



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #47 — JAN. 9, 2012

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Why Not Just Throw the Rest of Us in Prison Right Now?

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Jan. 9, 2012)

The United States already holds more people within its jails and prisons than any other nation on Earth. By the end of 2010, there were 1,404,053 prisoners in state prisons alone.

from *The New York Times*, Apr. 23, 2008:

The United States has less than 5 percent of the world's population. But it has almost a quarter of the world's prisoners. Indeed, the United States leads the world in producing prisoners, a reflection of a relatively recent and now entirely distinctive American approach to crime and punishment. Americans are locked up for crimes — from writing bad checks to using drugs — that would rarely produce prison sentences in other countries. And in particular they are kept incarcerated far longer than prisoners in other nations. Criminologists and legal scholars in other industrialized nations say they are mystified and appalled by the number and length of American prison sentences. The United States has, for instance, 2.3 million criminals behind bars, more than any other nation, according to data maintained by the International Center for Prison Studies at King's College London.

Now, the military is getting in on the act, big time, and they're free from the bothersome bother of the courts. The Republican Party wants to come knocking at our bedroom doors, demanding to be able to inspect (for the protection of society) for possible abortion activities, birth control, sodomy, bestiality, all manner of gay stuff, pornography, and any and all terrorist stuff you might have lying around. The Democratic Party wants to come in and take our guns, but they'll at least knock first.

I guess the prison population is going to explode, especially if the Republicans have their way. Brick by brick, word by precious word, the Constitution is dismantled. And they'll even let you keep your beloved guns, Teabaggers. What good are handguns, rifles, and shotguns when you have no other rights and the Army is against you? What good is your gun when you're in prison, without charges, without a judge, jury, or lawyer, being waterboarded? American citizens, arrested by the Army, vaguely charged with "terrorism" or "terrorist ties", will be the next folks to be welcomed at Guantanamo. You see, once the government wall allowed to set foot on this slippery slope, we put our freedoms in the hands of imperfect human nature, forsaking the Constitution.

from "The Evil of Indefinite Detention and Those Wanting to De-Prioritize It" by Glenn Greenwald, Salon

Jan. 8, 2012,

([http://politics.salon.com/2012/01/08/the evils of indefinite detention and those wanting to de prioritize them/singleton/](http://politics.salon.com/2012/01/08/the_evils_of_indefinite_detention_and_those_wanting_to_de_prioritize_them/singleton/))

This Wednesday will mark the ten-year anniversary of the opening of the Guantanamo prison camp. In *The New York Times*, one of the camp's former prisoners, Lakhdar Boumediene, has an incredibly powerful Op-Ed recounting the gross injustice of his due-process-free detention, which lasted seven years. It was clear from the start that the accusations against this Bosnian citizen — who at the time of the 9/11 attack was the Red Crescent Society's director of humanitarian aid for Bosnian children — were false; indeed, a high court in Bosnia investigated and cleared him of American charges of Terrorism. But U.S. forces nonetheless abducted him, tied him up, shipped him to Guantanamo, and kept him there for seven years with no trial.

In September, 2006, the U.S. Congress passed the Military Commissions Act (MCA) which, among other things, not only authorized the detention of accused Terrorist suspects without a trial, but even explicitly denied all Guantanamo detainees the right of habeas corpus: the Constitutionally mandated procedure to allow prisoners at least one opportunity to convince a court that they are being wrongfully held. Habeas hearings are a much lower form of protection than a full trial: the government need not convince a jury beyond a reasonable doubt that someone is guilty, but rather merely present some credible evidence to justify the imprisonment. But the MCA denied even habeas rights to detainees.

Only once the U.S. Supreme Court, in a 2008 decision bearing Boumediene's name, ruled that this habeas-denying provision of the MCA was unconstitutional, and that Guantanamo detainees were entitled to habeas corpus review, was the U.S. government finally required to show its evidence against Boumediene in an actual court. A Bush-43 appointed federal judge then ruled that there was no credible evidence to support the accusations against him, and he was finally released in May, 2009. Please first go read Boumediene's short though gripping account of what this indefinite detention did to his life, and then consider the following points:

1. Since the Supreme Court's *Boumediene* decision, dozens of Guantanamo detainees like Boumediene were finally able to have a federal court review whether there was any credible evidence against them, and the vast majority have won their cases on the ground that there was no such evidence (at one point, 75% of Guantanamo detainees prevailed, though the percentage is now somewhat lower). Had the Military Commissions Act been upheld as constitutional, Boumediene — and dozens of other innocent, now-released Guantanamo detainees — would undoubtedly still be indefinitely imprisoned.

Put another way, if those who voted for the MCA had their way — and that includes all GOP Senators except Lincoln Chafee along with 12 Democrats, including Jay Rockefeller, Debbie Stabenow, Robert Menendez, Frank Lautenberg, and current Interior Secretary Ken Salazar — then Boumediene and dozens of other innocent detainees would still be wrongly imprisoned. Moreover, the Democrats had 46 Senators at the time and could have filibustered but did not; indeed, even many Democrats who voted against the bill anointed John McCain as their negotiator and were prepared to vote for the MCA until the very last weekend when some unrelated changes were made without their input and they were offended on that procedural ground. As Boumediene's Op-Ed reflects, acting to empower the President to imprison people indefinitely with no charges is one of the most pernicious and dangerous steps a government can take, and yet the U.S. Congress in 2006 did exactly that.

2. The *Boumediene* Supreme Court decision was a 5-4 vote; thus, four Justices of the U.S. Supreme Court voted to uphold the constitutionality of imprisoning human beings indefinitely, possibly for life, without even the minimal protections of a habeas hearing. Had Anthony Kennedy voted with his conservative colleagues, not only would Boumediene and dozens of others still be wrongly imprisoned, but the power which the U.S. has long taught its citizens is the defining hallmark of tyranny — the power to imprison without due process — would have been fully enshrined under American law.

