." More on the "Fighting Fundamental Forums" later in "Wigger," but for now, let's focus on this gem of a posting:

A STUDENT COMMENTS

What you will read below is a student on one of Liberty University's own forums defending her/his University, in response to somebody criticizing Liberty's anti-gay attitude. (How anti-Gay? Liberty pulled the Democratic Club's permit because the Democratic Party supports equal rights for the LGBT community.)

Here is the forum posting, verbatim:

LIBERTY is an amazing university. They are not a judge. I agree that theres only one judge who is God. But don't base your view of the university on a few people! Wake up people! you cant be gay and also be a christian, i mean dont you seeeeee what the bible says about being homosexual!?! gahh thats a total contradiction. Its not a crappy school and its not pathetic, give it a chance. yeah obviously if someones not a christian, there not goina like it, so dont go around bad mouthing a place others cherish. If you think liberty's full of hypocrits your just seeing a few ppl who say their christians but are not acting the way a christain should act. There are really good people there who are not hypocrits.

MY RESPONSE:

To whoever you are, little Christian, who wrote the forum posting above...oooops... ***you have 33 mistakes in a single paragraph! OMG!!!*** That is astonishing. It also makes Liberty University look as incompetent as you are illiterate, a tragic state of affairs, since the thesis of your forum post is to defend your youniversity. I find myself asking—33 mistakes in one little paragraph... .33...the same age Christ lived to be... Is there some mystical, Baptist-cabalistic thing that I am missing here, some numerology message embedded in your Papal Bull?

Now, a couple of things. I am going to give you this advice for free, little Christian,

even though I have made a decent living being paid to teach students to write and communicate.

“Homophones” and “Homonyms” are such fun words to learn about, and I can hardly wait to teach you about them.

A “homophone” is a word that is pronounced the same as another word, but differs in meaning. If the homophones are not only pronounced the same, but are spelled the same as well, then they are called “homographs” or “homonyms”. An example would be the word “rose”. You can say “I gave her a single red **rose**.” (Referencing the flower, of course.) Or I can say “Laughter **rose** in my throat when I read your illiterate post.” (Referencing the past tense of the verb “rise.”) Other examples of homophones would be wave, bat, forearm, exact, light, bow, order, change, just, bear, match, bug, sign, rock, kind, down, crane, yard, trip, sink, bark, left, right, fine, hand, and cock.

Homophones that are spelled differently from one another are called “heterographs.” These are infamous, even among the first graders I baby-sit: the most famous are “their”, “there,” and of course, “they’re.” Other fine examples are “which” and “witch”, “too”, “two”, and “to”, “bale” and “bail”, “wore” and “war”, “bald” and “balled”, “sew” and “so”, and sew forth. Oh, also, “cock” and “caulk”.

Now here is the part where, uh, er, I have to humiliate you. If you nose around the credible teaching sites and institutions, you learn that there are fun books that teach about these different concepts (Ok, maybe not using exactly all of the words that I chose as examples), and they are geared FOR AGES 4-6. As in, Kindergarten and First Grade.

This puts me in the uncomfortable position of informing you that you are obviously not yet capable of writing at even a First Grade level. (Yet, Liberty University, oddly enough, still allowed you to enroll.) Which means, little Christian, that you should probably stay away from attempting to opine about really, really, really, like, really, really important concepts such as liberty, homosexuality, and, well, like, god, until you have, well—have developed a, well, like, brain.

Sorry. But that’s just how it is.

There’s good news, though. (No, not **that** kind of Good News, little Christian.) Some starter books I can recommend for you, to teach you about these fun and super-important types of words, the homophones and so forth, are “Dear Deer”, written by his Aunt Ant, “The King who Rained”, and “Chocolate Moose for Dinner”. These fun, **heavily illustrated** books are recommended for four year olds, so I don’t think you should have too much trouble mastering them.

Although I could be wrong about that.

(Bye the weigh: My editor suggested to me that perhaps your reluctance to learn about these important words like “Homophones” and “Homonyms” is because they have the root word “Homo” in them, and you are afraid that if you study them, you might, vicariously, become a faggot or a queerbait. Not a bit of it. These words have nothing to

do with homosexuality, just a little thing I like to call “The King’s English.”)

Oh, and one last, important observation: based on your post, if that level of writing is a reflection of what you have learned in the classroom, then Liberty IS a crappy school, to paraphrase your own eloquent parlance. LOL!

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

FALWELL AND MOON-SHINE

I could have some respect for Liberty University, and for the people who *are* Liberty University, if they were at least true to themselves. It is one thing to disagree with people in the extreme, it is quite another to find that they will sell-out all their supposedly dearly held principles for filthy lucre.

For example, here's a shocker. There is probably only one reason that Liberty University even exists any more, and only one person responsible for keeping Liberty from drowning in a Red Sea of debt. That man's name:

Sun Myung Moon.

Yup. The kook. You remember him. Mass weddings, sometimes 30,000 people at a time, who had never met and who had been hand selected for breeding by the Reverend himself. Finally kicked the bucket in 2012, at the ripe old age of ninety-two.

You might say he owns Liberty. Granted, he technically does not own Liberty (much as your mortgage company technically does not own your home, you own your home. You just owe the mortgage company a million bucks, and sometimes it feels like, your first born.)

Intrepid journalist Robert Parry got to the bottom of an almost unfathomably obfuscated financial mystery in his article "The Dark Side of Reverend Moon: Buying the Right" from The Consortium. And who do you think got burned the worst in this evil imbroglio? All the poor little Ma 'n Pa' who listened to Jerry Falwell and believed that he (Falwell), his family, his mansion, and his sprawling Fundamentalist Factory of Learning needed their last few dollars in savings, their retirement money, their nest egg.

Explains Parry:

On Jan. 28, 1995, a beaming Reverend Jerry Falwell told his Old Time Gospel Hour congregation news that seemed heaven sent. The televangelist hailed two Virginia businessmen as financial saviors of debt-ridden Liberty University, the fundamentalist Christian school that Falwell had made the crown jewel of his Religious Right empire. "They had to borrow money, hock their houses, hock everything," enthused Falwell. "Thank God for friends like Dan Reber and Jimmy Thomas." Falwell's congregation rose as one to applaud.

The star of the moment was Daniel Reber, who was standing behind Falwell. Thomas was not present. Reber and Thomas earned Falwell's public gratitude by excusing Liberty of about one-half of its 73 million dollar debt. In the late 1980's, that

flood of red ink had forced Falwell to abandon his Moral Majority political organization and nearly drowned Liberty University in bankruptcy. Reber and Thomas came to Falwell's rescue in the nick of time. Their non-profit Christian Heritage Foundation of Forest, Va., snapped up a big chunk of Liberty's debt for \$2.5 million, a fraction of its face value.

Thousands of small religious investors who had bought church construction bonds through a Texas company were the big losers.

But Falwell shed no tears. He told local reports that the moment was *"the single greatest day of financial advantage in the school's history."*

Left unmentioned in the happy sermon was the identity of the bigger guardian angel who had been protecting Falwell's financial interests-from a distance and without publicity. That secret benefactor was the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, the self-proclaimed South Korean Messiah who is controversial with many fundamentalist Christians because of his bizarre Biblical interpretations and his brainwashing tactics that have torn thousands of young people from their families. Moon has also grown harshly anti-American in recent years. Covertly, Moon helped bail out Liberty University through one of his front groups, which funneled 3.5 million to the Reber-Thomas Christian Heritage Foundation, the non-profit that had purchased the school's debt.

You can read that article in it entirety, and more articles about Moon, by Googling consortiumnews.com The Reverend Sun Myung Moon.

But you don't have to, take it from me, Moon is creepy. His is a megalomaniac, he is creepy, he is controlling, and he has an evil agenda. Of course, that's just my opinion, I could be wrong.

QUOTES FROM THE REVEREND:

"Am I foolish and insignificant or am I great? I gave all the individuals in the world cause to kneel down in front of me."

—Rev. Moon, *Today's World*, March 1995 p.6

(Today's World is a magazine published by the Unification Church for Unification Church members.)

"The time has come when the whole world must be concerned about me. From now on, American Christianity must follow me."

—Sun Myung Moon, *Today's World*, November 1993, p.5

"I served the famous professors and scholars, and eventually they learned that the Reverend Moon is superior to them.... Even Nobel laureate academics who thought they were at the center of knowledge are as nothing in front of me."

—Rev. Moon, *Today's World*, April 1995 p.6

"After being released from Danbury prison, I prevailed over the U.S. Congress within seven years. Do you understand? I prevailed over the United Nations General Assembly in seven years."

—Rev. Moon, *Today's World*, March 1995, pp. 6-7

"Any politician who wants to run for president will come to me in a few years."

—Rev. Moon, *Today's World*, Nov/Dec 1994, p. 19

"When you bow to True Parents' picture and display the Unification Church flag, Satan will have to go far away from your home."

—Rev. Moon, *Today's World*, January 1995 p.14

ON MARRIAGE

You will be happy to die on the earliest possible date. You will be pleased, won't you? (Yes!) But before you die, you must be blessed in marriage! If you die without getting blessed in marriage, it will be awful. So, wait until that time to die. Your physical parents too would like to have you get married before you die, at least.

ON DEMOCRACY

My dream is to organize a Christian political party including the Protestant denominations, Catholic and all the religious sects. Then, the communist power will be helpless before ours....But when it comes to our age, we must have an automatic theocracy to rule the world. So, we cannot separate the political field from the religious. Democracy was born because people ruled the world, like the Pope does. ...The separation between religion and politics is what Satan likes most.

—From MS-366, 9/17/73, Third Directors' Conference, Master Speaks.

ON LYING

If you tell a lie to make a person better, then that is not a sin.

—Page 11, Leader's Speech, Rowlane Farmhouse, March, 16th 1972

ON THE LAW

Americans know that I have brought many young people from all over the world. I have read that the immigration officials say I'm violating immigration laws. Americans don't realize that God has declared war against the satanic power, and that it is not I who have called the youth from all over the world to the United States to fight, but God. I am the commander and you are the volunteer army summoned by God. If the

American people don't realize this an persecute and obstruct you, they will be faced with perdition.

—From MS-456, 2/16/75, Tarrytown,, New York February 16, 1975, Master Speaks, Speech On True Parents' Birthday.

GIVE UP YOUR MIND

First of all, mind must be offered on the alter through True Parents.

—Page 10, Teaching Manual

TALENT OF BLACKS

Father thinks about the three races, yellow, black, and white. Orientals can contribute in the spiritual aspect, white people can contribute in the analytical, scientific area, while black people can contribute in the physical area—physical educational development of physical fitness, the area of health....The talented area of black people is in this physical aspect.

—From MS-432, 7/29/74, Barrytown, New York-July 29, 1974, Master Speaks, Address To Prayer and Fast Participants(I) .

ON JEWS

"Judaism committed a historical sin in front of Jesus, so Jewish people experienced the Holocaust under Hitler. Without God's permission, would it really have been possible for Hitler to do such a massacre?"

—From a speech given in the United States during his 2003 tour

ON SLEEP

In order for us to be able to do this would you prefer to sleep seven hours instead of six? (No.) We are used to sleeping, for instance, six hours. Would you prefer to sleep for seven hours or five hours? (Five.) Would you prefer to sleep four hours or five? (Four.) Would your prefer to go to work without sleeping? (Without sleeping.) I don't want you to die so I will let you sleep barely enough to sustain your life.

—From MS-452, 9/22/74, Tarrytown, New York, September 22, 1974, Master Speaks, Where We Are Situated Now.

ON AMBITION

Our motto this time is for each of the fundraising teams to earn \$12,000.00 a month, a high goal....If I mobilize 1,000 members, each earning \$10,000.00, then we will make three million dollars a month, which is a usable sum. I will train the fund-raising team to make at least \$3,000.00. When I mobilize 10,000 members, it means \$30 million n a month. Then we can buy Pan American Airlines, and the

Empire State Building. We shall buy Ford Motor Company, not to speak of the Empire State Building. That's possible.

"So from this time of peak every people or every organization that goes against the Unification Church will gradually come down or drastically come down and die. Many people will die — those who go against our movement."

—Sun Myung Moon, Master Speaks 2/14/74

("Master Speaks" are transcripts of private lectures for Unification Church members.)

"Let's say there are 500 sons and daughters like you in each state. Then we could control the government. ... The time will come, without my seeking it, that my words will almost serve as law. If I ask a certain thing, it will be done. If I don't want something, it will not be done."

—Sun Myung Moon, Master Speaks 3/24/74

"In one sense, our Heavenly Father will say, 'Reverend Moon is far better than me, the Heavenly Father.' In a short period of time, He will crush the enemy and let them surrender. Our Master senses this kind of feeling of the Heavenly Father. Also, he is proud of himself and appreciates that Jesus Christ's unfinished job of 6,000 years has been completed by him in his lifetime."

—Sun Myung Moon, Master Speaks, July 21, 1974

"Until our mission with the Christians is over, we must quote the Bible and use it to explain the Divine Principle. After we receive the inheritance of the Christian church, we will be free to teach without the Bible."

—Sun Myung Moon, Master Speaks, #7, p.1

"The whole world is in my hand, and I will conquer and subjugate the world."

—Sun Myung Moon, Master Speaks, 5/17/73

This is the man who impressed Falwell so much that Falwell jumped on a plane and went to Korea to court Sun Myung Moon. The Mountain going to Mohammed, you might say. If you were feeling playful.

Falwell's Moral Majority already got bitch-slapped down, in classic Jessie Pinkmam style, and it's not because people have a problem with morals, or even the majority. But you can't have your cake and eat it too; you don't get tax exempt status with the IRS, then get to go rabid trying to influence the outcome of political campaigns with that "charitable" organization.

Keep in mind, as you read “Liberty’s Tyranny”, that the school Sun Myung Moon bought gets more of your tax dollars than NPR.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY AND THE RICO ACT PART ONE: KIDNAPPERS FOR KRIST!

It started out simply enough. Two loving parents, bringing a beautiful child into the world.

As it happened, they brought that child into the world through artificial insemination, with a one Lisa Miller being the biological mother. The reason they went down this road was simple: Lisa Miller and Janet Jenkins had entered into a legal Civil Union in Vermont, and if they were to have a child, this was how it was going to happen, barring either adoption or a miracle.

The Civil Union took place in the year 2000, and the child was born in 2002.

The union fell apart in 2003—and then began the battle.

It was to turn into a full-fledged war that involved kidnapping, the RICO act, and coercing law students to advocate breaking the law.

And who do you think is caught smack in the middle of this crime, and the ongoing investigation of it—an investigation which goes all the way up to the highest echelons of the Federal Bureau of Investigation?

You guessed it. Our beloved Liberty University, about which we have already shared so much. And their legal posse running amok astride a herd of dinosaurs is not going to help get them out of this one.

Before we get to the stuff that reads like a Hollywood movie—like the actual kidnapping itself, and the RICO act being pursued by the F.B.I., let's take a quick look at the chronology of events—all the while respecting that hearts are being broken in the process, and a child's stability is being torn asunder.

During civil dissolution proceedings, primary custody of little Isabella was granted to Lisa Miller, Ms. Miller being the biological mother. Fine so far. Visitation rights were granted to Janet Jenkins, who was Isabella's other parent. Again, divorce being hell, and all other things being equal, fine so far.

Then, it all started to fall apart.

Lisa Miller fled. She hurried from Vermont to the bosom of Liberty University in lovely Lynchburg, Virginia, where she embraced Christ as her Savior and apparently was told by Christ—or someone masquerading as Christ—to cut all ties with the child's other parent. Janet Jenkins was being denied all visitation, *although she had clearly been*

granted such rights by the court. Meanwhile, Lisa Miller made her witness to the world that she had become a fundamentalist Christian, and was no longer a lesbian.

Apparently, Jesus—or more probably Liberty University’s legal counsel—told Lisa Miller to request a court order from the state of Virginia which would declare her, Lisa, to be the child’s sole legal parent and guardian. She did in fact receive such a ruling in 2004, which would appear to have gotten rid of that pesky Vermont lesbian once and for all.

Not so fast. Janet Jenkins appealed, arguing on the basis of the Parental Kidnapping Prevention Act, that the Virginia Court was obligated to comply with the former ruling in Vermont Family Court. The Supreme Court of Virginia agreed, and in November 2006, ordered that Janet Jenkins’ visitation rights with her little Isabella be re-established.

For the next three years, Miller consistently failed to comply with the court’s orders. She denied Janet any and all rights and opportunity to see her child.

Here is where the worm turns: Because Lisa Miller chose to defy the courts and deny Janet Jenkins all rights to see her child, the Vermont courts reversed their stand on parental custody, and in November of 2009, gave sole custody of Isabella to Janet Jenkins, because ***Lisa had never allowed Janet to see the child, in defiance of court orders.***

The handing over of the child was scheduled for January 1st, 2010. (Tragic, yes, how much of her baby’s childhood Janet had already missed.)

But neither Lisa Miller nor little Isabella appeared.

Later in 2010, Lisa Miller petitioned for a writ of certiorari from the United States Supreme Court. The Court declined to hear the case.

For months, a game of cat and mouse was played, as Janet Jenkins and the authorities attempted to locate Lisa Miller and the child—to serve papers, order compliance with the court’s custody change, etcetera. They were ghosts.

Then, the horrible truth became increasingly apparent for all to see: Lisa had kidnapped little Isabella. But she was not just hiding out somewhere in Virginia, around Liberty University. She was not hiding out somewhere in the United States. Lisa Miller had fled the country with little Isabella.

In April of 2011, the FBI arrested Timothy Miller, a Mennonite pastor (no relation to Lisa), and charged him with aiding and abetting the international kidnapping of Isabella. According to the Bureau, the humble Mennonite had left quite a cyber trail. He and other Mennonite missionaries had been discussing the situation via emails, and Timothy had also gone online to make travel arrangements for Lisa and Isabella. He had used his mother-in-law’s credit card to purchase plane tickets which would take Lisa and Isabella first to Canada, from whence they would then fly to El Salvador and then Nicaragua, where Timothy and his family had once served as missionaries.

It creeps me out to say that the first leg of the kidnapping, via the transportation

services of the Mennonite Miller (not a charming horse and buggy, I might add), took place in the Lynchburg Walmart parking lot. I am not proud to boast that I have stood in that particular parking lot many times. Fate is being particularly cruel when your life is dramatically changed for the worse and your family finally torn asunder in a Walmart parking lot, wouldn't you agree?

When Timothy Miller went to trial, he pled not guilty, requested that the charges be moved from Vermont to West Virginia, and he also claimed that he had not been Mirandized.

Then—hang on to your wide brimmed black wool Mennonite hat—the FBI agreed to drop charges against Timothy IF he would agree to cooperate in a case against a one Mennonite pastor Kenneth Miller (again, believe it or not, no relation to Lisa or Timothy, who were also no relation to each other). Timothy agreed.

To make a long story somewhat shorter, the upshot is: Kenneth Miller was found guilty of aiding the international parental kidnapping of a minor. He faces up to three years in prison. That is, he did when I first “penned” those words. As I proofread this, just this morning, he has been sentenced to twenty-seven months, but those months don't begin until the higher courts can decide upon a planned appeal, which may take up to two years.

For those of you who are reading between the lines, what is galling to so many people is that Kenneth Miller is clearly covering up for people. A lot of very powerful people, and he is willing to go to jail for it.