3. Post-*Boumediene*, indefinite detention remains a staple of Obama policy. The Obama DOJ has repeatedly argued that the Boumediene ruling should not apply to Bagram, where — the Obama administration insists — it has the power to imprison people with no due process, not even a habeas hearing; the Obama DOJ has succeeded in having that power enshrined. Obama has proposed a law to vest him with powers of

“prolonged detention” to allow Terrorist suspects to be imprisoned with no trials. His plan for closing Guantanamo entailed the mere re-location of its indefinite detention system to U.S. soil, where dozens of detainees, at least, would continue to be imprisoned with no trial. And, of course, the President just signed into law the NDAA which contains — as the ACLU put it — “a sweeping worldwide indefinite detention provision,” meaning — as Human Rights Watch put it — that “President Obama will go down in history as the president who enshrined indefinite detention without trial in US law.” Those held at Guantanamo will continue to receive at least a habeas hearing, but those held in other American War on Terror prisons will not. Read Boumediene’s Op-Ed to see why this is so odious.

4. As we head into Election Year, there is an increasingly common, bizarre and self-evidently repellent tactic being employed by some Democratic partisans against those of us who insist that issues like indefinite detention (along with ongoing killing of civilians in the Muslim world) merit high priority. The argument is that to place emphasis on such issues is to harm President Obama (because he’s responsible for indefinite detention, substantial civilian deaths, and war-risking aggression) while helping competing candidates (such as Gary Johnson or Ron Paul) who vehemently oppose such policies. Thus, so goes this reasoning, to demand that issues like indefinite detention and civilian deaths be prioritized in assessing the presidential race is to subordinate the importance of other issues such as abortion, gay equality, and domestic civil rights enforcement on which Obama and the Democrats are better. Many of these commentators strongly imply, or now even outright state, that only white males are willing to argue for such a prioritization scheme because the de-prioritized issues do not affect them. See here (Megan Carpentier), here (Katha Pollitt) and here (Dylan Matthews) as three of many examples of this grotesque accusatory innuendo.

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[20120106-01](#) 08:35 SteveB Photo: Brotherhood (If Only Republicans and Democrats Could Get Along Like THIS!)



[20120107-03](#) 21:25 SteveG Re: Photo: Brotherhood (reply to SteveB, above)

Dad used to have a horse, a Labradoodle, and a duck. The horse and dog would play tag and romp around the field – the dog would then curl up around the duck for a nap and the duck would clean the dog up.

[Even animals seem to have an instinct that drives them sometimes to take care of each other...I hope. And I hope so do we. –SteveB]

[20120107-04](#) 23:00 Larry Re: Photo: Brotherhood (reply to SteveB, above)

This is tops, SteveB, it really speaks to me.

[20120108-03](#) 13:02 Art Re: Photo: Brotherhood (reply to SteveB, above)

I grew up on a farm out near Fillmore and had a dog and a pig that were best friends and playmates. They would wrestle for hours. The dog being much faster would harass the pig unmercifully but every now and then the pig would get a grip on the dog and literally lift him up off the ground, and then gently set him down and they'd start all over.

[I love it! I had a friend in Cloverdale who had a pig for a pet and the pig acted just like a dog, greeting the school bus, etc. –SteveB]

[20120106-02](#) 09:30 SteveB Ancient Andean Astronauts

This is a photo of the Inca blanket I use as curtains in my office—that's why it's a little wavy. There's a *chola* on the right spinning alpaca or *vicunya* yarn. On the left is *Inti*, the Inca sun god. The patterns on these blankets go back, they think, thousands or millions of years. These Indians are incredibly conservative about ever changing. That's just the way they are. So, what I'm saying is...this depiction of the sun god goes back a long, long way.

Yet...look how *Inti* looks almost exactly like a microprocessor chip!!!!!! Those ancient people knew sh*t!

SHADES OF UFO'S!!!!



20120106-03 13:01 Ben Re: Ancient Andean Astronauts (reply to SteveB, above)

Yes indeed! "Flat pack" was what I thought consciously when I opened the mail, before ever I read the text.

Very cool.

Have you read *In the Courts of the Sun* by Brian D'Amato? It was one of the most cosmically amazing things I read last year... face-time in ancient Maya, at the peak of its glory, as an offshoot of modern terrorism. (Yes, it's a time-travel thing.)

20120106-05 14:42 Phil Fw: Another Anti-Obama Email

I laugh at all the political crap that people email relative to both sides of the aisle, but I thought this was immensely humorous.

I thought the Groundhog Day and State of The Union address coincidence was clever as well. [Except it turns out to be based on a lie too. They aren't on the same day. –SteveB]

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

KIM JUNG UN

I am really concerned about North Korea's appointment of the "dear leader", Kim Jung Il's youngest son to be the new leader of North Korea - a nuclear power! After all, Kim Jung Un (pronounced Kim's young-un?) had NO military experience whatsoever before daddy made him a four-star general in the military. This is a snot-nose twerp who

has never accomplished anything in his life that would even come close to military leadership: he hasn't even so much as led a cub scout troop, coached a sports team or commanded a military platoon.

So, setting that aside, next they make him the "beloved leader" of the country. Terrific!

Oh, crap! I'm sorry. I just remembered that we did the same thing here. We took a community organizer who has never worn a uniform and made him Commander-in-Chief; a guy who has never led anything more than an ACORN demonstration and made him the leader of this country.

I'm sorry I brought this up, never mind.

20120106-04	13:56	SteveB	From the Right: "Refighting Old Fights" & "Obama's 'Abuse of Power' threatens to Shut Down Senate"
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"Refighting Old Fights" by Erick Erickson, Daily Events, Jan. 6, 2012, (from an email)

We are about to begin refighting old fights within the Republican Party. In large part we can blame George W. Bush for this. Seriously.

Bush did not leave an heir apparent to run for President and either win or lose. Consequently, we have never really had a referendum within the Republican Party on Bush's brand of big government conservatism. McCain is not a real proxy because McCain opposed Bush and a number of Bush initiatives.

But because the GOP likes orderly processes, without an heir apparent in 2008, the GOP had to go back to 2000 with McCain and refight some of these fights. Had there been an heir apparent in 2008, Mitt Romney would either have supplanted that person as the leader or been beaten in a reaffirmation of President Bush's policies.

The party has never rebooted from 2008. Now we are in the fun situation of practically carrying over the 2008 primary to fight for the future of the party. But, the two front runners are, in effect, big government conservatives. Mitt Romney introduced the nation to gay marriage (you can blame the courts in Massachusetts for the first step, but Romney did not adequately fight) and the predecessor to ObamaCare.

Rick Santorum supported No Child Left Behind, Medicare Part D, filibustered the National Right to Work Act, opposed repeal of the Davis-Bacon Act, championed giving felons the right to vote, opposed food stamp reform and Medicaid reform and TANF reform, supported raising cigarette taxes to pay for healthcare and on and on and on.

It really is amazing that after the successes of the Tea Party movement in 2010 to reduce the size and scope of the federal government, the two front runners within the GOP have rarely ever opposed the creeping expansion of the federal state.

"Obama's 'Abuse of Power' threatens to Shut Down Senate" by Audrey Hudson, *Human Events*

Jan. 6, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=48593>)

Key Republican Senators are bracing for legislative battles and Constitutional challenges to President Barack Obama's unprecedented end-run around Congress to install several controversial political appointees.

Obama announced the decision Wednesday to make the so-called recess appointments -- even though the Senate is not in recess -- putting Richard Cordray in charge of a contentious new consumer protection agency and also naming three appointments to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) -- Sharon Block, Richard Griffin and Terence F. Flynn.

"Business as we know it in the Senate is over for this administration in terms of accomplishing anything legislatively or finding any cooperation from this side of the aisle," said Sen. John Barrasso (R. -Wyo.). "He has poisoned the well."

"Apparently, advise and consent called for in the Constitution doesn't apply to this Chicago-style politician. He's more interested in rewarding his friends than living under the law Americans need to abide by," Barrasso said.

The Constitution allows the president to make recess appointments, but the controversy in this case is whether or not the Senate is in recess.

"I believe it's an abuse of power. Now he is saying he's above the law -- the law doesn't apply to him," Barrasso said.

Republicans have kept the Congress in a pro forma session, gaveling in for a few minutes of official business every three days. It's a tactic that was used by Democrats during the Bush administration to block recess appointments. Additionally, Obama's own Justice Department argued before the Supreme Court in 2010 that Congress is not in recess unless it's absent for more than three days.

Republicans say they are frustrated because Obama did not nominate the NLRB picks until last month -- just two days before the Christmas holiday -- allowing no time for the Senate to hold hearings.

Meanwhile, Senate Democrats have stalled the confirmation of the lone Republican nominee for the labor board, Brian Hayes, since July 2009.

Another contentious factor in Obama's maneuver, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau created by the Dodd-Frank Act, requires that the new director be confirmed by the Senate, so Cordray's appointment puts the agency's legal authority in limbo.

"I don't think he has the full authority to run this agency," said J.W. Verrett, an assistant professor of law at George Mason University and a senior scholar at the Mercatus Center.

"The president's decision is a purely political one, and not about consumer protection," Verrett said. "In fact, he's sacrificed consumer protection. He's more interested in being tough on Congress than being tough on predatory lenders."

Sen. Mike Lee (R. -Utah), a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said these actions were not ordinary recess appointments but "egregious and inexcusable" acts of a president who thinks he's above the law.

"As a matter of raw political force, can he do it? He just did," Lee said.

"I think the president wanted to pick a really big fight, and he has surely chosen one," Lee said. "This is a direct affront to the American people and the constitutional system of government that we have."

Republicans are hesitant to give away their game plan on how they will respond to Obama's move, but Lee suggested that Congress could withhold the salaries for the new federal appointees.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R. Ky.) said Obama "upped the ante" and set "a terrible precedent that could allow any future president to completely cut the Senate out of the confirmation process, appointing his nominees immediately after sending their names up to Congress."

"This was surely not what the framers had in mind when they required the president to seek the advice and consent of the Senate in making appointments," McConnell said.

Sen. Orrin Hatch (R. -Utah) said Obama made the appointments to placate his "big labor allies," but that it might not be enough to save him come Election Day.

"The president put his own political future and the radical views of his far-left base ahead of constitutional government. The president will have to answer to the American people for this power grab," Hatch said.

Vincent Vernuccio, a labor policy lawyer with the Competitive Enterprise Institute, said the NLRB appointees are a gift to Obama's labor backers, and that Griffin comes to the board directly from a labor union.

"The vacancies on the Board have occurred because Obama has insisted on nominating pro-union ideologues too controversial to pass Senate confirmation," Vernuccio said.

Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO, congratulated Obama on overcoming what he called "Republican obstructionists."

"Working families and consumers should not pay the price for political ploys that have repeatedly undercut the enforcement of rules against Wall Street abuses and the rights of working people," Trumka said.

(Audrey Hudson, an award-winning investigative journalist, is a Congressional Correspondent for HUMAN EVENTS. A native of Kentucky, Mrs. Hudson has worked inside the Beltway for nearly two decades -- on Capitol Hill as a Senate and House spokeswoman, and most recently at The Washington Times covering Congress, Homeland Security, and the Supreme Court.)

20120106-06	14:57	SteveG	"Rick Santorum-Linked Universal Health Services Facility: Fraud, Assault & Alleged 'Exorcism'"
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Worth a read:

"Rick Santorum-Linked Universal Health Services Facility: Fraud, Assault and Alleged 'Exorcism'" by Jason Cherkis, Huffington Post

Jan. 6, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/06/rick-santorum-uhs_n_1186443.html?ref=daily-briefutm_source=DailyBrief&utm_campaign=010612&utm_medium=email&utm_content=NewsEntry&utm_term=Daily%20Brief)

20120106-07	17:29	SteveB	"Arms Dealer Obama Will Win by Default"
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"Arms Dealer Obama Will Win by Default" by Robert Scheer, TruthDig

Jan. 6, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/arms-dealer-obama-will-win-default-1325862035>)

Barack Obama will be re-elected not as a vindication of his policies but because the Republicans are incapable of providing a reasonable challenge to his flawed performance. On the central issue of our time—reigning in the greed of the multinational corporations, led by the financial sector and the defense industry—a Republican presidential victor, with the possible exception of the now-sidelined Ron Paul, would do far less to challenge the kleptocracy of corporate-dominated governance. [Why is Ron Paul "sidelined"? –SteveB]

As compared to front-runner Mitt Romney, who wants to derail even Obama's tepid efforts at regulating Wall Street, and who seeks ever more wasteful increases in military spending, the incumbent president appears relatively enlightened, but that is cold comfort.