The day after Kenneth Miller was originally convicted, Janet Jenkins filed a civil Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act case against Lisa Miller, Kenneth Miller, and others who allegedly helped with the kidnapping. Among those named: Thomas Road Baptist Church (that's Falwell's creation), and the Liberty University School of Law, also Falwell's baby.

Stay tuned for more. Could Liberty University's Holier-Than-Thous actually be conspiring to participate in a violation of the Federal RICO Act? Could Liberty University really be part of an international kidnapping ring?

Several criminal complaints have emerged from this imbroglio, and I offer you excerpts of them here, so that you might see the slimy tentacles leading from the kidnapping of Isabella Miller-Jenkins by Lisa Miller, (because this would be damned hard to engineer all by one's self)—right back to the Liberty University School of Law. Prepare yourself: it has more characters—and villains—than a Tolstoy novel, and the twisted drama takes a great deal of concentration to track.

Jerry Falwell's own Liberty University, in violation of the RICO Act, just like the

Mafia. Absolutely unconscionable.

THE CRIMINAL COMPLAINT, EXCERPTED

Now come Plaintiffs herein ... complaint against Defendants for intentionally kidnapping and conspiring to kidnap Isabella Miller-Jenkins on or about September 21, 2009, and intentionally causing her continued detention outside the State of Vermont to the present day. The Plaintiffs also complain against Defendants for violating the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act 18. U.S.C. ... for participating and conspiring to participate in the Affairs of the Beachy Amish-Mennonite Christian Brotherhood through a pattern of past and continuing acts and threats involving kidnapping, money laundering, and mail fraud.

(Wigger author's aside: Oh, and remember *Ms. Linda I-prayed-away-the-gay Wall*, running for a position of rulership over Appomattox? She is listed in this criminal complaint as well.)

17. Linda Marie Wall: Defendant Linda Wall is a resident of the City of Concord, Commonwealth of Virginia, and an agent of TRBC, [Thomas Road Baptist Church, founded by Jerry Falwell and Liberty University affiliated] in relation to the claims set forth herein, giving her sufficient contacts with the state of Vermont to subject her to the jurisdiction of this court.

22. Defendant Linda Wall, a Virginia anti-gay activist and Thomas Road Baptist Church member, stated that in 2004 she was contacted by attorney Rena Lindevaldsen, of Liberty University School of Law and was asked to meet with Lisa Miller to screen her for representation by lawyers at Liberty University School of Law and its related law firm, Liberty Counsel, LLC. After this screening, Lisa Miller was accepted for representation by Liberty University attorneys, and also formed a friendship with Defendant Wall. Lisa Miller's lead attorneys were Dean of the Law School Matthew Staver and Rena Lindevaldsen, a law professor there.

26. Also in the spring of 2008, Lisa Miller and Defendant Wall met to discuss what Lisa Miller should do, "knowing that Virginia law was not going to prevent Isabella from having contact with Plaintiff Jenkins". At this time, Appellate Courts in Vermont and Virginia had affirmed Janet Jenkins parental rights. Upon information and belief, Wall and Miller decided and agreed as early as June of 2008 that Lisa Miller should flee with Isabella.

41. Unbeknownst to Plaintiff Janet Jenkins, in 2009 Victoria Zodiates (now Hyden) was an employee of Response Unlimited, Inc., and also a 'student worker' at Liberty University School of Law. *On information and belief, Victoria Zodiates sent an email during this time period to her co-workers at the law school requesting donations for supplies to send to Lisa Miller to enable her to remain outside the country. Lisa Miller's attorney, Mathew Staver, was the Dean of the Law School and Ms. Zodiates'*

boss. Mathew Staver and Philip Zodhiates were also personal acquaintances at this time. On September 20, 2009, both Philip Zodhiates and Victoria Zodhiates-Hyden called Lisa Miller's father, Terry Miller, in Tennessee to assist in arranging her and Isabella's transportation from a WalMart parking lot in Lynchburg, Virginia to Waynesboro, Virginia from when they would depart for Canada and Nicaragua.

(emphasis added)

47. Lisa Miller's attorneys Mathew Staver and Rena Lindevaldsen also routinely instructed their Law School students that the correct course of action for a person in Lisa Miller's situation would be to engage in 'civil disobedience' and defy court orders.

48. Also, in 2009, TRBC Head Jonathan Falwell was among several religious leaders who made a call for "Christian civil disobedience" and published a public declaration, known as The Manhattan Declaration, stating that they, ***"will not comply with an edict that purports to compel our institutions to participate in abortions, embryo-destructive research, assisted suicide and euthanasia, or any other anti-life act; nor will we bend to any rule purporting to force us to endorse immoral sexual partnerships, treat them as marriages, or the equivalent, or refrain from proclaiming the truth, as we know it, about morality and immorality and marriage and the family."***

(emphasis added)

49. Hence, Defendants TRBC and its related ministry, Liberty University School of Law, encouraged its agents to disregard state laws governing parental rights, particularly Vermont's law giving rights to members of same-sex families. The TRBC and Liberty University School of Law through its public declaration promoted, condoned, and explicitly ratified its agents' tortious racketeering activity. These agents and employees have followed this direction, making TRBC and Liberty University School of Law liable in *respondeat superior* for the consequences.

51. In January 2012, Linda Wall appeared on television with several members of the PIC and TRBC ... to endorse the kidnapping. In discussing her role, Wall compared herself to Harriet Tubman, and suggested she would take similar actions with regard to more children from same-sex families. Pastor Kilingsworth also publicly supported Lisa Miller's action and threatened ongoing kidnapping activity. He wrote in an internet chat February 22nd, 2010; ***"Nobody has been 'kidnapped'. It may come to that as when the Pharaoh tried to do the same thing to the Israelites in Egypt. Just as it was necessary for Moses to be in the basket, that might be necessary for Izzy, but time will tell. As you've said, Lisa is certainly Izzy's refuge from the VT law."***

(emphasis added)

52. Defendant Wall also wrote on Facebook that if anyone knew of Lisa and Isabella's whereabouts, they should not tell anyone. She also made several phone calls to law enforcement to instruct them that they should not look for Lisa and Isabelle.

57. At the trial of Kenneth Miller in August 2012, a number of Lisa Miller's friends

and supporters testified, including Defendant Wright and members of the PIC. When asked if any of them had met or heard of Philip Zodhiates, the answer was no. At the trial, the government introduced phone records that showed phone calls made from Philip Zodhiates's cell phone between 1:28 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. on September 22nd, 2009, to a cell phone with an Orlando area code that is registered to Liberty Counsel, a landline registered to Liberty Counsel, and a landline registered to Liberty University School of Law. Mathew Staver, Dean of Liberty University School of Law, splits his time between Lynchburg, Virginia and Orlando, Florida. At the time that the calls were made, Philip Zodhiates was still enroute back to Virginia, after depositing Lisa Miller and Isabella near the Canadian border.

58. Lisa Miller's attorneys, Mathew Staver and Rena Lindevaldsen, have at all times maintained that they did not know their client's location to various courts in Vermont (including sworn testimony of Rena Lindevaldsen) and Virginia, and to the press that she simply stopped communicating with them and disappeared.

59. ***Meanwhile, Mathew Staver's acquaintance, Philip Zodhiates, and his daughter Victoria, an assistant in the Law School, knew of Lisa Miller's whereabouts and solicited donations from other Law School employees for her aid.*** Upon information and belief, other law school employees who spoke to Victoria about Lisa Miller's whereabouts were too intimidated to come forward to law enforcement, for fear of angering Dean Staver and losing their jobs. During the time that Lisa and Isabella were missing, Dean Staver fired several members of the admissions and financial aid department who were under his supervision. To this day, Victoria Hyden is still an employee of the law school, even though her tortious conduct involving Isabella Miller-Jenkins has been in public court records for over a year. Also, while Lisa Miller and Isabella were missing, Lisa Miller's attorneys continued to press appeals on Lisa Miller's behalf, until the last appeals were exhausted in November 2012 (more than a year after she was missing), stating that they had advance instructions from Lisa Miller as to her wishes for the ongoing litigation.

(emphasis added)

60. Rena Lindevaldsen published a book with New Revolution Press about Lisa Miller in 2011, citing portions of Lisa Miller's personal diaries which Lindevaldsen has stated were entrusted to her before Lisa Miller disappeared. Lindevaldsen and Staver have appeared on radio and television to promote the book, entitled "*Only One Mommy: A Woman's Battle for Her Life, Her Daughter, and Her Freedom: The Lisa Miller Story.*" Lindevaldsen has also publicly criticized law enforcement for its efforts to find Lisa Miller in an interview with lifelikeness.com, stating:

"I think certainly the current administration has obviously made a commitment that this is a high priority for them, that they are going to track down a biological mother and attempt to take this child away from her biological mother and I certainly

think that there is some political pressure that could be taken. [Wigger author's note: this is misleading and fundamentally a lie. Lisa Miller, the biological mother, had full custody; it was the fact that she was the biological mother that made the judge rule thusly. It was Lisa Miller's refusal to even let Janet Jenkins visit that created this horrific state of affairs.] I think the word needs to get out. Christians need to know that these things are happening, the idea that a woman apparently had to flee the country to protect her child, shouldn't be happening in America, and I don't think enough Christians know about that and don't realize that the people they vote for in an election year, who they vote for has a direct consequence on things like this."

(emphasis added)

Here ends the Janet Jenkins Criminal Complaint and RICO violation statements/excerpts.

But the RICO charges are not over, in this tragic melodrama: Jenkins filed a *civil* complaint; what follows is the feds, going *criminal* on Liberty University et al:

THE F.B.I. CRIMINAL COMPLAINT:

Below are further excerpts of sworn testimony from the Complaint against Kenneth Miller, the first of the co-conspirators to face trial for this kidnapping, *as sworn in oath by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation after their thorough investigation:*

I.66. A. Philip Zodhiates is a wealthy man and a "Liberty Leader" who has a beach house in Nicaragua. Lisa Miller and Isabella Miller have been staying at the home of Zodhiates.

I.66. B. Victoria Hyden is the daughter of Zodhiates. Zodhiates asked Hyden to disseminate a request to get Lisa Miller supplies.

I.68. A WEBSITE PRINT OUT DATED July 2010 from the Vacationrentals.com lists Philip Zodhiates as the owner of a vacation rental in Nicaragua. The phone number listed on the webpage is 540-943-6721.

J.72. C An email dated on or about November 12th, 2009, from Philip Zodhiates: ... "Timo Miller will meet you at the airport and hold up a sign with your name. He is a pastor of an Amish-Mennonite church in Managua who is with Christian Aid Ministries (Ohio). ... The suitcases are for a lady that works with them there in Managua named Sarah. ... Thank you for taking these. Sarah will greatly appreciate it, I am sure."

("Sarah" is the Biblical "AKA" that Lisa Miller has assumed while living in Nicaragua, according to other FBI testimony.)

WIGGER AUTHOR'S SUMMARY OF EVENTS:

So here is what we have, according the above Complaints and sworn testimony from the Federal Bureau of Investigation:

—Dean of the Liberty University School of Law Mathew Staver personally took on the case of Lisa Miller v. Janet Jenkins.

—Dean of the Liberty University School of Law Mathew Staver has a personal assistant by the name of Victoria Hyden (Zodhiates).

—Dean of the Liberty University School of Law Mathew Staver is a close personal acquaintance of Philip Zodhiates.

—It is confirmed that cell phone calls went out to Liberty University School of Law and Liberty Counsel, from Philip Zodhiates, on the day that Zodhiates drove Lisa Miller and Isabella to the Canadian border.

—It is confirmed that Zodhiates owns a beach house in Nicaragua and that Lisa Miller and her daughter are staying there.

—It is confirmed that boxes of supplies have gone from Virginia via Zodhiates to Lisa Miller in Nicaragua.

—It is confirmed that after the kidnapping of Isabella Miller to Nicaragua, Mathew Staver’s assistant Victoria held several email fundraisers for Lisa Miller.

—It is confirmed that Dean of the Liberty University School of Law Mathew Staver fired several persons during the investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Now here is the corker: Mathew Staver claims to know nothing, nothing about all of this.

Here is a critical question that we must ask regarding Mathew Staver’s judgment: given Victoria Zodhiates-Hyden’s knowledge of her father’s direct involvement with the kidnapping, and given her own participation in aiding and abetting the kidnapers, these damning details make her de-facto guilty of a felony. And Dean Staver is keeping her employed in his Liberty University School of Law?

BRIEF ESSAY EXAM:

Now, what do you think about the Dean of the Law School, Mathew Staver? What do you think of Liberty University? What do you think about it getting more of your tax dollars than NPR?

Take you time in answering. All students will be graded on a curve. Extra credit work may be available for those who get the answers wrong—for those who just don’t get it, yet.

Parting thoughts:

When Lisa fled with Isabella, years ago, she had not arranged to give away Isabella’s

pet hamsters, but left them without food and water to die, later to be found dead by the Feds. Bitch.

And now, even according to the Mennonite missionaries in Nicaragua, Isabella ***“bounces from barrio to barrio”***, (the word barrio generally implying extreme poverty), has no consistent house or home, is not happy, and is not doing well at all.

And FYI: There are pictures of the beach house published online, and take my word for it. It is not a “beach house” in the sense you are imagining. It is—how to put this delicately?—a shithole.

GOOGLE IMAGES: [Managua Barrio](#)

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY AND THE RICO ACT PART TWO: LIKE TALKING TO A BRICK WALL, AND A “LIVELY” DEBATE

FROM THE MODERATOR OF THE FIGHTING FUNDAMENTAL FORUMS:

I appreciate the emails concerning the poster who openly admitted she was a lesbian. If you all could report the post next time so I can quickly find it that would be a help.

I will not and never will allow an abomination like sodomy/lesbianism to be paraded around this forum. I will pray for Katie's salvation as the Bible says she has a reprobate mind(Romans 1:18-32) and is not saved according to I John 3:4-10

This kidnapping saga is far from over, though.

Now, it is time to re-introduce a character we told you about in our chapter where we talked about Appomattox, Liberty University, and how much they all hate the gays.

You will recall one of the posters on Liberty University's Fighting Fundamental Forums:

Anyone who reads the Christian Bible, AV 1611 only, knows that our baby Jesus hates the homofags (Ps 5:5) and would much prefer that we isolate them from the rest of society and make their very existence to be a capital punishment.

Odd. I don't remember the word "homofags" used as parlance in the version of The Bible that I own. But back to it. Remember Linda Wall? She is the Appomattox business tycoon behind “Buttons and Fun Fotos” who committed statutory rape in her past and has never paid for it. But the good news is that for several decades now, she has been a single Christian woman who claims that God cured her of her Homosexuality.

She writes, too.

Here is an excerpt from an article she wrote about herself; it is about how none other than Liberty University asked her to check out this “Lisa Miller” person to see if she was really a sincere, born-again Christian, or was she just faking it? Was she still a faggess? Apparently—and this is for real—***Linda call tell just by looking.***

LEGI, INTELLEXI, ET CONDEMNAVI:

“It was over four and a half years ago that I received a call from Rena

Lindevaldsen of Liberty Counsel. She had heard that I was a Christian activist in Virginia who had once been involved in homosexuality. Liberty Counsel was considering taking the Lisa Miller case and wanted me to go to Winchester, Virginia and determine if Lisa Miller was indeed “born-again.” I accepted the assignment and drove to Winchester. All the way I prayed for discernment. As soon as I walked through the front door of Lisa’s house and looked at her countenance, I knew she had been touched by Jesus, that she was the ‘real McCoy.’ ”

Hold the phone! This Linda Wall is far too gifted to limit herself to her self-proclaimed goal of being a Representative of the 59th District of the House of Delegates (Appomattox). This is, according to the Liberty University Legal Counsel, and to Linda Wall herself, a magnificent power with which God has imbued her, and apparently keeps re-imbuing her because of her constant prayer while she drives down the 460:

Linda can just look at another human being and see if they are still queer or not, or born again. The mind reels with the possibilities ... I wonder if she could expand this skill to even more useful realms. Can she tell if someone has cancer, as some dogs can? Can she tell if someone is lying on the witness stand, like a human polygraph? Can she tell if a political independent or civil libertarian is, in truth, a flat out Communist? Can she tell if someone of Arab descent is, in actuality, a potential suicide bomber? Can she sniff out when I am being sarcastic?

I was going to call her and ask her all of these things, including about the fact that she is, among other things, guilty of statutory rape. By her own admission.

By way of proof, the following deposition dialogue has been taken from the website of Jonathan Turley, a website well worth bookmarking for Turley's thought provoking essays. When a war of words and accusations between Linda Wall and Republican contender Paul Jost in an earlier election got ugly, lawsuits and depositions ensued. The following is (no pun intended) a revelation.

From Jonathan Turley’s website:

In 2006, a deposition of Wall by was taken by Jost’s attorney, Howard Hogan, and the questioning went like this.

Q: Have you ever been asked, formally or informally, to leave any other positions, that we haven’t discussed already?

A: Let’s see. Yeah, there was a teaching job, one time, in Prince George County. That they asked me if I would not come back.

Q: What was the specific job?

A: There was a parent that was — what was the job?

Q: Yes.

A: I was teaching.

Q: For whom?

A: PE. Um, Prince George Junior High, I think was the name of the school.

Q: And you were a PE teacher for Prince George?

A: Yeah.

Q: And roughly what time period was this?

A: Early '70s. Sometime in the '70s.

Q: Why were you asked to leave?

A: A parent was upset with me, and they just felt like I should move on.

Q: And why were they upset with you?

A: They asked whether there was some misbehavior with their daughter.

Q: What was the specific misbehavior alleged?

A: Uh, they alleged that I had an affair with their daughter.

Q: And how did you find out about this allegation?

A: They called me in.

Q: Who called you in?

A: The superintendent.

Q: The superintendent called you in?

A: Yeah.

Q: And what did the superintendent say?

A: He either wanted to try to go to court to prove it, or for me to leave. And at the time, my mother was ill, and there was emotional things going on in my life, and I didn't want to deal with it, because I was — I wanted out of teaching anyway.

Q: So you resigned or were you fired?

A: (Indicating yes.) Resigned.

Q: Was the allegation true or not?

A: Uh, it was an allegation, and there was no effort made to try to prove it.

Q: Did you have an affair with the student or not?

A: Yes.

Q: And, please, define affair.

A: Lord have mercy. Is this about me or this lawsuit?

Q: I just want to know why you were fired ...

A: I wasn't fired.

Q: ... or asked to resign from this job?

A: They thought I was having an affair with their daughter.

Q: Just to be clear, we're talking about sexual relations with a minor?

A: Yes.

Q: Thank you.

The 61 year-old Wall says the affair was a “youthful mistake,” and that God has “cured her” of her homosexuality. She also explains the pot smoking had a lot to do with it.

And her response to this is ***not*** to face the legal consequences (there is no statute of limitations on statutory rape in the state of Virginia), but rather to run for political office, spout rhetoric about what is good and right, and, if she wins, put herself in a position of making our laws and telling us how to live.

Goodness gracious. I bet I could walk right into a room and immediately, instantaneously, know some things about her.

By the way, about that phone call I was going to make. Linda Wall has absolutely dropped off the grid. Odd way to market her burgeoning business, Buttons and Fun Fotos.