Not only has Obama been a savior of the banking conglomerates that so generously financed his campaign, but he also has proved to be equally as solicitous of the needs of the military-industrial complex. He entered his re-election year by signing a \$662 billion defense authorization bill that strips away some of our most fundamental liberties and keeps military spending at Cold War levels, and by approving a \$60 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia.

Those two actions represent an obvious contradiction, since the attack on American soil that kept defense spending so high in the post-9/11 decade was carried out by 15 Saudis and four other men directed by Osama bin Laden, a wealthy Saudi primarily using funding from his native land. Now Saudi Arabia is to be protected as a holdout against the democratic impulse of the Arab Spring because it is our ally against Iran, a nation that had nothing to do with 9/11. Saudi Arabia, it should be recalled, was one of only three nations, along with the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan, to recognize the Taliban government that harbored bin Laden before 9/11.

This is the same Saudi monarchy that rushed its forces into Bahrain last March to crush a popular uprising. But that doesn't trouble the Obama administration; for two years it has been aggressively pushing the Saudi arms deal, which includes \$30 billion in fighter jets built by Boeing. Forget human rights or the other good stuff Democrats love to prattle on about. As White House spokesman Josh Earnest put it: "This agreement reinforces the strong and enduring relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia and demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a strong Saudi defense capability as a key component to regional security."

The rationale for the first big arms deal with the tyrannical Saudi monarchy since 1992 is that a better-armed Sunni theocracy is needed to counter the threat from the Shiite theocracy in Iran. Once again the U.S. is stoking religious-based fratricide, just as we did in Iraq. Only this time, we are on the side of Saudi Sunnis oppressing Shiites both at home and in neighboring Bahrain. That oppression—along with a U.S. invasion that replaced Tehran's sworn enemy in Sunni-led Baghdad with a Shiite leadership that had long been nurtured by Iran's ayatollahs—is what enhances the regional influence of Iran.

If Iran ever does pose a regional military threat because of its nuclear program or any other reason, real or concocted, it will be NATO forces that will take out the threat, not the Saudis, who will still be polishing their latest-model F-15s as icons of a weird conception of modernism.

The real reason for this deal is that it is the only sort of jobs program that Democrats are capable of pushing through an obstructive Congress. The administration boasts that the arms package will result in 50,000 jobs in 44 states, underscoring the warning from Dwight Eisenhower, the last progressive Republican president, about the power of a military-industrial complex that has tentacles in every congressional district. As Sen. Claire McCaskill of Missouri, an Armed Services Committee member who championed this sale, put it: "The F-15 is a world-class aircraft built by hardworking folks right here in St. Louis. I am thrilled for all of the skilled men and women on the F-15 line that this important, big order that I have stood side-by-side with them in working to secure is finally happening."

A Democrat running for re-election, McCaskill added, "These are important jobs in our community. I will continue advocating for sales of Boeing products wherever appropriate." Being a good Democrat, she doesn't reference Boeing's profits, which are increasingly dependent upon arming the rest of the world.

That's the win-win of government-generated profits and jobs on which the Democrats are counting to defeat the Republicans, both through campaign contributions from the more rational among the wealthy and the votes of ordinary people who, despite being seriously hurt in this economy, have nowhere else to turn.

20120106-08	17:51	SteveG	Fw: Just Hand-Out the Prozac (from Alan Grayson)
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from Alan Grayson:

I think that I figured out what happened in Iowa. Here's what I think.

Results of the Iowa Republican Caucus, Jan. 3:

Romney 25%
Santorum 25%
Paul 21%.

Reliable earlier polling results:

Dec. 18: Paul 24%, Romney 18%, Perry 16%.
Nov. 28: Gingrich 28%, Paul 13%, Romney 12%.
Oct. 16: Cain 37%, Romney 27%, Paul 12%.
Aug. 31: Perry 29%, Bachmann 18%, Romney 17%.
July 11: Bachmann 29%, Romney 16%, Cain 8%.
May 29: Romney 21%, Cain 15%, Gingrich 12%.

So the lead went from Romney to Bachmann to Perry to Cain to Gingrich to Paul and back to Romney. That is waaaaaaay more complicated than Tinker to Evers to Chance. Seven leaders in seven months. And that doesn't even count the boomlets for Donald Trump at the beginning, and Rick Santorum at the end.

And it's not as though we saw some kind of "character development" in these characters that would account for the change, as if the Iowa race were like some Stendhal novel, "The Red and the Redder." The only change that I saw in any of them is that on November 28, when he was ahead in the polls, Newt Gingrich was a sour megalomaniac, and on January 3, when he came in fourth, Gingrich was a bitter megalomaniac. Sour, bitter, what's the difference?

Also, leaving Herman Cain aside, there were no extraordinary revelations about any of the Republican candidates that could possibly account for their rise and fall. For instance, I gently noted on December 15 that Newt Gingrich is "a philanderer; a corporate shill; a crass greedhead; an egomaniac; and a cranky, crabby, crotchety, caustic, cantankerous, choleric cus." None of that was exactly news. I could have said the same thing about Newt Gingrich on December 15, 1995, and it wouldn't have surprised anyone.

I looked at those Iowa polling numbers again and again, and I asked myself what possible rational explanation there could be for them. And then I realized that there is no possible rational explanation. Only an irrational one.

And it's not the candidates. It's their voters.

Let's see. Severe highs and lows. Violent mood swings. One day, a person thinks that someone is the messiah, and a week later, the devil. And did you see the audience during the Iowa Republican debates? Violent temper tantrums. Inexplicable angry outbursts.

Hmmmm. What does that sound like?

It sounds like manic depression to me.

All of those manic depressives, about a third of the vote, were forced to choose among Romney, Santorum, Paul, Gingrich, Perry, Bachmann, Cain and Huntsman. But the only candidate whom they really could have related to would have been the late, great Thomas Eagleton. (George McGovern's 1972 running mate for 18 days, until all that nasty stuff about electroshock therapy came out.)

I don't know why this would surprise anyone. Roughly 10% of the population of the United States is on anti-depressants. And only 4% of the population of Iowa actually voted in the 2012 Republican caucuses. Just who did you think those 4% were?

So now I understand it. Romney won the paranoid vote, everyone who thinks that the brown people are trying to steal all their stuff. Why? Because no one is more white than Mitt Romney. As I said earlier today, it's as though Romney is on a strict diet of sour cream and cottage cheese, small curds only.

Perry and Bachmann split the schizophrenic vote, all the people who hear a voice in their head, and think that it's God. Because Perry and Bachmann can listen to the radio whenever they want to, even when it's turned off.

Ron Paul got the obsessive-compulsive vote, the folks who think that America is like some kind of mechanical wind-up toy, and the Articles of the Constitution are the gears.

And Santorum ended up with the manic-depressive vote. Maybe because they like the way that Santorum cries in public. Boehner was their second choice.

By the way, I'm not the first person to notice this about the other side. Noted Nixon-hater Philip K. Dick actually wrote a novel about this in 1964, called "Clans of the Alphane Moon." Except that Dick placed that story in outer space, not Iowa. Minor difference.

Anyway, I'll tell you one thing. If these are the kind of people who are choosing one of the two major-party candidates for President this year, then I'm voting for the other guy. I'm definitely voting for the other guy.

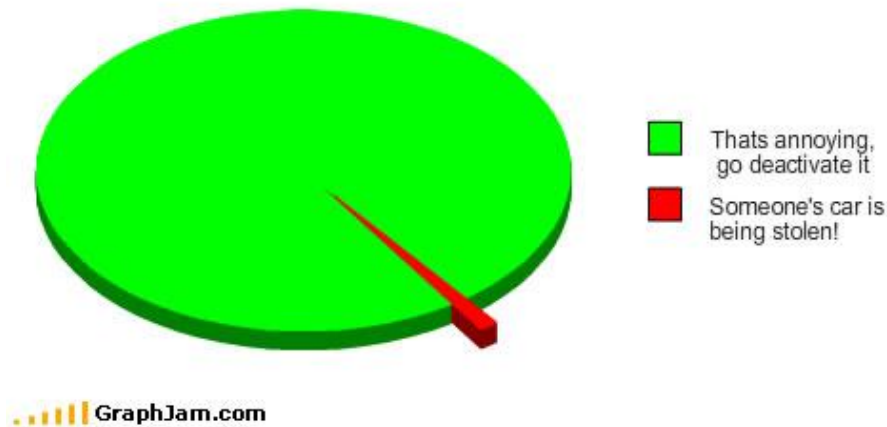
Courage, Alan Grayson

[20120106-09](#) 19:05 SteveG SteveG Action: Sign-up for Huffington Post's 'Daily Briefs' Emails!

Sign-up for the Huffington Post's "Daily Brief" emails: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/huffingtonpost/new-daily-brief_b_811083.html.

[20120107-01](#) 15:59 Art Graphic: Thoughts When a Car Alarm Goes Off

Thoughts When A Car Alarm Goes Off



[20120107-02](#) 20:26 Dennis Video: "Meet the Canada Party"

If only I hadn't flunked my draft physical, I could be there laughing along with this guy:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrhA0sEkuaM>.

[20120108-02](#) 12:45 Art Re: Video: "Meet the Canada Party" (reply to Dennis, above)

I think you may be on to something!

[20120107-05](#) 23:49 Jim Video: "Indiana Picks a Bad Time to Go to War Against Unions"

Rachel Maddow nailed it!

Want to know one of the biggest – and as yet locally unreported – reasons why the GOP is trying to jam through its divisive, wage-shrinking “right-to-work” legislation in one week?

Two words: Super Bowl.

<http://video.msnbc.msn.com/the-rachel-maddow-show/45894457#null>

20120108-01 12:32 SteveBA “2012: A Year of Choices”

Interesting article, long and is only Part 1:

“2012: A Year of Choices” by John Mauldin, Millennium Wave Advisors

Jan. 7, 2012 (http://www.advisorperspectives.com/commentaries/millennium_010712.php)

2012 will be the year that the consequences of the choices made by the developed world will begin to manifest themselves in the economic realm. We are in the closing chapters of the current Debt Supercycle, with different countries strewn out along the path, and all headed for a destination that will force major decisions if politically painful actions are not taken. Some countries (e.g., Greece) have a choice between the dire and the disastrous. The option for merely difficult choices was long ago, and there is no going back to where you started without a different but equally painful outcome.

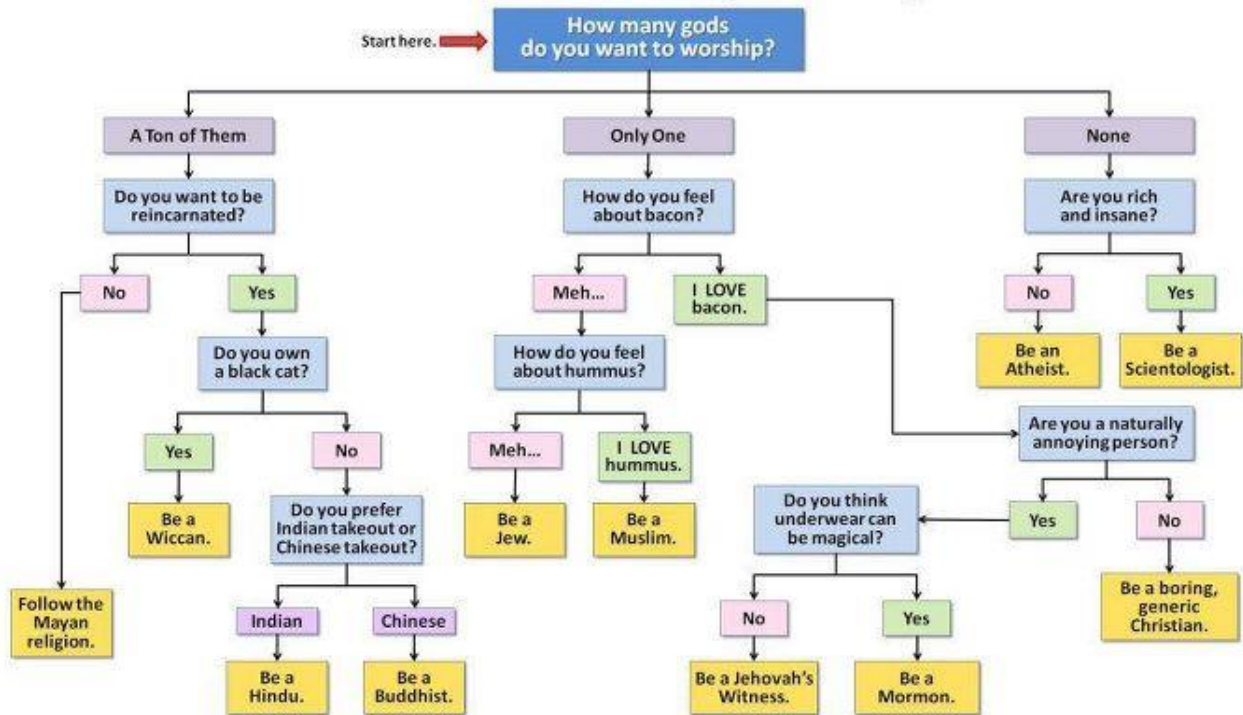
20120108-04 17:29 Dennis Re: “2012: A Year of Choices” (reply to SteveBA, above)
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Thanks SteveBA. The only thing I learned from this article is that I'm glad I bought stock in Biotime.