One last detail you should know about Linda Wall. Back when this sad and complicated kidnapping began, Rena Lindevaldsen, who is Lisa Miller’s attorney and a professor at Liberty University, created a webpage called “Only One Mommy” to explain their side of the argument.

I am a believer in free speech, so, so far so good.

But something happened that the arrogant Appomattoxins and the loony Lynchburgers and the Falwell fanatics did not expect: there was public outcry. There was outrage. And this, just when Liberty University was licking its chops over all the new Pell Grant online education money that was just within its grasp. But they couldn’t very well get their hands on it with so much bad publicity flying around.

So, in an attempt to distance themselves from the imbroglio, Liberty University and Rena Lindevaldsen dropped off the Only One Mommy Facebook page, and good old Prayed-Away-The-Gay Linda Wall took it over.

And, in the spirit of Fred Phelps, Wall had some nasty things to say about how she thought that the godless would fare in those gale storm winds that we came to know as Hurricane Sandy. Keep in mind that Hurricane Sandy was slated to hit, among other scenic locales, Vermont, which was precisely where the Lesbian Jenkins had wooed poor innocent Lisa Miller into her gay web. Do you think that Ms. Linda Perennially-Spinstered but Hell-No-I’m-Not-Gay Wall was going to miss an opportunity to make a pronouncement about this?

So, not only can Linda tell if you are queer just by looking at you, not only does she think she should be your Representative, she also had some smarmy things to say when

the entire northeast seaboard was rightfully trembling in fear that this storm might cause the death and heartbreak that it did, in fact, wreak.

Breaking news: Linda Wall might have caused it! Or at least part of it. She might be just that powerful. Linda Wall placed the following bit of snark right on the Mommy and Me Facebook page:

“Let’s see how Vermont does during the hurricane!”

That statement, understandably, did not sit well with some of the Vermont-based members of the group. Here was one Vermont poster’s understandably alarmed reply:

Now what I am seeing is people openly admitting to imprecatory prayer that God will smite my neighbors and me because of where we live. Not prayers that Vermont's politicians and judges will see the error of their ways and come around. Not love. Hatred. And the worst part is that it's not just hatred for enemies, but for innocent people. We must pay the price too solely because of where we live. And then when I object to prayers FOR MY DEVASTATION (yes that's personal!), I'm met with self-righteous self-justification and excuses. I'm told that I need to do things that are not practical or else I deserve to be harmed.

But an arrogant, unapologetic Wall shot back:

I didn't expect most of you to agree with my statement. But I tell you this the tragedy here is that a little six year old Christian girl and her born again Mother had to flee America in order to obey God's Word.

And now a Minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ is facing imprisonment for helping protect a little child from being removed from her biological Christian Mother and turned over to a stranger.

Christians who loved and nurtured Lisa and Isabella through the six plus years are also being sued for obeying God's Word. So look in the mirror and decide where your commitment is.

Vengeance is God's and He does repay.

Not surprisingly, all the offending posts have since been removed.

Wait...wait...I am getting a tingling feeling. Yes, that’s it. Linda Wall is beginning to sound just like one of those Westboro Baptists, the ones who go to the funerals at Arlington National Cemetery with signs that say “Thank God for Dead Soldiers!” and “God Killed Your Sons!” The same ones who blame the 9/11 World Trade Center bombing on the gays. (As does Jerry Falwell, while we’re on the subject.) The Westborons also blame the Boston Marathon bombing on queers, and planned to picket the funerals of the three people killed in the explosion, including that little boy with the heart melting smile.

(But fear not. We get to Westboro in our companion book, “WIGGER: THE LITTLE BOOK OF BIGOTS.” Their latest shenanigans include screaming ugly names at

a five year old girl who had opened a lemonade stand. Get up-to-the-minute updates about their latest planned protests at their cheery Baptist Church website, godhatesfags.com

Seriously. That's the name of their website.)

In the meantime, as regards Ms. Pray-Away-The Gay-Wall, (a sturdy woman if ever I have seen one, Google Images: Linda Wall Appomattox), you can post your no doubt fascinating reactions on Ms. Linda Marie Wall's Facebook page. I, for one, would like to tune in and see exactly what you think of her. Let's all give her a big thumb!

HONK!
IF YOU WANT LIBERTY LAW SCHOOL
TO LOSE ITS ACCREDITATION

My house caught on fire recently. Seriously, it did. In a big way. There were big orange embers dropping down around me everywhere from the ceiling, just like those fat studio raindrops on Gene Kelley in "Singin' in the Rain", except instead of being wet and cool and romantic, these embers were red hot and terrifying and about a thousand degrees. They were dropping on my sofa and stereo receiver and the drapes and carpet and the quilt my mother made me out of my childhood clothes, and on and on, and I imagine it was only by the Grace of God that one did not fall plop on me or my pets before we all got our terrified souls and selves out of there. The local volunteer firemen were speedy and brave and iconic; I owe them more than I can say. (Although I am sure that Linda Wall would say the fire was God's punishment to me for writing this book.)

Prior to the fire, my dream was to get involved with online tutoring. But now I am living in a cheap hotel with a highly questionable internet connection, and writing this book while lounging on a ghastly hotel mattress, waiting for the maid to come with fresh linens, while I drink coffee from a paper cup that tastes like yak piss.

Things could be worse. I could be writing this dead.

I only bring this up because this sudden change in my life and lifestyle has given me much time on my hands. So I am thinking of toodling down the road and standing in front of Liberty University all day long with a big, neatly printed sign that says:

HONK IF YOU WANT
LIBERTY'S LAW SCHOOL
TO LOSE ITS ACCREDITATION.

I don't think I will get much honking action, because I know Lynchburg, and most of the population pretty much thinks and acts like the Stepford Christians at Liberty U., who act an awful lot like Appomattoxins.

But it might be a novel way to advertise this book, if I put my Facebook website in big letters beneath the writing on the sign.

So, until I get myself a really big magic marker and some poster board, here are some phone numbers you should know, and shortly, I will attempt to make completely clear to you why you should know them. (That is, if Liberty's alleged complicity in the Jenkins-Miller child kidnapping isn't enough.)

Mathew D. Staver 434-592-5300 law@liberty.edu

Rena Lindevaldsen 434-592-5300 rlindevaldsen@liberty.edu

One will see very quickly that the entire staff shares the same phone number, so while it is troubling that none of us can be assured of a real, person-to-person heart-to-heart with Matt or Rena, the fact that they all share one number gives us just oodles of opportunity to flood that number with calls registering our opinion regarding law professors who encourage students to break the law—while paying for the whole thing with our tax dollars.

It's interesting, don't you think? Everybody at the Liberty Law School seems to use that one phone, yet Mathew Staver's personal cell phone number is all over the FBI case regarding the Lisa Miller/Isabella Jenkins kidnapping.

In a chilling column by Sarah Posner, (who writes for a number of magazines, newspapers, and websites—her primary outlet being religiousdispatches.org) we are told of a bizarre, biased, and, to my way of thinking, illegal manner in which Liberty University law students are being taught to break the law.

(More to follow shortly, of course, but *this* is the reason that I believe that Liberty University needs to be contacted. And this is also the reason that pressure should be applied to see to it that Liberty University Law School, if it is in fact encouraging students to break the law, needs to be sanctioned, penalized, and lose its already precarious accreditation.)

As an old academic, I have a number of law school connections, and they have all assured me that this is most certainly criteria for Liberty University Law School losing its accreditation with the American Bar Association. And if they are teaching lawyers to break the law, I say they should lose their accreditation as soon as it can possibly be arranged.

And as Whack-a-Mole further points out on the straightdope forums:

‘Additionally, they might have their not-for-profit 501(c)(3) status revoked as in order to maintain that status you cannot endorse a candidate or political party. Revoking the Democratic Club recognition and yet maintaining the Republican one that does the same thing may run afoul of that.’

Now, getting Liberty's accreditation yanked may seem like a Herculean task, but what is to stop us from immediately committing to some sincere, necessary, and justifiable fact-finding? All you need to do is call the telephone numbers above, and have

everybody you know call them—and if you do not receive any answer, or a clear answer, or an answer that is in accordance with the laws of the land, keep calling them until Liberty University Law School realizes that it is not above the laws of the land.

FIRST, THE QUESTION:

The following is the essay question, verbatim, that liberty Law School students were asked as a part of final exams. After stating it here, we will examine the students' reactions.

Assume that Lisa Miller has asked you for advice, as a friend who is a Christian lawyer. As you remember from her story, Lisa lived in Virginia at the time she entered into a lesbian relationship with Janet Jenkins. In 2000, Vermont passed a Civil Union law that created a parallel system to marriage for same-sex couples. Virginia law prohibits recognition of same-sex marriage and does not recognize the Civil Union law. After entering into the Civil Union, the two continued to live in Virginia and Lisa gave birth to Isabella in Virginia. Lisa, Janet, and Isabella lived in Vermont from the time Isabella was three months to seventeen months old. When Isabella was 17 months old, Lisa became a Christian and left Janet taking Isabella with her back to Virginia. Lisa sought to dissolve the Civil Union in Vermont and Janet, who is neither the biological nor adoptive parent of Isabella, sought primary custody of Isabella. After not having seen Janet since she was 17 months old, the Vermont court forced Lisa to provide Janet with visitation beginning in 2007, when Isabella was five years old. Lisa reluctantly complies, but she soon noticed that Isabella developed severe emotional reactions to this introduction to a person whom she did not know. Janet insisted that Isabella call her mommy and she engaged in other inappropriate activities with Isabella. Isabella began to wet her bed, have nightmares, and even tried to harm herself after one such visit. Assume that at the time Lisa asks you for counsel as her friend who is trained in the law, she has exhausted all appeals in both states (including the U.S. Supreme Court). Despite Virginia law, the Virginia courts decided to recognize the Vermont rulings, which ruling found that under the Civil Union law and the Vermont court's brand new judge-made "law", Janet should be afforded parental rights over Isabella and should have full custody because Lisa refused to allow Janet visitation thus removing Isabella from her mom, Lisa. Lisa has learned that she will soon be served with a summons in Virginia to enforce the latest Vermont order. That order directs law enforcement officials to remove Isabella from her biological mother's care and place her in Vermont with Janet, who continues in the lesbian lifestyle, who thinks Lisa's Christian views are "dangerous" and who wants nothing to do with God. Lisa needs your counsel on how to think through her legal situation and how to respond as a Christian to this difficult problem. Relying on what we

have learned thus far in class, how would you counsel Lisa?

Students at Liberty Law School told Sarah Posner of Religious Dispatches that in the required Foundations of Law class in the fall of 2008, taught by Lisa Miller's attorneys Matt Staver and Rena Lindevaldsen, they were repeatedly instructed that when faced with a conflict between "**God's law**" and "**man's law**," they should resolve that conflict through "**civil disobedience**." One student said, "**the idea was when you are confronted with a particular situation, for instance, if you have a court order against you that is in violation of what you see as God's law, essentially... civil disobedience was the answer.**"

This student and two others all requested anonymity, for fear of reprisal by Law School Dean Mathew Staver.

Students who wrote that Miller should comply with court orders received bad grades, while those who wrote she should engage in civil disobedience received an A, the three students said. "**People were appalled**," said one of the students, adding, "**especially as lawyers-to-be, who are trained and licensed to practice the law—to disobey that law, that seemed completely counterintuitive to all of us.**"

Still, some knew what they needed to "**regurgitate**," in order to get a good grade. "**It was obvious by the substance of the class during the semester the answer that they wanted**," said one of the students. "**The majority of people that I am acquainted with who did get A's wrote that because it was expected of them.**" One of the students who got an A said, "**I told them she needed to engage in civil disobedience and seriously consider leaving the country**," adding, "**I knew what I needed to write.**"

Given what was expected of them on the exam, and the tenor of the class, there is "**not a lot of shock among the students about the current developments**," said one of the students, referring to the revelation that Miller is in hiding in Nicaragua. "**Everybody semi-suspected that Liberty Counsel had something to do with her disappearance.**"

So, Mathew Staver is not only directing his students to break the law—his students who wish to become lawyers some day, and who are paying good money for a Liberty Law School education—but he is also fighting, and not very convincingly, charges that he is complicit in an international kidnapping case.

Yet the more I learn about him, the less surprised I am.

Here is a corker I spotted as breaking news on the web in March of 2012, just a scant year ago. It seems that Matt Staver and the Liberty Law Counsel have decided to take up

the cause—to defend vigorously, if you will—a man by the name of Scott Lively, whose bio reads like something from a villain in “True Blood” or “Big Love.” (One fundamentalist blogger even writes about Lively’s determination to “defang” the gays.)

The Reverend Scott Lively is an evangelical pastor who was sued in Massachusetts Federal Court by an international group concerned about a series of anti-gay speeches that Lively had been making in Uganda.

Apparently the anti-gay talks he was giving in Uganda were very inspiring; in a decade when country after country has been decriminalizing homosexuality, Lively’s ... well ... *lively* talk inspired the development of an Anti-Homosexuality Bill in the Ugandan Parliament. The bill, submitted in November 2009, called for the death-penalty in some cases of homosexuality. Lively’s response: ***“As one of the first laws of this century to recognize that the destructiveness of the ‘gay’ agenda warrants opposition by government, it would deserve support from Christian believers and other advocates of marriage-based culture around the world.”***

Granted, he does backpedal and explain that he doesn’t really favor the death penalty, he prefers therapy and prayer for handling the gays. Among other statements Lively made in Uganda: ***“Homosexuality is thus biologically (and to varying degrees morally) equivalent to pedophilia, sadomasochism, bestiality and many other forms of deviant behavior.”***

Gay bashing is very big with Lively. He is famous in the fundamentalist community for a book he wrote called “The Pink Swastika,” which states in the preface that ***“homosexuals are the true inventors of Nazism and the guiding force behind many Nazi atrocities.”*** Here is a little gem that Lively said right on TV, right over the open air waves and everything:

“Homosexuals created the Nazi Party, and everything that we think about when we think about Nazis actually comes from the minds and perverted ideas of homosexuals. When you think of the Nazi Party... you cannot help but understand that this organization was a machine constructed by militant, sadomasochistic, pedophilic homosexuals. ... They built the Nazi machine. They were the people that ran it, and that put it together. Most people understand that there were some homosexuals involved in the Nazi Party—no, it wasn’t that. They were the very foundation of the Nazi Party.”

This is a peculiar thing for Lively to write, since it is a well known fact that in Nazi Germany, you also got rounded up and thrown in the death camps for being gay: even the most erudite experts on the subject can’t come up with a figure for just how many innocent homosexuals were slaughtered under Hitler’s tyrannical reign. But there is no question that thousands upon thousands of innocent citizens were killed for being homosexuals—yet Lively maintains that the gays also started all of this?

And with all of the woes in the world, *this* is the man whose freedom of speech Liberty University Law School Dean Mathew Staver has chosen to defend?

Oh, and by the way—lest you run into Scott in a dark alley, you may want to know about one particular chapter in his life, before you decide to take on this Champion for Christ.

It would seem that back in 1991, Lively was in Oregon, part of a group drumming up anti-gay rhetoric in hopes of turning the tide of a local political campaign. A photographer by the name of Catherine Stauffer showed up to cover it for the newspaper, and she did not comply when Lively asked her to leave. So Lively threw her against the wall, dragged her across the floor by her hair, and physically ejected her from the building.

The jury awarded Ms. Stauffer \$31,000. Of course, Lively didn't even pay the fine, never intended to pay the fine, until years later when he had finished studying for his law degree and realized that he could not get his license until the fine was paid. Then, instead of paying out of his own pocket, Lively just held a fundraiser. But Lively having to cough up those chubby bucks will never erase that little lapse in chivalry from his eternal reputation.

Finally, perhaps because it was impacting his public image, and his popularity with some of the more reasonable and compassionate members of his Christian flock, Lively announced that he was backing away from the whole gay-bashing thing. (Of course he didn't, but that's beside the point.)

Instead, he fled to Springfield, Massachusetts and opened a java shop right across from the local high school where students could come and drink coffee for free if they wore Jesus buttons, and where Lively could practice some under-the-radar youth evangelism. The name of the shop is "Holy Grounds."

Seriously, it is.

And students hung out in droves.

The community began to show some concern when the free beverages and fun Christian atmosphere led to high truancy rates.

The community got a hell of a lot more concerned when the shop manager volunteer, Michael J. Frediani (who got the job using the alias "Michael Free"), was arrested for failing to register as a Class 3 Sex Offender, which is the highest risk and most dangerous kind, prone to recidivism and likely to re-offend, with a history of rape and/or violence and/or preying on children. More specifically, Michael Frediani had been categorized as a Class 2 Sex Offender in Massachusetts and a Class 3 Sex Offender in New York, where Frediani had served three years in the penitentiary for "deviate sexual intercourse" upon an eleven-year-old girl.

Now perhaps Scott Lively ignored the egregiously fake sounding name, "Mike Free", and was instead taken in by Frediani's appearance. You can see by his mugshot

that he bears an eerie resemblance to the clean cut David Duke. (Joke.)

Google Images: Michael Frediani Holy Grounds

It's odd. Scott Lively did enough research to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that homosexuals were the driving force behind the Nazi Party (and Eva Braun a mere beard, no doubt), but he didn't run a ten dollar background check on a heavily tattooed guy named Free who wanted to work for free if he meant he could spend his day hanging around children.

When asked if he or Frediani bear any responsibility for the negative publicity garnered by the breaking news story about Free's status as a sex offender, Lively said, ***"I'm a person who believes God is in charge, and nothing happens in his universe without his permission."***

By the way. Pastor Lively has formed an exploratory committee because he is contemplating seeking the governorship of Massachusetts. As of spring 2013, he is ***"95 percent certain that he will run in the 2014 gubernatorial race."*** You can communicate your opinion regarding his candidacy, his book "Pink Swastikas," his beating and dragging of Ms. Stauffer, or anything else preying (praying?) on your mind at: sdllaw@gmail.com

But don't forget the double "L"s in that address, or you will end up harassing some poor San Diego lawyers who, I am certain, harbor slightly different opinions regarding the "homofags."

The upshot? Scott Lively is a man whom Mathew Staver continues to vigorously support, both in and out of the courtroom. Shouldn't it be obvious by now? Even some of Liberty University's most stalwart supporters are beginning to question the competence—and mental health—of Mathew Staver.

And yes, we have just strayed a bit from the kidnapping by the Lynchburg gang of poor little Isabella. Yet there is a common thread here, or perhaps it is more like tentacles: the more one explores the antics and attitudes of Liberty University, the more horrified one becomes.

God help us all.

(Oh, and just in case you're wondering how Liberty is doing with that effort to rake in tuition money, much of which is your taxpayers dollars via Pell Grants ...well, "The Richmond Dispatch Newspaper" answers that question for us, in an article just released in July of 2013: ***"Liberty University's net assets have sustained a fivefold increase — from \$150 million to \$860 million — over the past six years, driven by the rapid expansion of Liberty's online programs."***

All this higher education funding ... to a university which teaches students to break the law, is embroiled in a RICO felony kidnapping investigation, and teaches that the history of the earth involved corralling teenage dinosaurs onto the ark. Again, I say, God help us all.