20120108-07 23:08 SteveBA Re: “2012: A Year of Choices” (reply to Dennis, above)
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Well played.

A Flowchart for Choosing Your Religion

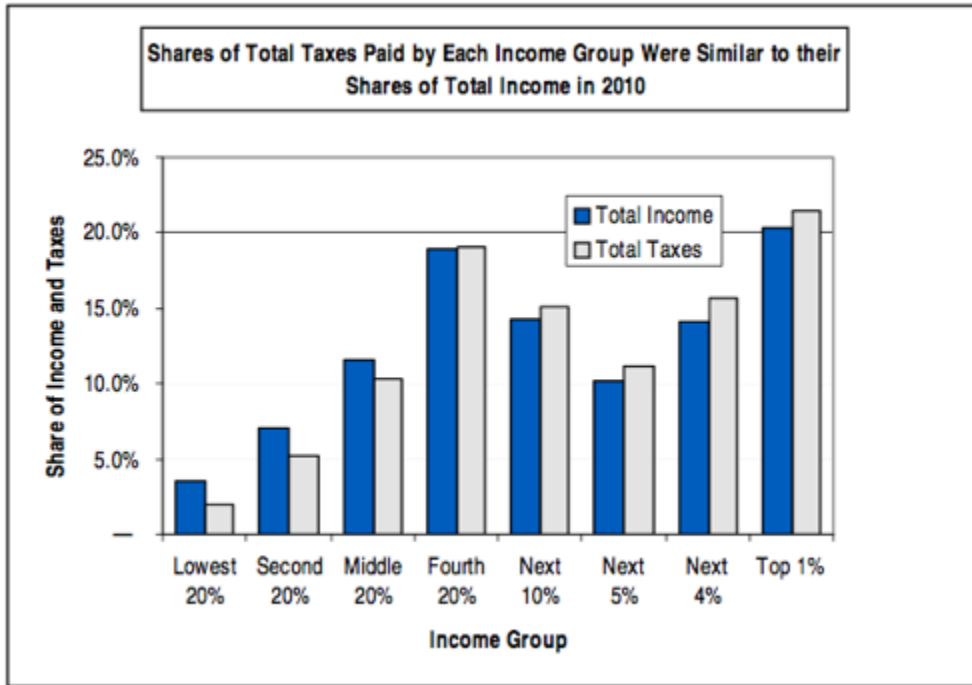


"The Top 5 Tax Myths to Watch Out for This Election Season" posted by Sara, MoveON.org

Jan. 6, 2012, (<http://front.moveon.org/the-top-5-tax-myths-to-watch-out-for-this-election-season/>)

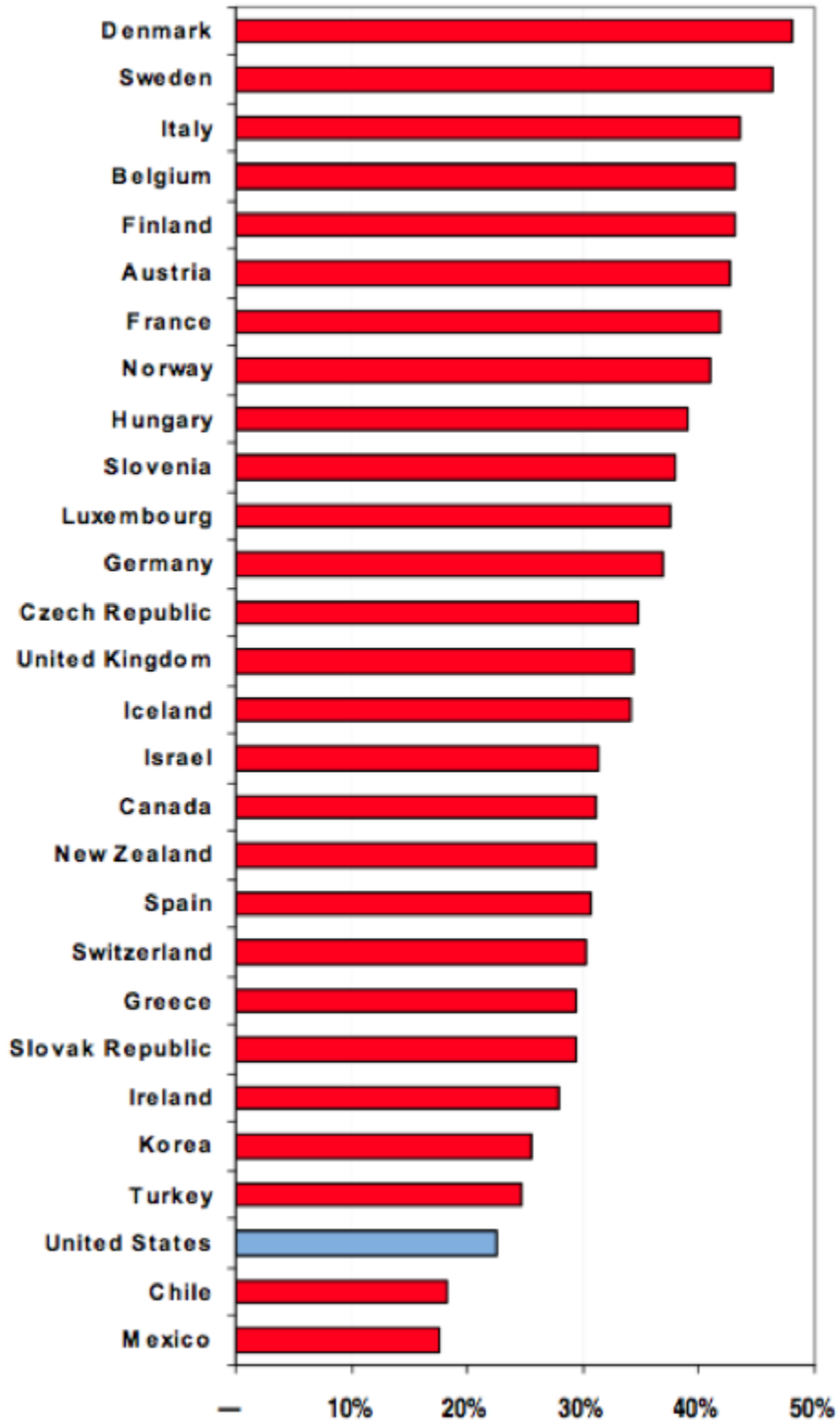
MYTH #1: 47% of Americans do not pay taxes.