PARTING SHOTS

VOICES ON LIBERTY UNIVERSITY'S TOPIX FORUM WEIGH IN ON THE LISA MILLER KIDNAPPING:

Still praying for you, Lisa. What else could you do when over-reaching, liberal-controlled government runs slipshod over the rights of Christians.

-Dusty Shadow

Lisa is the biological mother, janet is a low-life lesbo. Run, Lisa run...protect Isabella from that perverted deviant, janet!!!

-Daryl

Don't let the perverts kidnap the baby. Run Lisa, run.

-Sandy

I agree, it's bad enough that normal and decent people have to share this world with perverted deviants but we must draw the line at low life lezbos being awarded custody of children.

-Dalton

Don't let these perverts and their cops and gay judges take away your baby! Run sweetie! May the Lord gaurd and protect Lisa and her baby! We are praying for you! Run sweetie run!

-Run Sweetie

Whatever is happening now is way better than living in sin and corruption in a lesbian relationship. She is free ... free of the of being controlled by perverted desires. Something tells me you don't enjoy that freedom.

-Dusty Shadow

its because she [Lisa Miller] has seen the light and does not want the child anymore infected with the immoral sickness of being a part of thecarpetmuncher crowd. if your kind can produce your own have at it but pussnboots just cant make a baby now can they, you are reprobate and should either drink some drano or just hide

from what will be reaped -True (then responding to another poster ☺ as for you, your a embarrassment to your family, and you know it, no one else wanted you so you found a sheman dyke that has that man tool you pretend is the real thing, but it isnt

Homotards like to claim that homoexuality is natural but this can easliy be disproven by looking at a country like Iran...millions of people in Iran yet they don't have even one single homosexual

And finally, a tip from some helpful person on the Fighting Fundamental Forums, that bastion of Christian living which is perennially asking, then answering, the question, WWJD—What Would Jesus Do? (Personally, I consider myself a very spiritual person, I who have joyfully attended a variety of churches, and I don't think that the J-Man would take the steps outlined below.)

How to deal with businesses that promote perverted activities

Many corporations have "non-discrimination" and "diversity" policies where they encourage recruitment of homosexualists to work for them.

It may not be possible to boycott all these companies at all times, but it is possible to do the following:

(1) contact the management and respectfully ask for the list of homosexualist employees — this is not illegal to disclose and it is possible apply some pressure on the manager to help you compile the list;

(2) distribute the list amongst your church members and neighbors so that they know who the perverts are;

(3) refuse service by any known pervert and avoid any place that has pervert employees, especially when with children;

(4) THIS IS IMPORTANT: repeatedly petition the company and any known investors to end these harmful "diversity" policies.

—Praise the Lord, and hope you all will encounter as few as possible of these servants of the perdition. By Deacon Dixie, The Fighting Fundamental Forums

PART THREE

“TO SEE THE FACE OF GOD...”

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE DEVIL YOU KNOW

All of this, of course, begs the question: “*What THE HELL do we do about Liberty University?*” (I thought that might amuse you.)

The problem here is that Liberty has done a damn good job of covering their asses. Cases in point:

1.) Their infamous, evil “School of Law”. And I use that phrase loosely. Unfortunately, there isn’t much that the average citizen can do about shutting down a law school. Rule 24 of the American Bar Association Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools governs the filing of complaints against law schools. And its particulars are rather clear and stark—amazing in and of itself, since the rules are of course written by lawyers.

The only people who can file a complaint with any gravitas are members of the university population who feel that there are ABA violations going on within the school. Clearly, Liberty professors aren’t going to say anything; they are in fact the essence of the problem. And, since a student has to give her or his name, it stands to reason that most students are intimidated out of reporting anything to the ABA. Matt Staver, the Dean of the School of Law, after all, has been stated in an FBI affidavit to be vindictive and retaliatory and punishing. The Left Hand of God, you might say. With Rena Lindevaldsen being the middle finger, I guess. Perhaps certain disgruntled students might have the courage to act after leaving the program, but I don’t think we should hold out much hope.

2.) The Pell Grants. Half a billion dollars. Remember that’s how much federal grant money Liberty University gets each year. As in, Liberty gets more money than NPR. It gets way more money than the National Endowment for the Arts does annually. But the problem is that technically, Liberty isn’t getting the money directly from the feds; Pell Grants are awarded to students to spend where they wish. Liberty, in turn, woos those students into turning the money over to Liberty’s coffers. So no matter how egregious the violations committed by Liberty, it is ultimately a private university, and therefore immune to most federal regulation.

So what is left, my friends?

Buck up ... there is one last tried and true strategy: Call it a whisper campaign, call it trying Liberty University in the Court of Public Opinion, call it an All Out War Declared By Social Media. Bottom line: the ridicule has to spread, and the ridiculousness of

Liberty University has to become as true and factual and understood by the general public as the Irrefutable Dictum at Fox News which states that Santa-is-White-He-Just-Is, thank you Megan Kelly and Kollaborators.

Only when everybody contemplating the pursuit of a college degree or an online course knows that Liberty is a Joke (and a joke in bad taste) can Higher Education save itself from the Lower Standards and Nether Regions that are Academia at Falwell's Fatwa Factory.

You may notice that this is something of an obsession with me, but it is time to do more with your gossip chinwags and social media time than just sending your friends YouTubes of babies farting and hilarious cartoons of how funny it would be if your cat could speak French. It is time to worry less about the Kardashians and Dancing with the Stars, and more about social crises and causes. You can make a difference. More to follow on that.

But, as regards Liberty University specifically, here are some of the factoids you can share with your friends:

FIRSTLY, Liberty University is not the least bit choosy about whom they allow to enroll. And, quite frankly, that should tell you something right there.

According to the company which administers that requisite, insomnia-inducing, ball-breaking, and terrifying test known as the SAT, the middle 50% of students at Liberty University have SAT scores in the 430-550 range for reading and 430-570 for math. That means 25% of the students got LESS than 430s on at least one of the sections, which isn't exactly a stellar score. The mean scores for all college-bound students were 500 for reading and 516 for math.

As a person who attended three universities, who went for the gold—Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD—let me parse the above numbers in non-Godly terms: these scores SUCK.

And what about their Law School? Findthebest.com: remarks on Liberty's School of Law:

1. LSAT: The most recent set of students admitted to Liberty University had a median LSAT score of 150 out of 180. This is a low score compared to the scores needed to gain admission to other schools.

2. GPA: The most recent class of students admitted to Liberty University had a median GPA of 3.27, which is below average compared to the GPA needed for admission to other schools.

And regarding Liberty's new push as an online presence: according to Liberty's own website, online acceptance is 96 percent, so already we can see that the online Liberty

school is the epitome of non-selective. Basically, they don't give a damn who they let into their cyber-studies—maybe because when you are teaching someone via the internet, it's hard to tell whether or not they are queer.

SECONDLY—and this is clearly as a result of all the other clustering factors—Liberty does not rank well in comparison to other colleges and universities.

In a U.S. News and World Report survey (one of the most well-respected ranking systems in the academic community), which divides the country into four regions and offers a comprehensive consideration of all the relevant factors, Liberty ranks—wait for it—89th out of 92 universities ranked in the southern region of the United States.

Shameful.

As for their law school, Liberty will tell you that they are accredited, but then always tries to squelch the fact that this accreditation is only provisional. And while they might then attempt to tell you that this is a mere formality, and that accreditation is just a rubber stamp and a matter of time, that is simply not true: this probationary period is the time of close scrutiny and in-depth examination into practices and procedures. ***And with damning FBI affidavits, shocking RICO violations, and highly questionable classroom practices, would you really want to trust your academic future and law career to such a place?*** Might you not be wasting tens of thousands of dollars, and years of your life? Moreover, Liberty is a FOURTH TIER law school, meaning, lowest of the ranking, after First, Second, and Third Tier law schools. There is no Fifth Tier.

Put another way: the Liberty University School of Law's ranking given by the U.S. News & Word Report is not published, indicating that it is in the bottom 25% of all ranked law schools.

Here is the down and dirt about the tiering of law schools from Kristi Dosh—attorney, sports business reporter, and a sports management instructor. (Great street creds: she has reported on everything from collective bargaining to endorsements to the finances of pro and intercollegiate athletics for outlets such as ESPN, Forbes and Comcast Sports Southeast. Kristi is also a consultant with College Sports Solutions, a collegiate athletics consulting firm.) She shares with us her personal experience with Fourth Tier law schools:

“Yes, in my personal experience there was a difference. I say this as someone who went to a fourth-tier law school and then transferred to a first-tier. There’s a big difference, primarily in the number of traditional law firms that come on campus to interview students, the average pay for students after graduation, and the number of students employed in law after graduation.”

Point of clarification: This is not to completely disparage Third and Fourth Tier law

schools, by the way. They are both an affordable alternative for many aspiring law students, as well as an alternative more forgiving of lower LSAT scores and GPA's, for the student willing to work hard enough to put those behind him. But those other Third and Fourth Tier law schools do not have the legal problems and scandalous reputation that Liberty has acquired, nor are they known for blatantly ignoring—and insisting that their students ignore—the laws of the land.

Now, perhaps some of you are thinking that Liberty gets a bad rap among the sometimes liberal brain trusts of the academic field and the Fourth Estate. Fair enough.

And maybe you actively SEEK a religious college experience.

Fair enough. Fine, so how does Liberty University rank among those? Using the same criteria we used when discussing who gets into Liberty—GPA, SAT scores, etcetera, here is a ranking of Protestant Christian Colleges, as of the year 2012. Scan the list and you will see Liberty. .. Well, after you're done scanning the list, and have gotten to the very bottom ... keep searching ...

RANKING FROM HIGH TO LOW (note test scores in parens)

Wheaton (CR 600/710, M 600/700, WR 590/700, ACT 27-31)

Grove City (CR 560/690, M 570/680, NA, ACT 25-30)

Calvin (CR 520/670, M 550/660, NA, ACT 23-29)

Hope (CR 520/660, M 540/670, NA, ACT 23-29)

Covenant (CR 540/660, M 510/620, WR 520/660, ACT 22-28)

Cedarville (CR 530/650, M 530/640, WR 520/630, ACT 23-29)

Gordon College (CR 520/650, M 500/640, WR 560/640, ACT 24-28)

Baylor University (CR 530/640, M 550/650, WR 510/620, ACT 23-29)

Houghton College (CR 520/650, M 510/620, WR 500/640, ACT 23-29)

Le Tourneau University (CR 520/650, M 540/650, WR 490/620, ACT 22-29)

Union U (CR 510/650, M 510/640, NA, ACT 21-29)

Taylor University (CR 500/650, M 510/640, WR 490/620, ACT 24-31)

Messiah (CR 510/620, M 510/640, WR 510/620, ACT 23-28)

Biola University (CR 500/620, M 490/620, WR 500/610, ACT 21 - 26)

Indiana Wesleyan University (CR 480/600, M 480/600, WR N/A, ACT 21-27)

Azusa Pacific University (CR 490/590, M 480/600, WR N/A, ACT 21-27)

Lee University (CR 480/610, M 460/600, WR N/A, ACT 20-27)

Belhaven University (CR 490/610, M 460/570, WR N/A, ACT 19 - 24)

Trinity International University (CR 450/610, M 440/600, WR N/A, ACT 19-26)

Eastern University (CR 480/600, M 480/590, WR 480/590, ACT 19-23)

Malone (CR 470/590, M 460/590, WR N/A, ACT 19-26)

Anderson University (CR 460/570, M 460/580, WR N/A, ACT 20-25)

Georgetown College (CR 430/570, M 480/560, WR N/A, ACT 21-26)

Liberty (CR 430/570, M 430/550, WR NA, ACT 18-24)

—March 2010 edited June 2012 in Christian Colleges

There you have it.

Liberty University is...what is the word I am searching for? ...Ah, yes. The Worst.

THIRDLY, you can hear from the horse's mouth what Falwell's university was like for young minds who immersed themselves in the Liberty experience. Go to student review sites, and drink in the disappointment.

Granted, Liberty has its fair share of positive reviews, but I can tell you from personal experience, after having dealt with a number of Liberty graduates, that many of these positive reviews come from kids still living in the Baptist bubble that covers hamlets like Appomattox, Lynchburg, Farmville, etcetera: their heavily Baptist communities support these graduates and their Liberty learnings, both personally and professionally. The problem comes when those students choose to go out into the "real world." And yes, I phrase it that way purposely. For your author, the "real world" is the world of fossil records and carbon dating. The "unreal" or "surreal" world is the one featuring museums that boast of 3000 year old dinosaur bones, and murals depicting cavemen riding on dinosaurs. Fred Flintstone, without the laugh track.

In guidetoonlineschools.com, a full third of respondents give Liberty horrible, dismal reviews. Apparently, as irksome as having Christianity, Christ, and Baptist dogma shoved down one's throat is the fact that the majority of staff doesn't even walk the talk. Make no mistake, it is not just atheists, liberals, or mildly religious persons who find Liberty toxic. Complaints on various review sites are full of self-proclaimed Christians, who take their faith very seriously, but who express profound alarm at the spiritual hypocrisy that is rampant at Liberty.

Here is a brief overview of the pervasive bitterness:

onlinedegreereviews.org

125 of these 125, about half of them gave the school mediocre or worse reviews—three stars, two stars, or one star. About one fourth of all respondents gave the school dismal reviews.

"Accused of Potential Fraud I agree with the person who was accused of potential fraud by Liberty University because the same thing happened to me and members of my family last year. They send the email and request the student to provide them information and make sure to include a color copy of your driver license or state issued identification

card. Once they have every bit of information that they requested, they do not review it all but say that your ID has been compromised and then proceed to send your grants and loans back to the department of education. They refuse to talk by phone and will only respond to emails. However when you email them to ask them specific questions or ask about this compromised ID, they fall back on “we can’t divulge that information but will be sending it to other government agencies.” They will not allow you to view the information, dispute it and cut off all forms of communication leaving you with a balance for something that was already paid for. The Dept of Education doesn’t really help because they are aware that Liberty University picks “certain” students to randomly put in their system for this so called fraud prevention alert. Although the majority of these students are Black, the Dept of Education says this is not discrimination. Liberty University also black lists you from going to other colleges as they have a hold of your transcripts along with sending your account to a collection agency. This has been a horrible experience. I believe the only way to stop Liberty is to have a class action lawsuit brought against them for this practice they have. People if you have complaints please follow up with someone. We must not suffer in silence and just put it on reviews. We need to come together and file a complaint against the unjust things Liberty University is doing and getting away with.”

Anonymous (In Progress) on January 20, 2012

“Please rethink attending this Institution. The PhD Counseling Department discriminate among students once you are enrolled. The committees and faculty pick and chose whom they want to support and graduate from this program, in spite of your hard work. They have a poor grading system. They use the rubric system that consists of points. The professors uses this system against the student. They only allow two to three students to graduate from the program at a time, in spite of how well you do. If they do not like you for whatever reason, you will never reach doctoral candidacy or dissertation status. They will allow you to get to certain point in the program and ruin your GPA. In turn, dismiss you from the program, after they have taken your money from during your enrollment. They are ruthless.”

“I would rather lay down in traffic. Financial Aid is an absolute nightmare. I would rather deal with Freddy Krugar. It is unorganized. Ignorance is prevalent. Some of the representatives are rude beyond belief. I would drop out if it wasn't for the fact I only have one semester left. My daughter is transferring out as fast as she can ... What shocks me the most is Liberty University's slogan is "Training Champions for Christ for more than 30 years", and the content of the courses (in many classrooms) is far from Biblical values.”

Mzpreacher August 17th 2011

“Dishonest financial aid department stole my Pell Grant! Curriculum is okay — only did one semester with these creeps so I'm not the best to ask about curriculum. But, I can tell ya about financial aid! I was awarded a Pell Grant and loans (subsidized and unsubsidized). They took the money from the government and held the Pell Grant, refusing to release my funds to me and stopped communicating with me altogether. They wouldn't email me and asked me to call. So I called and they said to keep checking my online account ("Asist"). They are liars, thieves and scandalous people. Don't waste your time and go elsewhere!”

Hall Lynn SEPTEMBER 8TH, 2011

studentsreview.com

(Students asked to sign with the major field of study. Note: On this site, 88 reviews are positive and 74 are negative—darn near half and half, appalling for a college in a college review site.

“I started this school believing that being Christian they would be more compassionate. WRONG! They don't believe in equality and I even received a notice that if I speak my mind again in their academic environment that they will throw me out, which is not what being a Christian nor even allowing a healthy debate in an academic environment. Said I cannot talk to anyone. Not anyone. How crazy is that?”

“This school only wants your money. They do not care if you learn anything. The faculty seems inept.”

Feb 12 2014 —Education

“This school is very horrible and does not appreciate the student's well being. Students are not allowed to voice their opinion. The financial Aid office and Students Accounts office are not helpful to the student's need. No one will communicate with you. This the worst university to attend; they put on a front acting if they are concerned. This is supposed to be a Christian college, yea right. Teachers expect you to agree with them all the time. You might as be in slavery if you cannot voice your own opinion.”

Dec 20 2013 Major Unknown

“This school acts more like a cult than a university. Also Trevecca Nazarene University is exactly the same way.”

Mar 01 2014 —Business Management and Administration

“This university does not believe in freedom of speech. If you try to speak your mind in this academic environment they will censor your comments. They are hypocrites and

not real Christians.”

March 01 2014 ——Business - Management and Administration

“It’s their way or the highway....disagree and your grade will suffer. You're encouraged to find things wrong and debate, but don't do it! The students will oust you as well — no more socializing with such heathens who are freethinkers with their own opinions. Make a 96 or above on EVERY assignment if you want an overall GPA of 4.0....their grading system is horribly unfair.”

May 14 2012 -Other

“Unable to reach professors, unable to obtain timely answers, unable to have professors fulfill complete academic accommodations per the Disabilities Act, professors flat out refuse to help.”

Jun 08 2012 Business - Management and Administration

“I cannot believe how unprofessional Liberty seems to be. Assignment instructions through Blackboard are difficult to understand, the textbook for one of my classes (e-book for \$100) was absolutely worthless and rarely matched up with the homework assignments, grades returned for written assignments are scored in a contradictory manner each week, professors are downright rude and will not answer simple questions. Regarding the e-book noted above, I asked the prof for other resources and she replied that wikipedia was a great resource. I've never heard of anybody in higher education recommending a student consult wiki! If you're looking for a place to be frustrated with assignments, deal with unprofessional professors, and be generally befuddled by the process of courses, Liberty is the place to be.”

Jun 13 2012 Business - Management and Administration

“I am out after this semester. And talking to some students and all professors are like talking to a wall. I already have a Masters and I’m still pretty young, but you are not allowed to debate here or have slightly different opinions. Even if you are on the conservative side, you are not enough for them. Everything is wrong in their eyes, the work is not even challenging, and the books you read don’t even offer differing opinions so you can come up with an academic debate for research, like other prestigious universities. I have had issues with financial aid and advising that are too long to list, and I am counting down the days until my brain is stimulated with actual academia again.”

Aug 24 2013 —Business - Management and Administration

“I have attended Liberty University Online (Masters in Mental Health Counseling) for three weeks. I withdrew from classes yesterday due to the deplorable education I was

receiving. The University focuses entirely too much on their "worldview". I deliberately had to answer questions on exams to their point of view, even if it wasn't the scientifically correct answer. A graduate education should be about finding your own worldview, not about having one shoved down your throat. The professors did not answer my questions adequately and seemed annoyed with my questions. They also graded work based on their biases, not on the quality of your work. I spent 27 hrs. per week on coursework and I feel that my efforts were not reflected in my grades or in the information I have gained.”

Feb 05 2012 Psychology

“The online program at Liberty University flat out sucks. They give you professors that don't know the material so the only thing they can grade you on is APA. This was the worst educational decision I ever made and consider their MBA program to be a total waste. The assignments are not written by the professors and the tests are computer graded. This is not a school I would recommend to my worst enemy. All I have now is debt with no solid credentials. There is absolutely no teaching at their online program. Definitely not recommended.”

Apr 08 2013 Business - Management and Administration

“The online MBA program is a total joke. I tried to transfer my courses out but they wouldn't transfer to any decent school, only to the for profit money maker type schools. This school duped me out of a decent education for lots of money. The assignments are pasted onto blackboard that aren't even written by the instructors. The professors I had rarely left any feedback on the assignments; it just seemed like they gave you whatever grade they felt like giving at the time. They were quick to take off for apa but never once was I graded on business content. Also, when I asked the instructors a question they told me to look at Wikipedia or other online places. The textbooks hardly ever matched the online test material and so many times I found test questions marked wrong when I knew I had the correct answer. Folks, if you listen to one thing I say keep this in mind. Liberty University's online MBA program is a total joke and waste of money. Do not go there unless you don't mind heartache grief and tons of stress with a low quality education. This school is not worth the money, I repeat not worth the money. I don't care how many good reviews they get.”

Apr 08 2013 —Business - Management and Administration

“Liberty University gives the illusion of being a tolerant university for religious education ...However, LU offers a very limited world view of evangelism, and belief systems. My worst trouble came from the amount of true/false exams taken at the graduate level. I felt that I was not encouraged to think at all, just memorize other

people's opinions. The other trouble came from the caliber of the other students. They were not willing to debate or think outside the box, instead they seemed to look for the answers outside the box rather than applying logic. My final concern came in the last term (that just ended). Since I took the courses on-line, I responded only to Teaching Assistants. Never once did I hear a comment from an instructor. I don't think that is acceptable at a grad level coursework. The instructor should be available to debate and help you develop your self, not fit into a defined mold. If you are OK with a fundamental theology, LU, is likely OK for you. If you, like me, want to challenge opinions and break them apart so you understand why you have certain beliefs, LU is probably not the right grad program for you. PS I transferred out and none of my credits transferred. They are not telling the truth if they tell you your credits are good anywhere.'

May 14th, 2008 —Religion/Religious

“At this point, I may as well have homeschooled grad school, and saved a ton of money. Calling advising is like calling customer service for a predatory lender—they know less about your question than you do, get defensive about school policies, and take you from asking respectful questions, to being totally exasperated. Do not expect any help with online learning from neither advising, nor the arrogant professors. Do not expect to get a job when you tell them that you have graduated from Liberty—if you graduate. Their graduation rate is 44%. Now, I know why. I have almost completed a program, and am denied an internship in my state because of my school—who does not have my state in the list of "problem states." I now have to transfer, and lose most of my 60 credit hours. Liberty is only collecting money from unsuspecting students, not providing an education.”

Mar 16 2011 —Other

YELP.COM

In the popular Yelp.com review site, out of 11 reviews, only three given them give 5 stars, and one gives them 4 stars. The other seven out of eleven give it a single star for being an abysmal joke of an institution of higher learning. That is surreally bad.

Katie C., Redmond, Washington, 4/10/2008

“LU carved a giant logo in the side of a mountain, forever marring the face of Lynchburg. Ugliest. Thing. Ever. And what Patrick H said: — "Liberty", if you have a liberal and open mind, don't step on campus, you could be arrested.— yea, that's 100% accurate.”

Michelle M., Mynchborg, VA 6/18/2011

“The school's name, "Liberty" is extremely ironic for a school with so many

restrictions on their staff and students. The rules are so outrageous, they hide them until a student enrolls with them, giving them the handbook after they've gotten their money.

This school is sexist, homophobic, and very elitist when it comes to Christianity. They're the reason why people overgeneralize Christians in this area. Only attend this school if you want to be told what to believe and who to vote for. The way I see it, Liberty is one big zombie and they want your brains.”

Terrance W., Hendon, VA 1/12/2012

“Liberty University is THE WORST. They like to pretend they are efficient until they get you in the door ... Financial aid sucks and their staff is awful. They speak to you like you are a child and not a customer. I ask simple and basic questions and get the run around by their unknowledgeable students who seem to run their offices. Any time I need information I don't receive it and it's the most general questions a student could possibly have. They never will go out of their way to locate your account if you don't know your student i.d. number and you will be blown off regardless. Their students and "chip-eating" professors who basically work at home for the online programs are totally unaware of the calendar, you get incorrect due dates for assignments and think you have a week to complete a final exam to be told in an announcement "there is miscommunication and the new due date is TOMORROW" - for your final assignment which can make or break you grade-wise. Online school is for WORKING ADULTS who simply cannot adhere to these last minute deadlines - it is totally ludicrous and unacceptable for professors to get away with presenting students with incorrect deadlines. Heck, half the time, they post an incorrect syllabus and then a student catches an error, hence, confusion is rampant. Be prepared for tons of technical errors if you attend this university online also....whenever I need to access their “Blackboard” system to get information, I can't, which delays my ability to get my work done. Anyway, the professors do not care, they won't call you if you need help - there is no way to receive help with anything and most assignments are set up to benefit the instructors so that they are automatically graded by the system. That said, I'm not sure what they do all day or how it is they are able to be college professors AT HOME around their own life in this capacity. I actually had one professor tell me his life is too crazy as a "stay at home dad" and he could barely keep up with his job. Nice.”

“Good luck with the assignments too if you aren't wrapped up in this Christian culture. I thought by taking the courses online, it would withdrawn me from this piece of the culture at least, but they wrap it up into all of your work, even if the course has nothing to do with religion. You are expected to always reference the bible in your assignments....even accounting! I am currently looking for another college. I won't be treated like a jerk because these buffoons think they are hierarchy due to their "religion"

and can treat everyone else lower than they think they are as a result ... NO ONE GETS ANYWHERE WITH THESE PEOPLE. Their on-campus students are idiots.”

“I am a Christian, TEA Party advocate, Marine Corps vet, missionary kid, and I can probably recite the Bible better than half the Bible beaters that attend this crappy school. Liberty University prides itself with being military friendly and highly efficient. However, their perceived reputation could not be farther from the truth. This is what happened to me: (and then the student write a virtual dissertation of horror stories.. ..)

I would give Liberty zero stars if I could. It was my intent to continue with Liberty for a Masters as well as have my husband use his tuition assistance from the Navy to get his degree from Liberty, but now I am telling everyone I know to run away from these liars and thieves!

Their lack of communication and poorly run system is laughable and extremely unprofessional ... The instructors they hire for the online classes are terrible. I have had instructors take weeks to post assignments and then grade incorrectly. Other instructors never reply to emails or post weekly updates. It is very frustrating ...

In conclusion, you have been warned. The negative reviews on this site are all accurate. Don't waste your time, money, or VA benefits on Liberty University. It was the worst decision I ever made. Don't be blinded by their promises of a high quality Christian education as they do not practice what they preach.”

grad reports.com

Out of 80 reviews, 25, nearly a third, give it one or two stars—again dismal reviews from students—graduate and undergraduate, online and on campus, mildly religious and profoundly religious. Nearly one third found it appallingly bad:

“If you want to get the run around from pretty much everyone there then go to Liberty! Also if you want Jesus and the Bible shoved down your throat go to Liberty! “Every degree is pretty much a religion degree, and if you try to make valid points about anything not found in the Bible, your grade will suffer.”

—Kayla August 13, 2012

“I started taking online courses and at first I loved it. The first course and professor was amazing. The second course was so boring that I thought I would die. There is no interaction with your classmates at all. Everything is done via e-mail and that's it. I thought we would have some type of interaction online but no. And, I knew going into it that Liberty is a Christian school but they take it to the extreme. The last class I was taking was psychology. We were told "if you can't find it in the Bible it didn't happen." What? Wait. There's research to show it's. I couldn't be onboard with that. I am now

looking for a new school.”

Psychology Student July 26th, 2013

“I am attending Liberty Seminary online. Be warned, they hate female seminary students. They don't believe women should preach which goes against everything Jesus stood for. They have no female seminary professors. They will smile in your face and give fairly decent grades until after you do your Professor's review. Then they will give you a D or F on your final research paper. Turabian style is required for all papers submitted. The dumb professors do not even know proper Turabian format. Some will say use ten point, some twelve point. Some say three lines or more are indented when it is five lines or more. They give way too many DVDs to watch for an eight week class. Only two professors were worthy to be called professors. The rest hate and I mean Hate women being in their classes and show it by their complete lack of respect and by their terrible grading. I submitted all my papers to the writing workshop and made all the corrections before submitting the papers to the Professors. They would still try and give low scores. This place is a joke. I guess the old saying is true that evil knows where to place their demons. They are the Seminary professors at Liberty University. Financial aid will keep your additional refund if you drop a D term class. I guess students can starve to death as long as those greedy ignorant woman hating beasts get their pay. GOD will surely judge them a thousand more times as harshly as they have treated all the females in Seminary. The sooner the better. The books you are required to buy are written by idiots who hate women as well.” Anonymous Nov 18th

FOURTHLY, you can tell people—and most urgently students contemplating going to Liberty, or enrolling online—what Liberty University will NEVER tell you: that many, many serious employers will not even consider hiring a person with a degree from Liberty. HR people have been Making their Witness and Giving their Testimony regarding this for years, all over the world wide web.

You see—and this is a subtle but crucial point here—*with Liberty, it's not just a question of what you didn't learn there that makes you a less desirable job candidate. It's a matter of what you DID learn that kills your chances: Dogma over Science, Blind Faith over Replicable Proof, personal bias trumps the laws of the land, and if the answers aren't in the Bible, well then this Liberty-grad-employee probably doesn't give a damn about the questions.*

And pursuing all kinds of dynamic, creative answers to crucial questions is at the essence of succeeding as a white collar power force.

Bottom line, if you spend years of your life and tens of thousands of dollars pursuing

a degree there—be it in lovely LYNCHburg, or online—you may well find that degree is entirely useless when you get out in the real—and yes, often secular—world.

Here are just a few opinions of employers culled from the web; search for yourself; you will get an education.

From askamanager.org:

June 19, 2012 at 8:21 am

“I can see where a laboratory wouldn’t hire scientists from colleges that don’t teach real science courses. Liberty University is well known for teaching ‘Creation Sciences’, and in a real world laboratory such experience is useless.”

Donna July 23, 2013 at 5:26 pm ‘

“As an employer, I DO care. A LOT.

I will NOT hire anyone out of a religious school. Liberty University is a good example. I find the religious agenda so interferes with teaching critical thinking skills that these people can be VERY difficult to supervise.

Anything that goes against their personal religious beliefs is rejected outright. I work in medicine, so this can be a serious problem. Credible science is rejected by those graduates based on the SOURCE. If the source is a credible scientific body, they reject it. It’s exactly the opposite of what it should be.

So – when my assistant reviews applicants, she knows to file away ANY that are from religious schools. Period. We don’t destroy them as we are legally required to keep them, but she stamps “UNIVERSITY” across the cover page. That alerts us, if we are reviewing files, that the person is automatically unacceptable.

I’ve had too many years and too many experiences with those people. The fact that I have to manage someone’s personal religious beliefs – some of which can get us into trouble (for example, we had one of those employees trying to talk one of our patients out of going for an abortion – we are a psychiatry office – we CANNOT do that). So for this doctor, NO RELIGIOUS SCHOOL GRADUATES. Period.”

Reflecting on the Force answered 5 years ago

“I do not consider Liberty University a legitimate university. I am an accredited lawyer in Australia, but work as a psychologist here. I know what it means to be a professional, it means that you must abandon all political, religious and emotional beliefs in your own mind for the benefit of your clients. I do not think a person educated at Liberty University could do that because their learning is derived from a place of political, religious and emotional faith. In other words, I would not hire a Liberty U lawyer in my firm because they may have to argue for an abortion case.”

And here is an even more damning example, in which a most certainly religious

minded soul condemns Liberty University:

Jkdbuck76, 27th May 09, 11:05 AM

“...They might as well have expelled them. Fundie nut sets up a private university to expound his own opinions, fundie gets to do aforesaid. Surely degrees from such a place are worthless in the job market beyond religious-right political organizations and evangelical protestant ministry? I'm on a pulpit committee right now to hire a new pastor. I will not hire a Liberty U grad. Period. One of the major principles of the Baptist faith (besides eating way too much fried food) is the separation of church and state. I tend to be more fundamental in my beliefs, however I have never liked nor trusted the Religious Right. And Falwell's infomercials always made me sick. Why is there so much stupid?”

And further reflecting this general phenomenon—of religious educations being anathema to many employers—is the experience of Ben Strength., from wordpress.com. Here is an excerpt from the article, as told from the graduating student’s point of view:

He bemoans his fate at attending a Christian college: with people choosing to spend less money than in recent years, and employers hiring fewer employees, Ben Strength, a graduate of New Hope Christian College, has found it difficult to obtain a job in Eugene [Oregon]. Between the substantial number of lay-offs people have dealt with and the way people are holding onto their money, employers seem to have a plethora of highly-qualified applicants. “It’s pretty cut throat out there,” says Strength. Having a degree from a religious institution hasn’t held much weight in the application process.” ... Strength adds, “It seems I wasted thousands of dollars on a degree that won’t help me.”

LASTLY—and this may be my favorite zinger—(wait for it) you can debunk the myth that Liberty is this wonderful “accredited” university, as Liberty would have you think. Yes, technically Liberty is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, but what they don’t tell you about on their website (or actually they do, in fine print at the end of webpage, where they hope you won’t look), is all the organizations who WON’T accredit them. To name just a few: Its graduate business courses are *not* AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) accredited.

Its counseling and therapy courses are *not* accredited by COAMFTE, the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education, nor by CACREP (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs). This is rather like saying that your degree is printed on toilet paper, which at least you can hand to your weeping therapy client when they find out that you are not qualified to

treat them. Even Liberty's own webpage about this degree is full of defensive apologies and fine print disclosures of restrictions—vis a vis, the uselessness of the degree.

But you want to hear the biggest joke of all? (Thank you for waiting) ... Even really religious people, people willing to spend their lives, their entire career, pursuing and teaching and disseminating religion, don't take Liberty seriously: ***Liberty is not accredited by ATS—the Association of Theological Schools.***

GodPeople don't even take Liberty seriously.

And if all else fails, remind them about the 3000 year old dinosaur bone. If this doesn't turn off the kid entirely on going to Liberty, you may want to euthanize this child. The Darwin Awards philosophy, and all that. (Please enjoy Darwin awards.com for a few brief shining moments.)

There is one last possibility, a final strategy which may bring pressure to bear on the draconian minds at Falwell's Liberty University. Liberty University is a religious institution, proudly so, and as such enjoys a tax exempt status. Which means staying out of politics, neither endorsing nor condemning any candidate or party.

Yet Liberty University banned the Democratic Club at their campus.

What the hell is up with that? Shouldn't that mean they lose their precious tax exempt status, and what can we do about it?

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE PREACHER

Certain readers may observe that the ending to this book, *Liberty's Tyranny*, bears an almost word-for-word resemblance to the ending of *"Little Book of Lynching"*. That is a conscious choice. There is a reason for that. My logic is best described in a charming little anecdote that circulates in the preaching community. It's an old favorite of mine.

A story is told about a man who preached an impressive sermon, seeking to be the pastor of a new church. It was a heartfelt sermon, filled with examples of The Golden Rule and Do Unto Others and Love Thy Brother As Thyself and Corinthians 13:13 and so forth. Beautiful! Inspiring! Everybody loved it and voted for him to become their new pastor.

They were a bit surprised, however, when he preached the same sermon his first Sunday there—and even more surprised when he preached it again the next week. After he preached the same sermon the third week in a row, the church leaders met with him to find out what was going on. The pastor assured them, "I know what I'm doing. When you start living out this sermon, I'll go on to my next one."

Translation: it's a bad place, out there in the world, with evil people doing dark deeds. It's a depressing place, full of hardship and pain and misery. The bad guys are always almost winning, right on the verge of triumph. We need every soul we can get, fighting on the right side. On the side of Good. Hence, I will probably end many of my books this same way. And why not?

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THIS IS THE END, MY FRIEND

I didn't expect this book. I was planning on writing a fantasy involving World War II soldiers called "The Ash Boys." It was only because of my horrible experiences in Appomattox and the egregious racism I witnessed there, as well as the things I learned about Liberty University, that I felt it was a matter both imperative and urgent—for me to sit down and write these books.

"Wigger." "Liberty's Tyranny." "The Little Book of Lynching."

After two years of burying myself in stories and incidents of bigotry, xenophobia, homophobia, religious intolerance, religious zealotry, and fundamentalism run amok, along with the seemingly endless accounts of lynchings, both long past and all too recent, I had a bizarre realization: I had no ending for this book.

I had no ending for this book.

This was odd to me, because, like many writers, I tend to know the end of my story, and the end of my character's journey, first, from the very beginning. And the fun part, the fascination, is with seeing exactly how he or she gets there. Granted, sometimes you create an odd character, and see where his personality and predilections take him. Or her. But more often than you would guess, the author knows the endgame even better than he knows the opening paragraphs.

Why couldn't I come up with an ending for either *"Liberty's Tyranny"* or *"The Little Book of Lynching"*?

And then, it hit me. That is because an ending implies closure. And closure is precisely the opposite of what we have here. In these books we have shed a light, pulled back a curtain, lifted a rock—choose the cliché of your choice—but the point is, a galling and dangerous problem has been uncovered. And now, clearly, something needs to be done about it.

I KNOW THERE TO BE THREE KINDS OF PEOPLE:

1. There are people who would never even bother to read a book like this. (Too depressing?)
2. People who read books like this, and then discuss them over dinner parties and at cocktail soirées and at book clubs and in other such scenarios with great concern. They

sound intelligent and caring, informed and citizen-of-the-worldly. They are frauds. They acquire their patina of social consciousness at the cost of other people's suffering. They make no difference in the world. Actually they do make a difference—for the worse. They are part of the problem. I would rather hear some addled blonde debate the Bachelor's decision vis-a-vis the Final Rose than hear these people twaddle on about heart-wrenching problems that they have no intention of doing a damn thing about.

3. People who read a book like this, and then decide what to do about it.

Back in the day, there was a public service announcement about drugs. It said something like, “53 percent of drugs are done by kids who live in the cities. So who do you think are doing the other 47 percent?” They were trying to alert people to the idea that drugs, both hard and soft, were making their way into suburbs and towns, the country, the little Mayberries that dot our landscape. It was a valid point.

Maybe sometimes I just get cranky and become a glass-half-empty kind of person, but I rather feel that way when I peruse the statistics for volunteering. Allow me to elaborate: I recently read that roughly between one fourth and one third of adult Americans volunteer. While some studies claim that it is on the rise, others claim that it is dropping, leading me to believe, based on a comparison with past figures, that the numbers are remaining fairly consistent. Also, it depends on how you define volunteering: i.e., number of hours served per annum, formality or regularity of commitment, etcetera—still the numbers remain fairly steady at one third to one quarter of America getting off its collective butt and helping their fellow man. Woman. Child. Senior. Person. Dog. Cat. Wild thing.