FACT: All Americans pay taxes.



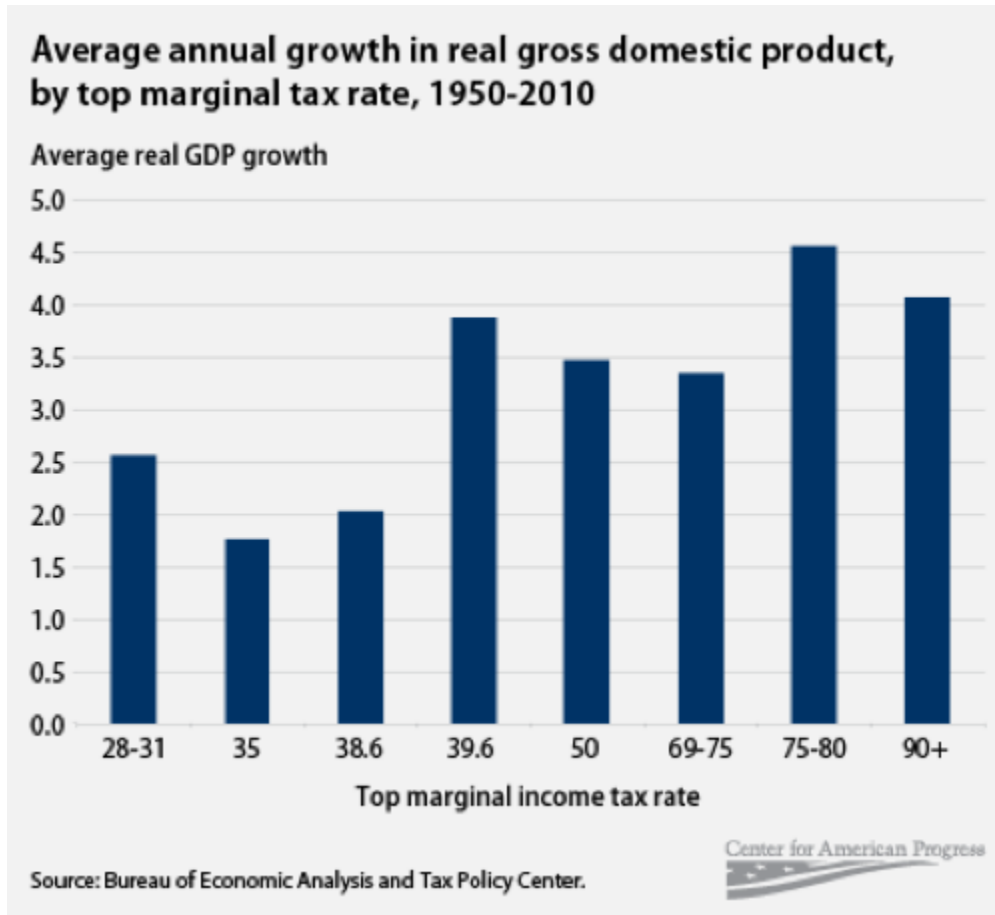
MYTH #2: The American people and corporations pay high taxes.
FACT: The US has the third lowest taxes of any developed country in the world.

Total 2009 Taxes as a % of GDP



MYTH #3: Cutting taxes creates jobs and raises revenue.

FACT: Tax cuts reduce revenue and are not associated with economic growth.



MYTH #4: The US tax system is very progressive because wealthy individuals already pay a disproportionate amount of taxes.

FACT: At a time of growing income inequality, the US tax system is basically flat.

When you take into account all of the taxes that individuals pay, the truth is that our tax system is relatively flat. The top one percent of income earners receives 20.3 percent of total income while paying 21.5 percent of total taxes and the lowest 20 percent of income earners receive 3.5 percent of total income while still paying out two percent of total taxes.

In other words, wealthy individuals pay a high percentage of taxes because they earn a highly disproportionate amount of income. This is a consequence of growing income inequality in the United States, which is at a level not seen since before the Great Depression.

MYTH #5: The "Fair Tax" or a flat tax would be more fair.

FACT: The "Fair Tax" or a flat tax would make our tax system even more regressive.