(By the way, go Provo, Utah!, with its 64% volunteer rate, highest in the country, last time the world looked.)

But what about the rest of us? Hmmm? What about the rest of us?

It's like the drug commercial. It's all too much like the drug commercial. When I see that statistic, I don't see one out of every three people charging out to make the world a better place, I see two out of every three people clenched so deeply by the arms of their La-Z-Boy, their asses now melded with the naugahyde, their eyes so riveted on whatever television show has mesmerized them for the moment: Dancing With The Stars, Nascar, Honey Boo Boo, Duck Dynasty, and on and on ...that they can't imagine the thought of going to a Wednesday night fundraiser. They can't imagine spending some time on the weekend helping those less fortunate.

Yes, I know, we're all busy, especially people with families. But busy with what?

Well, I guess that depends on whether you are single, or have a family. If we are single, in addition to our job, we generally spend most of our time looking for happiness and fulfillment. Oh, I don't care if you spend you time at the mall or on the links, at the spa or at the gym, getting therapy or practicing yoga, at a bar or at a barbecue, cruising the internet or channel surfing, the raw truth is that most of us are spending any spare

time we have seeking happiness and fulfillment. Hey, I got a tip for you. The fast lane. Top secret. Sure fire. Hiding in plain sight. Hey, I got one word for you: volunteer. You will immediately be on the track to much more happiness and fulfillment.

Oh yes, I will grant you, sometimes it takes trying several different charities and organizations before you find your soulmate, cause-wise. Or maybe, like the Mormons of old, you have more than one soulmate. (Read: cause.) And I will also grant you that volunteering can often be daunting and depressing, given that you have chosen to look squarely in the face of need, sadness, hardship, and pain.

However, I promise you this: once you do find your "soulmate"—*that cause which stirs you more deeply than any material thing on this earth ever could*—the moments of bliss, peace, and satisfaction you derive from engagement will trump any “high” you have ever known. And trust me, *that* is a subject about which, I am sorry to say, I know far too much.

But what of those folks with families? Easier for them to take their daytimer and their To-Do list (both now more likely found on an electro gizmo tablet, rather than scribbled in some leather bound booklet or affixed to the refrigerator with a whimsical magnet), and use that busy bee schedule as an excuse, than it is to actually get up, walk out their front door, and change the world. That newfangled tablet, in fact, has become something akin to an electronic shield, just as our babies and children have become human shields. *"I can't volunteer, it takes every minute of my free time just to raise this!"* (Wave baby in the air for emphasis.)

But first of all, that's a lie. According to an entire 'nother set of statistics, which remains eerily consistent, regardless of who seeks out the data, the average parent spends about an hour a day with their kid. (I don't know if it is frightening or hilarious that about five percent of parents think this is still too much.) And considering that the above mentioned *hour per day average* is skewed by the lengthy weekend commitments—driving the little nippers around to soccer games, ballet practice, band, martial arts, scouts, play dates, etcetera, all of which tend to take up a much greater swath of time—it means that the amount of time any parent spends with their child during those perennially traumatic school days is whittled down to almost nothing. A few minutes. One study puts it at seventeen minutes.

And those statistics don't even delve into the thornier issue of what constitutes "spending time" with one's children. If you are all sitting down to dinner together, and your kid spends the entire meal mute, ignoring you, and texting away, have you really spent any time together?

All of this accumulated data begs the question: exactly what are we teaching our children, during those seventeen minutes, or however long it might be? For most parents, it's not how to do homework. A frightening new study from the National Center for Family Literacy corroborates what other studies have discovered. Specifically, from the

parent pool, 21.9 percent of all parents are too busy to help their kids with homework, 31.6 buckled to kids who say they don't want their parents' help with homework, and a whopping 46.5 percent of parents say they just don't get the material. Just don't understand it. Damned disinspiring statistics, if you ask me. But surely, surely, any parent understands how to shut off the TV, the Playstation, the Wii, the computer, the Ipod, the texting screen, and drag their kids out into the real world to do some good.

That presumes, of course, that the parent is inspired to, and committed to, doing some good. The fact that so many simply are not scares the hell out of me. Sad.

And what is so sad here isn't that the parents—and kids—don't seem willing to give, but that they aren't even selfishly astute enough to go out and reap the very real, very personal benefits of volunteering. Make no mistake, volunteering helps the volunteer every bit as much as it helps the volunteered. (?)

Just to pull one study out of the air—and there are hundreds of studies, by the way:

“Among teenagers, even at-risk children who volunteer reap big benefits, according to research findings studied by Jane Allyn Piliavin, a retired University of Wisconsin sociologist. She cites a positive effect on grades, self-concept, and attitudes toward education. Volunteering also led to reduced drug use and huge declines in dropout rates and teen pregnancies.”

—U.S. News and World Report, April 4th, 2012

And as for adults, study after study—and I mean exhaustive, numerous, credible studies—all indicate that volunteering is as close to an overall wonder drug since—well, since forever: volunteering improves health on a wide variety of fronts, including increased longevity. It increases feelings of happiness, well being and self-esteem. It improves relationships. “Health Benefits of Volunteering”, a pdf from our federal government's own nationalservice.gov, even offers a detailed chart demonstrating that specific areas of heart health increase with the number of hours that a Baby Boomer volunteers. Apparently, there is a connection between the metaphorical loving heart, and the literally healthy heart.

As a person who has always volunteered, (first being shepherded around to events by mom), I cannot help but chuckle at those selfish souls who claim they haven't a jot of time to help other people, but who always have plenty of time for therapy, new age book immersion, self-help seminars, and assorted forms of self-medication.

What can I say? Apparently, I haven't volunteered enough hours yet to have had the snark bludgeoned out of me.

If it's happiness you want, get up right now and put someone else's happiness before your own—and this time, it has to be a perfect (or imperfect) stranger.

And if it's better kids you want, take them away from their computer, out into the sunshine, dragging them if you must, and teach them *the truth* about what it means to

fight evil, be heroic, and become legend.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

ORIGAMI PIGS BEFORE I DIE... & HAMMERTIME

I could give you all kinds of advice regarding what to do about the problems presented in this book, or any cause to which you attach yourself, for that matter. I could go for the old chestnut and tell you to write your congressman, or become involved in local **POLITICS**. You know how it goes—people bitch and moan about the quality of presidential candidates, then admit to never participating in the process that gets those candidates to the debate podium in the first place.

But just because phrases like "write your Congressman" and "get involved at a grassroots level" may be hackneyed advice, that doesn't make them any less valid. It is excellent advice, absolutely: it is my experience that clichés are bad in writing, because we are looking for the original thought, the fresh twist on ancient ideas—but in real life, clichés usually contain a kind of sagacity. They are oft' repeated and time honored precisely because they contain wisdom and truth.

So yes, react politically. Please. History is littered with the carcasses of cultures who ignored this advice.

And even the best writers would agree with this. A physician turned journalist named Sheri Fink wrote a book called "Five Days at Memorial", a non-fiction narrative about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina at one of the local hospitals. Based on the author's earlier Pulitzer Prize winning article, it contains jarring stories of death, and of facing the certainty of impending death— and how do you think she ends this powerful and unique book? She tells you to get involved with politics, write your congressman. (Or, in this day and age, use social media to get many people to write their congressman.) Sometimes, it is simply the best solution, even if it is just one of many.

In this particular case of Liberty University bilking so much money from the taxpayers while teaching, albeit subtly, hateful attitudes such as homophobia and xenophobia (to name just a couple), as well as ignoring huge areas of facts in the realm of the sciences, and shunning balance in the area of the liberal arts—well, I will grant you that political activism can't seem to impact that problem: the entire reason that Liberty gets so much money without the accountability is that technically, it is the students who are getting the money, in the form of Pell Grants, and Liberty then woos and seduces the naive student into handing that money over to Liberty University. And if the easily disenchanted (read "horrified") student decides to drop out or otherwise remove himself from the bastion of brainwashing that is Liberty, screw him, to hell with her, Liberty is

sure as hell keeping that Pell Grant money. Even if the student is legally due that money back.

But—and this is important—since Liberty University, like the town of Appomattox, has grown so arrogant that it thinks it can not only flaunt the law, but associate with know felons, this is where a pro-active District Attorney, police department, and sheriff's department come into play. Police Chief, Sheriff, and D.A. are usually elected positions, and if they are not, then you simply find out which elected official is in charge of appointments, and hold their feet to the fire—especially during the next election cycle.

My telling you to write your Congressman or get involved in local politics may not be novel or scintillating, it may not seem like thinking outside the box, but if you don't get the powerful impact that these actions can have, then you don't get the whole point of being an American and living in America.

There is no excuse for apathy.

And if you do not even understand that your apathy makes you part of the problem, I don't want you sharing my country with me. And maybe you should move. In fact, please do. Soon. Now. This weekend.

Time and again, I have heard Holocaust survivors say basically the same thing.

To quote survivor Benny Hochman, author of "From Hell to Here", who lost his entire family in the Holocaust, ***“Don't forget, when you're old enough to take part in our government, you have the duty to vote for who you want to vote for. If somebody comes and tells you that you have to vote for so-and-so, tell them to go fly a kite.”*** Then later, during that same speech, he directed his words specifically to the junior and senior high school students in attendance—but they were words choked with tears: ***“I have loved America from day one, when I met my first American soldier, to as long as I live. It means so much to me to live in this country that I never take the flag down. For me, this is my heart: America. You have the right to fight for freedom, for liberty, for choice. Go home and tell your folks that I said, if you don't vote the next election—for the dogcatcher, for the mayor, for the governor, senator, or whoever, and they don't vote—tell them, from me to you, ‘Shame on you, Mom and Dad, shame on you ... I never miss it ... Thank you very much and God bless America.”***

But activism goes way above and beyond the ballot box. (And I am speaking more generally here, of how to advance your particular cause.) If you want to feel alive, and you are not prone to common fears, you can resort to something more radical, like ***civil disobedience***, or else cozy up to the kissing cousin of civil disobedience, ***“Guerilla Marketing”***.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE is a concept with which, I suspect, you are no doubt

familiar—if you are the type of person to have picked up this book and read this far. But just so you know, civil disobedience can be far more creative than the ubiquitous 60's sit in, and rather more fun than the martyr's fast.

If you have any doubts about an example of civil disobedience, I have two words for you: ROSA PARKS. Please tell me you know who this is. But what you may not know is that she was not what so many people mistake her to be—just an elderly woman who was too tired to get up, and who had had enough of being told to “move to the back of the bus.” This moment of defiance was neither spontaneous nor serendipitous. At the time she carried out this act of civil disobedience, Rosa Parks was secretary of the Montgomery, Alabama chapter of the NAACP, and she was also not the first black to be arrested for refusing to move to the back of the bus.* Rosa Parks was part of a larger movement—proudly so—and it had been agreed upon that hers was the case to be pushed through to the higher courts, and to draw the world’s attention to this ongoing thwarting of equal rights.

(*The first person to refuse to move to the back of the bus was a very brave young woman by the name of Claudette Colvin. Just fifteen years old, her mind was filled with stories of Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman, whom she had just read about in school. She admired them, and wanted to follow in their footsteps, so when she was on a bus en route to school in Alabama during the summer of 1955, just nine months before the Rosa Parks incident, she decided not to move when several white people got on and the bus driver told her to move to the back of the bus. She followed in the footsteps of her mentors by refusing to move her feet at all, you might say.

The police were called, and they hauled the young girl off to jail, but not before kicking her brutally, even though she was slim, slight, and obviously harmless. After cuffing her and throwing her in the squad car, they called her names like “nigger bitch” all the way to the station, and when she got there, she was called “nigger” again, and, inexplicably, “whore”. You can learn more about her inspiring story from the NPR archives, or read the book about her story, “Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice”.)

Obviously, the concept of civil disobedience is not new to you. If you are truly selfless (which alas, I am not), you can go all “Gandhiesque,” although some of his strategies, like fasting until laws are changed, I am afraid are just not my thing. I care about a wide variety of causes and charities, but not enough to give up snack time.

But if you’ve a vestige of the hippie left in you, or if you have hippie DNA handed down from your parents or grandparents, then you might want to consider a different approach to civil disobedience. A great primer and excellent inspiration can be found in Abbie Hoffman’s “STEAL THIS BOOK”. Now, I wouldn’t recommend using most of his tips—among other things, many of his tactics are outright illegal—but the book is inspiring, and I find such brain food essential to get me thinking in the right direction. (Or the left direction.)

I don't even want to mention here how extreme some of Hoffman's ideas are, but the spirit of the book has trickled down to activists who use his kind of civil disobedience even today. I remember one 60's-esque strategy was to move large numbers of activists into a bank, have them peacefully stand in line, and each withdraw a dollar, then have them get in line again, only to redeposit it. This was a bit before my time, and dammit, I can't find on the internet exactly what they were protesting, but it probably had something to do with bank policy, and it had its own vogue there for a while. I mention it to show how benign, and even easy to execute, some civil disobedience can be, while still effecting change.

Granted, characters like Timothy Leary and Abbie Hoffman, and hippies in general (particularly the way they dressed), may look a bit ridiculous to some people today, viewed through the filter of the passing years. But their strategies are actually time honored, effective, and constantly being resurrected with much success. It is also important to remember—and even honor—the extremes to which activists were willing to go, in order to fight a system that was increasingly corrupt. These activists were, after all, living and fighting and struggling during a period which included Vietnam, Watergate, the Birmingham freedom marches and the attacks made upon them, Kent State, the '68 Democratic Convention riots, and a slew of assassinations, to mention just a few highlights. Desperate times call for desperate measures, and all that.

I will not dwell at length on the topic of civil disobedience for two reasons: one, it is edgier than most people want to take on. By definition, it implies breaking the law, ergo arrest is highly possible, and frankly, is that something you are up to this week? Schedule's already a little full, I am guessing? Secondly, if you are interested, the examples of it on the web are so ubiquitous, I think that I would be guilty of reinventing the wheel.

But, if you do fall into that rare group that wishes to commit civil disobedience, remember, many people have experienced arrest, and not found it particularly traumatic. They have been groomed for it, they are psyched for it. And because the eyes of the world (or at least the community, and their web fan base) are most likely upon them, the incarceration is neither traumatic nor lengthy. The authorities know that the world is watching.

Think of the famous people, like Woody Harrelson and Darryl Hannah, who protested the pillaging of the environment by chaining or cuffing themselves to trees, bridges, etcetera. Think of the pro-lifers who have gotten themselves arrested for peacefully sitting in front of the door to an abortion clinic and blocking the entrance. Think of Occupy Wall Street. You don't have to agree with all of them, but I think it's important to keep civil disobedience alive, because at the crux of it is the reminder that throughout history, the law books have been crammed with asinine and immoral laws.

Think of the Suffragettes, think of the Abolitionists and the Underground Railroad,

think of the 3/5's Compromise, think of homosexuality being against the law—a felony, no less. And that list doesn't even include the funny laws that are still on the books.

But back to civil disobedience, moderned up:

—In May of 2010, the Greensboro, NORTH CAROLINA FIVE (as I am dubbing them) waited for the recess of a City Council meeting, took over the Council members' chairs, pounded the gavel, and publicly denounced the corruption of the police department. And if you research the highly racist nature of the goings-on which prompted this action, you will see that these five people were absolutely in the right. And the judge apparently agreed; they were charged with second degree trespassing, sentences waived. Being charged was actually a win-win: being arrested and charged effectively brought the issue to public light via the media, which is exactly what the protestors wanted, and the judge seeing the light meant that the protestors didn't even have to do any jail time or pay a fine.

And the North Carolina Five are not alone; during that same week, six preachers blocked a public building, protesting the same police corruption. Eradication of the rampant corruption and racism within the police department is not yet quite complete, but one point is clear. The citizens of Greensboro, by joining together in various forms of activism and civil disobedience, have kept this problem looming large on the world wide web for years now. The Greensboro Police Department can no longer indulge in racist or corrupt behavior, under the assumption that it is not being watched.

Acts like this take some courage, but in my experience, waking up in the morning takes courage, so it is a muscle that many of us have exercised far more than we know. If your cause is truly just, and if it is worthy enough, breaking bullshit laws or creating minor violations is a small price to pay for something which is very, very expensive to purchase: publicity—be it local, or global. And in a cyberworld where Jesus' face in a Dorito or a gourd shaped like Richard Nixon goes viral on the world wide web, getting your cause global is not as hard as you might think.

GUERRILLA MARKETING

Now, on to the cousin of Civil Disobedience, Guerilla Marketing.

“Guerilla Marketing” is generally defined as using creative thinking and photo-op worthy event-making to get free publicity for your product or cause. Now granted, over time, it has morphed to also include advertising that is not free, but is at least, innovative, surprising, and thinking-outside-the-box. The most immediate example that springs to mind is the new rage, “flash mob”. Although flash mobs are hardly free—a fancy one can be into the five figures—it certainly gets people's attention. And seriously, you would have to be quite a sourpuss to not enjoy a flash mob breaking out while you are having lunch al fresco, feeding pigeons in the park, or racing through Grand Central Station.

But most of the guerilla marketing that is paid for—sticker bombing, presence

marketing, undercover marketing, bus and bench ads, is really just the old fashioned advertising approach with a contemporary twist. The *true genius* in hardcore guerilla marketing exists where the twin requisites, creativity and courage, carry the day—and best of all, because you have this great imagination, you’ve come up with a guerilla marketing idea which costs you virtually nothing.

Guerilla marketing is basically civil disobedience filtered down into something more benign, legal, and effective. And granted, sometimes the lines between these two categories blur; one great publicity stunt can be a little of both.

Here are some examples, to jog your atrophied mind:

PAYWITHPENNIES.COM tells people how to protest a bill, outrageous penalties and interest accrued on a bill, or the unnecessary complicating of the method of paying a bill, by paying it all in pennies. I do recall that in 2011, a Utah man was arrested for disturbing the peace after doing this, but rightly so: he was, in point of fact, arrested for dumping thousands of pennies on a receptionist’s desk, which *is* disturbing the peace, and frankly a scary move in this day and age. What might this nut do next? It was not the pennies themselves which got him in trouble. The Federal Code states clearly that pennies are legal tender for all debts, public and private. There is a grey area here, as some merchants have a right to refuse payment in pennies (in the spirit of No shirt No shoes No service), but the government *has* to take it.

I wish I had known this ten years ago, when I got a ticket for turning onto the street where I lived. Overnight (literally), they had put up a sign in the Sherman Oaks suburb of Los Angeles “**No Right Turn Between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.**” These signs are usually posted after a.) a pattern of excessive traffic on certain side streets and b.) the people on those side streets create a massive petition. The only problem is, nobody on the street remembers signing a petition, and, more importantly, those signs ALWAYS exclude the people living on the street, elst how do you get to where you live? I explained to the cop how this would necessitate my making a huge 12 block square all around the Ventura Blvd./Sepulveda Blvd. intersection, which sits directly under the Ventura Freeway/405 intersection—which, as fate would have it, is one of the ten busiest intersections in America. This when I could have spit on my apartment building from where he had pulled me over.

The cop was about as sympathetic as a dung beetle. I pointed out that he had just made the same illegal turn on his motorcycle when he was in front of me in traffic, and that police cannot break the traffic laws, unless they have sirens on and are enroute to an emergency. This did not enhance the chemistry of our dialogue. The judge was more sympathetic, waving the fine but giving me the points on my license. Still, I wish, in hindsight, that somehow I could have dumped a pile of copperheads somewhere.

I will grant you that this pay-with-pennies example of guerilla marketing/civil

disobedience (although technically you aren't even breaking any law) can seem like more hassle than it is worth to the average activist, but it has three distinct advantages:

1.) If you can persuade enough people to do it (and persuasive people have persuaded other people to do some mighty peculiar things), you can effect policy change regarding the matter.

2.) The psychic gratification, the venting process if you will, getting your bile out of your system—it's tremendous.

3.) It functions more as a form of guerilla marketing than civil disobedience. As in, if you can get a news story or internet story done about your penny project, it drives traffic to your website and your cause.

CASE IN POINT: my own personal favorite example of this would have to be the man who paid a \$137 dollar moving violation ticket to his local police department by rendering it in origami pigs made from one dollar bills—137 of them, to be precise, presented in a Dunkin' Donuts box. Get the joke? You can see it for yourselves on YouTube, as have over one million other amused voyeurs. Granted, this man did not seem to have a larger attached cause, but the genius of it is, such a whimsical form of protest—which even got the cops and clerk begrudgingly laughing—is bound to get lots of traffic; this drives people to other videos on your Youtube Subscribe site; hence, instant publicity. Oddly enough, BaconMoose, the perp in question, only has one other video on his Youtube page—you guessed it. How to make origami pigs out of dollar bills. Still, the fact that 1,327,191 people and counting, all viewed this video, speaks to the overwhelming power of guerilla marketing as a way to get people in touch with your cause—in this case, via beloved Youtube,

So, we have seen how some acts straddle the fence; they are both Civil Disobedience and Guerilla Marketing.

But heck, guerilla marketing doesn't have to be strident, nor walk a tightrope across the law. It can be fun, benevolent even. When a famous Hamburger chain decided to give all the first responders free burgers during the Los Angeles 6.6 Northridge Earthquake (and lucky me, I was just a few miles from the epicenter), they got what had to be well over a hundred thousand dollars worth of free publicity for a few days, as various stations ran the news story, announcing the hamburger chain's name on television over and over again, to an audience that was glued to the set for news of the quake. In a curious twist of fate, I'll be damned if I can remember the name of the hamburger chain. But it was almost twenty years ago, and I didn't get a free hamburger. I was holed up in some rubble in my apartment.

And Guerilla Marketing can be creative. One burgeoning example is authorized graffiti. As in, rather than have a drab brick wall, the owner of that wall—be it a small man'spa grocery store, a used book shop, a gallery, whatever—will authorize spectacular graffiti. Then you know how it goes ..."The store is right at the intersection with that

great graffiti" ... or, alternatively, even better, people go to see the graffiti, and stay to browse the store.

One of my favorite examples of guerilla marketing is still ongoing, even as I write this, and it comes from a wonderful artist known as Candy Chang, who, after losing a loved one and going through a profound depression, rebounded by securing permission to take over the side of a building in New Orleans that could only be improved by any manner of artistic embellishment.

She created hundreds of repeat stencils which all contained the first half of a sentence: **BEFORE I DIE, I WANT TO—**” And then, she left behind a great quantity of colored chalk, so that anybody who wanted to could scribble in their response.

She did not anticipate the extent to which the results would pull her out of her depression, make her laugh, make her cry again, give people a chance to vent, draw the neighborhood closer, all the while bringing legions of visitors and tourists to see it.

But perhaps most importantly, on a practical, guerilla marketing level, it helped her to get viral publicity. In her case, you could say that the cause she was promoting via guerilla marketing—and very successfully—was twofold: first, she created a cathartic outlet for anybody who wanted to participate, and secondly, she got publicity for a cause called Candy Chang.

But I see this not as a selfish move; this creative act constitutes one of my favorite things in life: the Win-Win situation. She wins, and the neighborhood wins with an influx of gawkers, participants, and patrons. And the people who vent via chalk get their catharsis, their creative expression, their fifteen minutes of fame. And Candy Chang has just enhanced and expanded her reputation as a contemporary artist.

And now, in a continuation of the Win-Win scenario, Candy Chang has expanded beyond beautiful New Orleans, with walls all over the world, and in a flowering of languages, including Los Angeles, California, Lexington, Kentucky, Carbondale, Illinois, Newark, New Jersey, Kimberly, Canada, Nelson, Canada, London, England, Newtown, New Zealand, Amakusa, Japan, Durban, South Africa:

Among my favorite responses to BEFORE I DIE,

—sing for millions

—hold her one more time

—eat a salad with an alien

—see my daughter graduate

—abandon all insecurities

—plant a tree

—right all my wrongs

—foster a child

—hike the Appalachian trail

—stop all my bullying

- go on a city slicker old west cattle drive
- see my two sons
- master the art of foreplay
- save 1000 lives
- live in a song and dance world for a day
- do too many things
- get off drugs
- have a child
- confront my abusive father
- take care of my mom the way she took care of me
- straddle the International Date Line
- be completely myself
- learn to read
- end racism
- restore my faith in humanity
- witness a miracle
- be tried for piracy
- be famous enough to have a Pez dispenser designed in my image
- have a movie soundtrack scored just for me, and have it played while I live my life.

Yeah.

Candy Chang has made us feel less bottled up, more fully expressed—and most importantly, she has reminded us all that we are not alone. Thanks to passionate people, over three hundred Before I Die walls have now been created in over twenty languages and in over fifty countries, including Kazakhstan, Portugal, Japan, Denmark, Australia, Argentina, and South Africa. They have been a constant source of comfort, therapy, humor, and inspiration.

By the way, for those of you who are beguiled by this idea, but can't get to a wall, she does have a book out that would make a great gift. And no, I don't know her, that's not why I am promoting her project here. I just know how difficult it is to create your own momentum out of the ether, plugging an idea that, in its infancy, is seen as a bit crazy by the world writ large.

Oh, and as for those last two BEFORE I DIE's on her list, about the Pez Dispenser and the movie soundtrack. That's not on any of her walls. Yet. They are my personal BEFORE I DIES, and BEFORE I DIE, I want to write it on one of her walls.

DO NOT TRY THIS AT HOME

No discussion of civil disobedience is complete without a regaling of the Mona Shaw Saga, so before we leave this chapter, I want to end it with her inspiring tale. That having been said, DO NOT TRY THIS AT HOME. In fact, DO NOT TRY IT ANYWHERE. When you read the story, you will understand why.

Then again, hell—try it out. Figure out what corporation has screwed you over the worst this week, and then go out into the world today, buy a hammer, and go to town.

The piece of American Theatre that is the Mona Shaw incident is rendered for you below, in a combination of my own storytelling, and excerpting (in italics) a brilliant Washington Post Article by Neely Tucker, entitled “Take a Whack Against Comcast”, published October 18th, 2007:

Sometimes truly American virtues arise in outlaws who — by dint of heroic but questionable endeavors — display the mettle of the national character. For instance: The Dillinger Gang, robbing banks (and destroying mortgages) when banks were foreclosing on the poor. Stephanie St. Clair, matron of the numbers racket during the Harlem Renaissance, striking a (dubious) blow for both gender and racial equality. Junior Johnson bootlegging liquor during Prohibition (the benefits of which were self-evident). Fear not, fellow Americans! In these dark days of war, pestilence and Paris Hilton, a new hero has arisen. She is none other than 75-year-old Mona "The Hammer" Shaw, who took the aforementioned implement to her local Comcast office in Manassas to settle a score, and boy, did she!

But surely, we must ask ourselves—

—What would lead such a sweet senior citizen to commit this act of consumer terrorism.? A little background is in order. Let’s start with the fact that Comcast is reviled the world over. They aren’t just bad, as is most customer service these days, they have turned bad service into an art form; so egregious and heinous is their customer service that the respected trade magazine Advertising Age wrote a scathing editorial suggesting that Comcast and other cable providers spend less on advertising and more on customer service. And even more damning, Comcast is so vile that it has provoked one disgruntled consumer to create the watchdog website ominously titled comcastmustdie.com; not only did consumers jump on the bandwagon with complaints, but such high profile news outlets as The New York Times, The Washington Post, and Good Morning America covered the site’s efforts.

With that as prelude, on to Mona. Eternal optimist that she was, Mona scheduled an appointment with Comcast for installation of the much ballyhooed trifecta service “Triple Play” which (theoretically) will provide the consumer with Internet, phone, and cable services all bundled. Monday, August 13th, 2007 was the big day. Nobody showed up. Nobody called. Why are we not surprised? Poor, naïve Mona. Finally, at long last, they

did show up. Two days later. They didn't finish their assignment. Taxed by the enormity of the task before them, the butt crack squad left with the job half done. Then, inexplicably, two days after that, Comcast simply cut off all service to Mona and her husband Don.

You have been patient, dear reader. , and your patience will be rewarded. It's about to get juicy. On the same day that their service was cut off, Mona corralled her husband and they went, in person, down to the local Comcast call center to complain. What you are about to read is unbelievable. Or maybe not:

Mona marches in and insists on speaking with someone in charge. A daffy, addled, perennially smiling secretary says someone will be right with them. (Note those fateful words: "*Right with them.*") And will Mona and Don go take a seat? Outside, please? Now, what the idiot secretary means, when she says outside, is not outside of anybody's office, but outside of the building. In the world. In the weather. In the Virginia August heat wave. Again, naively, Mona obeys.

Two hours pass. Not ten minutes, not three quarters of an hour. But two hours. At which point rude idiot secretary leans out and informs them that *the manager has left for the day*. The work day is over. And here is my favorite part: Adds "Thank you for coming."

The insulting idea that, as Shaw puts it, "they thought just because we're old enough to get Social Security that we lack both brains and backbone." So, after stewing over it all weekend, on the following Monday, she went downstairs, got Don's claw hammer and said: "C'mon, honey, we're going to Comcast."

Did you try to stop her, Mr. Shaw?

"Oh no, no," he says.

Hammer time! Shaw storms in the company's office. BAM! She whacks the keyboard of the customer service rep. BAM! Down goes the monitor. BAM! She totals the telephone. People scatter, scream, cops show up and what does she do? POW! A parting shot to the phone!

"They cuffed me right then," she says.

Her take on Comcast: "What a bunch of sub-moronic imbeciles."

Being a responsible newspaper, we must note that this is a misdemeanor, a crime, a completely inappropriate way of handling a business dispute.

Noted.

Who among us has not longed for a hammer in this age of incompetent "customer service representatives," of nimrods reading from a script at some 800-number location, of crumbs-in-their-beards plumbing installation people who tell you they'll grace you with their presence between 12 and 3, only never to show? And you'll call and call and finally some outsourced representative slings a dart at a calendar and tells you another guy will come back between 10 and 2 next Thursday? And when this guy

comes, pants halfway down his behind, he'll tell you he brought the wrong part?

And there is nothing, nothing you can do.

Until there! On the horizon! It's Hammer Woman, avenger of oppressed cable subscribers everywhere! (Cue galloping "Lone Ranger" theme.)

"I scared the tar out of some people, at least," she says. "It had never occurred to me to take a hammer to a phone company before, but I was just so upset... After I hit the keyboard, I turned to this blonde who had been there the previous Friday, the one who told me to wait for the manager, and I said, 'Now do I have your attention?'"

It wasn't all fun.

"My blood pressure went up around my ears. I started hyperventilating. They had to call the rescue squad and put me on a litter."

Well, here's how it all shook out. In the blink of an eye, the building was surrounded. There were two police cruisers, a sergeant's car (!), and an ambulance outside. I, personally, cackle every time I envision it. Mona, to her credit, did not take hostages. But another best part of the story is coming up:

Not surprisingly, the judge did not come down hard on Mona. Not at all. Clearly, he felt what we all do at this point: envy, admiration, a smidge of worship. Oh, he's never admitted as much. But you just know he felt that. Mona actually had the stones to do what we all dream of doing. But Mona is not just a dreamer. Mona is not just talk. If you shut your eyes, and listen very hard, you can still hear the echoes of the judge tittering into his robes, as he hands down the sentence: three months suspended sentence for disorderly conduct, a \$345 fine in restitution and a restraining order barring her from the Comcast office for the next twelve months. Like Mona would ever want to visit there again.

The Stepford VP of Comcast pronounced the expected drivel in response to the melodrama. "Truly a unique and inappropriate situation," says Beth Bacha, adding that "nothing justifies this sort of dangerous behavior."

To which I say, hell yes it does. What you did to Mona justifies it. What you do to millions on a daily basis justifies it. But that's just me.

For what it's worth, a few parting words about Mona Shaw. As de factor spokeswoman for the Perennially Abused by Customer Service Buttholes Everywhere, Mona Shaw could not have been a better choice. She's neither a lunatic nor a criminal. She and her husband of 45 years are both retired, live in a charming suburban cottage, and both look back fondly on lifetime careers in the United States Air Force. Mona was a registered nurse—as in, her usual life calling is to comfort and heal people, not wield hammers in their general direction. Mona is secretary of both her local square dancing club and her local AARP. She has seven rescue dogs that she fosters for her local animal shelter, a major passion of hers. When she is not lifting weights, she is volunteering at

their local Unitarian Universalist Church. And *this*, ladies and gentlemen, *this* is the portrait of a modern day consumerist vigilante. Gotta love it.

Two other things you should know: she finally did get phone service—with Verizon. And secondly, always the philanthropist, Mona Shaw had the hammer auctioned off for \$180 dollars, and gave the money to charity. Personally, I think with the right handler, she could have gotten a lot more for that hammer. I know that I had heard about that auction, I would have started quite a bidding war.

And after all, is anybody safe anymore, really? Mona Shaw lives minutes away from a Home Depot. Where they sell hammers.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THERE IS NO EXCUSE

There is no excuse for not doing your part to change the world. There is no excuse; you *can* make a difference.

Obviously, entire books could be written about how to use the internet to effect social change, and to impact a cause. E-Petitions are becoming one of the most powerful new ways to make countries, states, counties, causes, and corporations reverse their policies. Even a cynic must agree that this works; signature protests usually translate into money not spent by angry and indignant consumers, and boycotts have long been considered a great tool for change. The internet makes petitions go global in the blink of an eye. This global pull means that everything happens at a much faster pace; urgent problems get immediate solutions. No more standing in front of the Piggly Wiggly with your clipboard annoying people. You can do this on your sofa in your sweats at your laptop, for Pete's sake.

Even the laziest among us are out of excuses.

And lest you question whether or not E-petitions actually have an impact on social, political, and economic environments, make no mistake. The evidence is abundant that they do; dig a little, and you will find hundreds of businesses, governments, educational institutions, and a variety of other enterprises caving to the power of the signature, which almost always translates to the power of the almighty dollar. (Or Euro, Pound, Franc, Peso, Yen, Yuan, Rial, Shekel, Ruble, Rupee, Bitcoin, etcetera.)

Even as I write this—literally as I write this—petitions saved that poor giraffe. Surely all of you paying attention must remember how, right around Valentine's Day of 2014, a perfectly healthy giraffe was destroyed by Danish zookeepers, and fed to lions while crowds—including children—watched. Their lame excuse about preserving the genetic integrity of the herd was thin and unconvincing; dozens of viable alternatives were offered that would have guaranteed a full rich life for the young giraffe. Tragic as it was, there seems to be general agreement that it was public outrage, a tsunami of venom on social media sites—and a petition on change.org—that saved the second giraffe. That's something. That's a start.

Go to change.org to get started. It is growing in leaps and bounds*, and will soon be up there with Facebook, Google, YouTube and Twitter, as a powerful and prominent instrument of social networking. It will create change, just as its name promises.

(Case in point: although change.org is only six years old, it passed the ten million

member mark in 2012. In 2011, it was seeing 300,000 new members a month; now it is surpassing two million new members a month. It is now the fastest growing site of its kind. Finally, a social networking site that does some good. Instead of posting pictures of your macramé art or bobble head doll collection, instead of twatting about whatever the hell your X, or the latest x-Disney delinquent is up to, instead of uploading videos of your uglybaby or stoopidpet, you can actually do something to change your little corner of the world.)

Here are a few provocative examples:

—Julia Bluhm, only fourteen years of age, plus 86,440 people who agreed with her and signed her E-Petition, in July of 2012, got Seventeen Magazine and Teen Vogue Magazine to stop photo-shopping their covers, so that teenage girls would stop getting unrealistic and unhealthy ideas about what constitutes beauty and the ideal body.

—Carl Chancellor, plus 8,610 people who agreed with him and signed his E-Petition, on February 11th, 2011, got the Mississippi Governor to veto a license plate that was about to be issued honoring the founder of the KKK, Nathan Bedford Forrest. Similar petitions are now circulating regarding schools, statues, and other structures and signage which are publicly owned and in the public view. Although Forrest is considered by some to be a Civil War hero, his leadership of the Klan during its ultra-violent period (whipping and murdering both black and white voters who did not vote correctly), has been well documented.

—After he and his friends risked their lives for six years fighting fires without any kind of health care, John Lauer, plus 16,631 people who agreed with him and signed his E-petition, in July of 2012, got Obama to direct federal agencies that health insurance would be provided for all those firefighters who fight the blazes in America's wild lands.

—Cynthia Butterworth, plus 800,000 people who agreed with her and signed her E-petition, in September of 2012, convinced Verizon telephone to change its contract cancellation/change policy in the cases of women who are fleeing abusive men. When her sister-in-law ended up in the emergency room, then sought to hide from her abuser, she realized it would cost her five hundred dollars that she did not have to cancel or change her phone contract. And as long as her phone information stayed the same, not only could her abuser track whom she was calling, but even worse, he would know where she was calling from. Verizon got the message, and changed its policy. Jane Doe, and 175,125 people who agreed with her and signed her E-petition, in November of 2012, effected the same changes at Sprint.

—Timothy Rosner, plus 14,000 people who agreed with him and signed his E-petition, in July of 2011, pressured the Wyndham Hotel chain to step-up its efforts to stop enabling child prostitution. The Wyndham Hotel in San Diego and one in Escondido, for example, actually had staff that was facilitating Crips gang members with

posting ads, renting rooms, and running police interference. Amanda Kloer and her fellow 4253 petition signers accomplished the same victory with the Comfort Inn chain in February 2010, after five year old Shania Davis was sold for sex at a Comfort Inn in North Carolina. In April of 2011, confronted with 7474 signatures on a E-Petition, Hilton agreed to the same thing.

—Benoit Coulon, plus 21,467 people who agreed with him and signed his E-petition, on August 16th, 2012, got France TV to air the Para-Olympics, bringing new pride to the disabled community, and new compassion to the country.

—Cruel and Ugly: Headline: BP Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico. News breaks that BP is burning endangered sea turtles alive. A boat captain who has been leading efforts to rescue the endangered turtles says BP has blocked his crews from entering the areas where the animals are trapped, effectively shutting down the rescue operation. BP is using "controlled burns" to contain the oil spill. Shrimp boats create a corral of oil by dragging together fire-resistant booms and then lighting the enclosed "burn box" on fire. If turtles are not removed from the area before the fire is lit, they are literally burned alive. The sea turtle most affected by the Gulf of Mexico oil spill is the Kemp's Ridley, which is listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Parties responsible for killing the endangered turtles are liable for criminal penalties that include prison and civil fines of up to \$25,000 per violation. As a result, BP perversely has a financial incentive to allow the endangered turtles to burn, rather than allow rescue crews to cull them from the burn boxes before the containment fires are lit. ***"They ran us out of there and then they shut us down, they would not let us get back in there,"*** said turtle rescuer Mike Ellis, in an interview with conservation biologist Catherine Craig that was posted on YouTube.com. BUT—thanks to CREDO ACTION, plus 5404 people who agreed with them and signed their E-petition, on July 2nd 2010, BP was forced to sit down with environmental groups and halt this cruel practice being perpetrated on an endangered species.

—Melissa Sehgal, plus 202,962 people who agreed with her and signed her E-petition, in March of 2012, got the worldwide conglomerate Amazon.com to stop selling products containing whale or dolphin meat.

—Bridgett Wright, plus 15,896 people who agreed with her and signed her E-Petition, in February of 2011, made sure that the unrepentant animal torturer and killer Russell Swigart stayed behind bars after serving only two and a half years for torturing and killing her two cats, then detailing the grisly acts in a text to her, then threatening to do the same to her. This was not his first twisted act of cruelty to animals. Previously, he had broken in to another girlfriend's home, taped her cat in a box, then fired a shotgun into it. Previous to that, he had almost tortured a girlfriend's dog to death. Bridgett showed up at the parole hearing with her petition, spoke of the terror she felt at the thought of him getting out and stalking her, and put Swigart back behind bars where he

belongs. Sometimes, it's just about going after the really bad guys, as simple as that.

—Cameron Dunbar-Yamaguchi, plus 1663 people who agreed with him and signed his E-petition, in November of 2011, fought the Fairfax County, Virginia Zoning Board when they ordered National Guard Officer Mark Grapin, away on a tour of duty in Iraq, to dismantle the tree house that he had built for his two sons as ***"a promise that he would return to them."*** Amazingly, Grapin had even done something that many of us wouldn't have bothered to do; he called the county and asked about zoning permits before he built it. They said fine, no permit is needed, have a nice day. He then sank nearly two thousand dollars into a sturdy, world class tree house. Then the Board changed its mind, and ordered the tree house torn down. (This is how we treat a veteran and his family?) As a result of Cameron's petition, the tree house still stands.

—Ben Crowther, of Washington University, plus 100 students and faculty who agreed with him and signed his E-petition, in November of 2012, got the notoriously homophobic LIBERTY UNIVERSITY un-invited from their annual Law School Fair. From their petition site: ***Every year Western puts on the Law School Info Fair. This year the infamously homophobic Liberty University was invited to attend. Liberty was founded by none other than Jerry Falwell (the guy who blamed 9/11 on queer people and called a Teletubby "gay", figuring it had to be a homo, as it was purple). Good ol' Jerry's ideology spread to his university. They expel queer students, mark students down for taking pro-gay stances on tests, and encourage reparative therapy, which has been recognized as both ineffective and harmful by the American Psychological Association. Liberty University stands contrary to Western values against hate and discrimination. They will create an unsafe space for queer students, staff, and faculty and their allies, making them a disservice to everyone. Hate is not a Western value. Tell Western not to bring hate to campus and to formally disinvite Liberty from attending the Law School Info Fair.***

—The Polaris Project, plus 6023 people who agree with the project and signed the E-petition, in September of 2010, finally did "the impossible". It has gotten a department in the U.S. Government to stop dragging its feet. The Polaris Project Petition accomplished something with world wide implications, and became a global force for good: they got the Department of Labor to release a list of goods produced by forced labor, child labor, and slave labor, also releasing along with it a list of countries most guilty of said crimes against humanity. It began like this: With the reauthorization of Trafficking Victims' Protection Act (TVPA) in 2005, the Department of Labor was mandated by Congress to compile a list of goods produced by forced labor or child labor and the countries where they were made. Four years passed—and the department had yet to release this list to the public. Enter the Polaris Project. The E-petition is created and goes viral. And just like that, the list is released. Now all consumers with a conscience have the knowledge and the facts they need in order to do the right thing.

—Martin Methany, plus 1640 people who agreed with him and signed his E-petition, in November of 2010, pressured the Federal Government to step up and pass tough legislation against Crush videos. Crush videos circulate freely in the underbelly of the internet—these are sites that are pseudo traceless and don't list themselves with search engines; you may remember the Silk Road bust. Although it is horrific, and almost beyond imagining to the uninformed, crush films cater to a sick sexual fetish which involves watching the crushing of small animals—mice, bunnies, kittens, puppies—for sexual gratification. A previous ban had been overturned by the Supreme Court, but this tough new law should go a long way towards wiping this ugly sickness out for good. And in case you think this isn't a real problem, or prevalent, or public, imagine this, if you will: as recently as April of this year, 2013, a Houston Judge, the Honorable (!?!?) Sim Lake was in a position to pass sentence over a couple who had made dozens of these "animal snuff films", including one that showed a kitten having its head crushed with a stiletto as the heel gouged through its eyeball, and one in which a puppy who was repeatedly slashed with a meat cleaver, then finally beheaded. The judge's response: he threw out the case, as the snuff films were "protected under freedom of speech and the First Amendment".

<http://www.chinasmack.com/2008/pictures/kitten-killers-return.html>

<http://dayveetlavide.blogspot.com/2011/02/rabbit-killer-sequel->

<http://feeds.feedburner.com/blogspot/tEXi>

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

SUFFER THE CHILDREN

We can learn a lot from kids. Our own kids, our community's kids, our country's kids, kids from all over the world: at the same moment that they make us proud, they shame us.

Because unlike us, they are fearless.

Because unlike us, they have boundless energy—and when that energy is lasered on a good cause, watch out.

Because unlike us, their hearts are not yet jaundiced with cynicism.

Because unlike us, they haven't learned about their own limitations. In fact, they haven't even bought into the notion that there even are any limits to what one person can do. Heck, most kids I know who are under eight are still wearing make-shift capes, fashioned from beach towels and bed sheets, and on some level, they really think they can fly. What's interesting is that most of the kids on this list got started when they were less than eight years old. And they are soaring in a very real way.

CASES IN POINT:

CHARLIE COONS, 13, of Simi Valley, California. When her brother returned home from volunteering in a poverty stricken part of Jordan, Charlie was moved by his stories of poverty beyond her imagining: not enough food or fuel, dirt floors, not enough clothes, hardly any toys. Charlie got a fleece kit to make a blanket, and got her friends and neighbors on board to help out. First it was 50 blankets. Her group HELP (Hope Encouragement Love Peace) has made 700 blankets so far, and she has fanned out to neighboring states, with plans to engage all fifty, then she's going global. She splits her time after school between making blankets, and speaking engagements to spread the word. Apparently, nobody has told her that she is supposed to be terrified of public speaking, the # 1 fear among adults. She cherishes the photo she received from an orphanage of a child clutching the first blanket she made.

GOOGLE IMAGES: Charlie Coons Blankets

TAYLOR AND KENNEDY EVERSON made a plan, after returning from an amazing trip to Kenya, working with the non-profit organization Free The Children. The girls assisted in building a secondary school while they were there, and had a chance to see poverty up close and personal. The twin girls had a ninth birthday coming up, and decided to ask for contributions to Adopt-A-Village instead of the usual gift-wrapped presents, cake, party favors, balloons and streamers. They raised \$2650 dollars, the record for a birthday party, and now they plan to expand to start a Free The Children Campaign in their school. Part of what inspired them: they realized that many of the children they met in Africa don't even know when their birthday is. And will never have a birthday party or a birthday present in their life. And that for one out of five of these children, their life will be over before they are six.

After RACHEL BECKWORTH died from injuries sustained in a car crash near her Bellevue, Washington, home in July of 2011, news of what had been the 9-year-old's birthday wish to raise \$300 to build wells for those in need went viral. Inspired donors have helped fulfill — and wildly surpass — her mission by giving more than \$1 million to the non-profit charitywater.org, devoted to bringing clean water to developing nations, which not only saves lives by providing drinking water, but helps fight a range of diseases. Rachel's mom headed to Africa with the nonprofit to see firsthand how her deceased daughter is continuing to save lives. These are the statistics to date: \$1,265,823 has been raised from 31,997 contributors. 143 wells have been built, which have provided 37,770 people with fresh, clean, local water for the first time in their lives.

BLARE GOOCH, 13, Grand Rapids, Michigan. When Blare was watching the news coverage of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, he couldn't shake from his mind the image of a little boy sitting on a pile of rubble, crying. Blare wanted to help. He thought of his favorite teddy bear, and how it had always comforted him. He talked his school principal into making an announcement over the PA. You know what is coming: it went viral. News stories, Facebook, you name it. Over 50,000 teddy bears later, "BLARE'S BEARS FOR HAITI" has given 25,000 stuffed teddy bears to the island nation, and that many again to assorted non-profits. Plans have expanded to collect other toys and much needed school supplies. Blare's words of wisdom: ***“If you're young and think you can't make a big difference in the world, well, you actually can.”***

JAYLEN ARNOLD is fighting back against bullying. Born with Tourette's Syndrome, known for its uncontrollable vocal outbursts and ticks, he didn't cower in fear or let others get the upper hand. Instead the 8 year-old (now 14 in 2014) founded Jaylen's Challenge, and, with a tiny bit of help from his folks, created a campaign to stop school bullying. He started out selling awareness bracelets to raise money. What started locally grew, and one single marathon race sponsored by Disney raised \$57,000 for the cause. In addition to acting and modeling, Jaylen currently holds speaking engagements at Universities, Institutes, and schools nationwide, in order to continue educating the world about Tourette's. Jaylen has just completed filming a documentary for the Discovery Health Channel called "Tourette's Uncovered". He has quite a fan base, too, including the likes of Disney Studios, Anthony Anderson, Sam Waterston, and Leonardo DiCaprio.

EVAN MOSS. Life seems so unfair. Yet why is it that the people whom fate treats most cruelly often seem to be the folks who make the best of things? Evan was born with tuberous sclerosis complex, a form of epilepsy that caused him between 300 and 400 seizures a month. Even after an operation at the age of four reduced the number of seizures, they were still frequent and longer in length. Evan desperately needed a specialty service dog, one trained to detect and warn of seizures before they happen. But Evan's family needed \$13,000 dollars. So Evan wrote and illustrated a book, in which he explained how he imagined it might be when he got his dog. He talked about traveling, feeling more normal, even eating pizza with his dog. The book was an instant success. It hit the top of the Amazon's list of Children's Health Books, and he even became a celebrity at book signings. The book was so successful that Evan was able to fly to Ohio with his family, visit 4 Paws For Ability, and even purchase seven other service dogs for needy kids.

Like all trained seizure dogs, Mindy, a Goldendoodle (half Golden Retriever, half Standard Poodle), can detect small seizures a full twenty minutes before they happen (by detecting subtle signs undetectable by humans), and grand mal seizures a full five hours ahead, allowing Evan plenty of time to get the help he needs. Evan admits that he and his family decided that it would not be healthy for the dog to regularly dine on pizza, but he does have a secret about the dog. The dog's special trick. Evan whispered it to the reporter, on the condition he keep it a secret: *It can play Nintendo DS Pokemon*. Don't tell anybody.

TYLER PAGE is an ordinary kid who, according to his mom, forgets to brush his teeth and leaves a path of his stuff trailing behind him wherever he goes. So she didn't take it too seriously when ten year old Tyler saw an Oprah show about child slavery and he announced he was going to do something about it. He had learned that poor parents in Ghana would sell their children into child slavery for as little as 20 dollars. Many of these children worked on fishing rigs for 14 hours a day, receiving just one meal. Deep diving into dangerous waters, by children as young as three, led to many drowning deaths.

But Tyler then learned that a mere \$240 per child could end all that hell. Suddenly, the path was not about what he trailed behind, but about blazing ahead: his classmates and the school liked his carwash idea. He made a little over a thousand dollars. Eighteen months, later, he had raised a little more. \$50,000 a little more. Tyler and his mother talked about starting a foundation, Kid-to-Kid. Mom thought that organizing the group might cut into his fundraising time, but Tyler promptly turned around and raised \$130,000.

Then, the inevitable happened. Inevitable if you know Tyler. Tyler went directly to Ghana, Africa, to talk with the people who were enslaving children. He shamed, bargained, and cajoled them into freeing the kids. Because of Tyler, the children who lived in slave labor—most of them never knowing their mothers, not knowing what a door or a toothbrush is, never having put their head on a pillow—get a whole new lease on life. Like all the stories here, you need to read more details to do honor to this amazing kid's work. But those are the broad strokes. Tyler is fifteen now. Can you imagine what he will have done by the time he's thirty? ***"I plan to do it till I'm 99!"*** says Tyler.

Watch his documentary "Kids For Sale" on Youtube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taTy9Tf0lzo>

WINTER VINECKI, twelve years old, of Salem, Oregon, came from a family of runners, so it was no surprise when she had run in marathons and triathlons at the age of five, and a 10K by the age of eight. But Winter was not content with just running in marathons; she watched adult competitors and learned about sponsors, and soon she had raised \$1100 dollars towards cancer research. Soon, though, this cause would hit all too close to home: her father was diagnosed with prostate cancer—as will one out of every six men in this country. So Team Winter was formed, and raised over \$100,000 towards her father's treatment and towards cancer research.

Sadly, her father passed away one year after his diagnosis, but Winter remained dedicated to her cause, out of loving memory for her dad. Team Winter has now run into a half a million dollars, literally—and Winter knows in her heart that her father is her own personal guardian angel and is proud of her. At fourteen, she was the youngest

person to ever complete a marathon on Antarctica. Machu Picchu is next on the list; her goal is to run a marathon on all seven continents—that is, when she is not excelling as a star student at Stanford University’s prestigious online high school. Not surprisingly, Winter, now fifteen, has her eyes on the 2018 Winter Olympics. She is already well known and a record-breaker in the world of winter sports, and one can only imagine to what heights her fundraising will soar, with the whole world—and her father—watching.

RACHEL WHEELER must be one persuasive twelve year old. Most of us were tickled if our bake sale cleared a hundred bucks. Try a third of a million. Bucks. Of course, she was charismatic and savvy enough to partner with local church members and the Chamber of Commerce, but still—a third of a million? And that was just a jumping off point for her. This Lighthouse Point, Florida citizen recently came back from Haiti, after touring the community of twenty-seven houses and the school that her money built. It's wonderful, she agrees. But now she has plans to build twenty more houses. What inspired this amazing child? When she was nine, her mother took her to a charity meeting about Haiti, and Rachel was horrified to learn that children her age ate cakes made out of pure mud for dinner.

PETER LARSON first slept outside to raise awareness—and money—for homeless families when he was five years old. It was his dad's idea (Peter is never in danger), and what started as a family charity project has spread. Peter learned of a program that helped families have housing year round, through the winter months, for just \$500, so he started setting goals. Last he counted, he and the people he has inspired to "sleep out" with him have raised almost half a million dollars. The even better news is that "sleep-outs" are spreading across the country. Working through his church and his Cub Scout group, Peter has been sleeping outside every year for ten years now, from November 12th through December 31st. Oh—did I mention that Peter hails from ... MINNESOTA! Cripes! This kid is dedicated! In his own words: *“At some point in your life I think everyone gets called that way, whether it’s when you’re 5 or when you’re 50 or when you’re one or when you’re 100,”* he said. *“At some point you’ll get called. It’s whether or not you’re listening.”* Well? Are *you* listening?

JEFF HANSON first felt the effects of the tumor when he was just a boy of twelve,

and he nearly turned blind at seventeen, because of the optic nerve tumor. But Jeff never let the condition interfere with his creativity or determination to help others. Jeff started painting and crafting note cards while undergoing radiation treatment, and in the five years since his diagnosis, Jeff has donated more than \$350,000 from the sale of his work to more than 50 children's health charities. GOOGLE IMAGES JEFF HANSON ART to really do right by Jeff; I prefer his work to most "modern art." Better yet, buy a piece, and support his cause. His goal is one million dollars by his twentieth birthday, which is September 30th, 2013. Ironically, that is the day after tomorrow, as I write this. (For some reason, I occasionally like to give my readers real-time reports.) Fact checking isn't always a drag: Jeff's aforementioned goal came from an older article on the internet. His Facebook page announces the good news: he's now clocking in at over a million bucks to charity.

JANEECE ERDOFF: By the age of 18, she has done more than most of us do in a lifetime. In ten lifetimes. At the age of three, Canadian born Jeneece Edroff was diagnosed with neurofibromatosis type 1, a debilitating genetic disease. Tumors grow from the nerve tissues in her spine, causing her vertebrae to become thin and unsupported. She underwent a series of surgeries, then her parents were told that she would never walk, and would probably not live into her teen years.

Her story could be a book in itself, so here are just the (awesome) facts: not long after her diagnosis, she ran into her doctor's office and thanked him for helping her to walk again. At the age of seven, she grasped how much this must be costing Variety, the Canadian children's charity that was helping her family. First, the Show of Hearts telethon: \$164 dollars donated. Then, the next year, with the help from a local news anchor, 16 tons of pennies poured in. That's \$27,000 bucks, which was later matched during the next telethon with \$54,000. Then, the official "Jeneece and Friends Coin Drive" upped its take even more: to **1.5 million dollars**, all donated to Variety.

Since then. Jeneece has partnered, spoken publicly, has been titled, and has been given awards and honors for her courage, bravery, stamina and contributions. She has shaved her hair many times in support of children with cancer.

Her most recent triumph and contribution: Jeneece Place, a home away from home for kids and families traveling to Victoria for medical care. Jeneece Place opened on Jan. 20, 2012, Edroff's 18th birthday, allowing 600 families to have a place to call home when they face a medical crisis.

GOOGLE IMAGES: Jeneece Place Victoria bc

Through her passion and incredible spirit, Edroff has inspired Canadians to give more than \$6.7 million. Not bad for a kid who was given such a grim diagnosis. Is there

anything the human spirit cannot achieve?

PARTING THOUGHTS....some final musings from the Fighting Fundamental Forums, and from Jerry himself.

“Faithful Word Baptist Church on MSNBC! Our church was talked about on MSNBC tonight. Baptist Pastor Prays For President Obama To Die & Go To Hell. While we're out it we'll make sure to pray for the queers to die as well. If Barack Obama & all the queers died tonight then this country would be a much better place.”

“They say we all have a different scent depending on the diet of our country. Is that why black people smell like bologna?!?”

“There's nothing ungodly about a death penalty for the crime of homosexual activity, per se, as God Himself once instituted it for His covenant people in their civil code. To condemn the punishment would be to attack the righteous character of God. This bears out also in the eternal sentence of fiery damnation for those unrepentant of this sin— Physical death pales in comparison to the eternal death that awaits the unrepentant guilty.”

“It is ironic that all you satanists will end up in Hell

“It is God's planet - and he's taking care of it. And I don't believe that anything we do will raise or lower the temperature one point I believe that global warming is a myth. And so, therefore, I have no conscience problems at all and I'm going to buy a Suburban next time.

—The Reverend Jerry Falwell

THE END