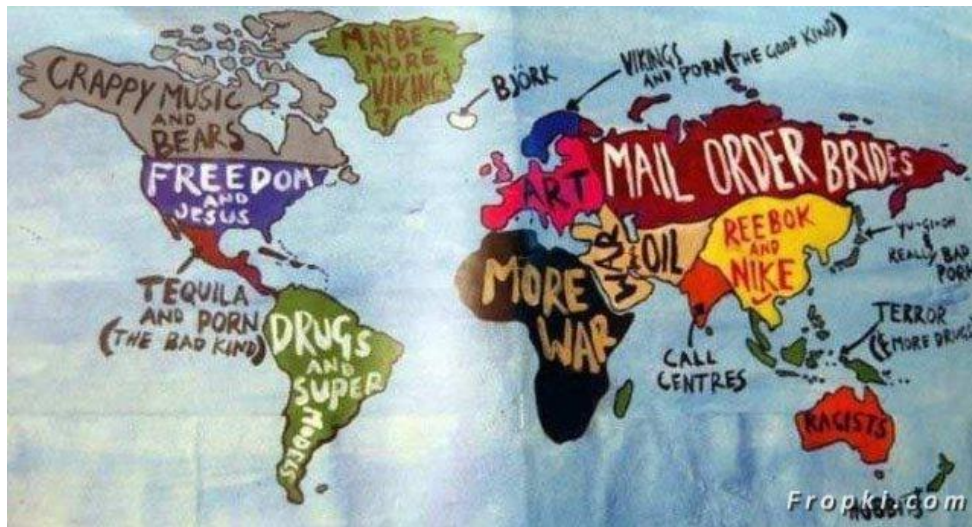
Impact of Specter "Flat Tax" in 2010		
Income Group	Average Income	Average Tax Change
Lowest 20%	\$ 12,400	\$ +1,485
Second 20%	24,900	+2,299
Middle 20%	40,100	+2,678
Fourth 20%	65,500	+3,576
Next 10%	99,600	+5,182
Next 5%	140,100	+4,323
Next 4%	243,900	-5,834
Top 1%	1,327,700	-209,562
Bottom 95%	\$ 48,000	+2,887

**Source: ITEP Microsimulation Model,
February 2010**

[20120108-08](#) 23:59 FotM Friends of the Middle—Just Reminiscing

Over the weekend, part of our group enjoyed quite a discussion of times we shared in junior high and high school, back in Indiana. Normally I exclude almost all personal-type communications from this Newsletter, but I thought maybe this could be instructional to someone, maybe at some point in the future, so, at the risk of boring some of you, I'll try to present the exchange as concisely as possible. Some of this appeared in the last Newsletter (#46) in a different format. Just trying to present a complete conversation of this type to see what it looks like. Besides, it was kind of fun (for us!).

Blame it all on Dennis, who sent us the wonderfully ridiculous "Stupid Person's World Map" that appeared in FotM Newsletter#46. Here's a little smaller version as a reminder:



SteveB: Whoever did this map has truly been around. I like Iceland and the Philippines, especially.

Ben: Hoot!

Art: I love it. Sadly I suspect it pretty well sums up the general geographic knowledge of most Americans.

Pam: Ain't that the truth?! Those of you who went to junior high in Greencastle, do you remember Mr. Hammond, the geography teacher? I learned almost everything I know today about geography from him, and that's quite a lot compared to most people. I still remember coloring in those maps that he would put up on the bulletin board. I always hoped mine would be picked as the best, and sometimes it was. :-)

Art: I had a college professor who taught a basic geography course. He was known to be a terror. The first day of class he handed out about three sheets, single spaced and two columns each of place names and told us you probably won't see any of these again except on a test, and then you'll see a lot of them. Great professor and we learned a lot, including how geography and climatic patterns shape our weather, all of it. I still remember.

SteveB: HALITOSIS HAMILTON, Pam! But you learned your geography. He made it easy. Why doesn't everybody know geography? The map is just precious, I think.

Dennis: Geography at GHS was not considered an "academic course." It was just me and the greasers and "Little Boo" was the teacher. I had a minor in Geography at Western Michigan along with double majors in Social Science (mostly history) and Sociology. And look where all those liberal arts classes got me!

SteveB: Uh...liberal?

SteveG: They got you around the world a few times, Dennis.

Bill: I also had Reese Hammond for geography, and, despite the halitosis, he was a good and conscientious teacher. I had heard that he was graduated from DePauw, where he was on the football team and known to be tough. What has become of his daughter? Can't remember her name; dark hair; smart and pleasant.

SteveBA: What I remember about that class was the competition he had to find some of the most obscure places in the world.

Pam: Poor Mr. Hammond, being remembered for so long by so many for his breath. The last time I saw his daughter Janine (sp?) was at a GHS reunion. She was single and had just adopted three kids from Guatemala, I think it was. That was over thirty years ago. I think she became a French professor. I used to teach with her mother at South Putnam H.S. Ruth was a great help to me when I was a fledgling teacher.

Pam: When I lived in Canada, a family of Nigerians lived across the street from us. The husband was a professor at the U. of Guelph. They were sweet people. Still, I would rather be in Canada than in Nigeria.--

Clark: Agree on the unfortunate aspect. I think it's because Halitosis Hammond was alliterative and easy to remember. On such things are reputations born and live on. Speaking of nicknames, who ever came up with the brilliant Big Boo and Little Boo? I'd love to know -- an unsung hero. Regardless, Reese Hammond was probably my favorite teacher in junior high and those maps helped the world come alive for me. He was also a pretty good tipper at Christmas time (he was on my paper route). Real money rather than the ballpoint pen that some of my other customers handed out...though I would have been happy with a Hammond Atlas.

Bill: Thanks for refreshing my memory, Pam. I think she spelled it Jeannine, but, given the fluid nature of geriatric memory, you may be right, or it may be somewhere in between. What a heroine to have adopted THREE children. Yes, I remember she was studying French and had spent some time in Paris. I don't think I ever met Ruth. She should have told Reese to floss, damn it all.

SteveB: It's kinda cool when we all put our imperfect memories together. Does anyone remember when Mrs. Franklin backhanded Jim Beamon (?) across the face with her ring hand? For making some remark about Mr. Franklin, I think. 7th grade?

SteveB: And the fact that his breath could kill you. Bill's right' I wonder why his wife never told him? Maybe she was extremely jealous and knew that would keep other women away? Not that I'm trying to start any rumors. I'd love to know the genesis of the Boos. It's older than we are. Remember in 7th grade, when the high school was there. I think Big Boo was Bog Boo then. Don't remember Little Boo in 7th grade...

Bill: Yes, I was there. It was *John* Beamon, and it cut his face. I suppose John did have an attitude problem. He eventually had to do some prison time.

SteveB: Yes! John Beamon! It definitely gave him an attitude adjustment at the time. The Franklins were good teachers too, if a little violent and kinky. We had incredible teachers! How lucky we were!

Bill: Agree!

Pam: I don't remember that, but I do remember the Franklins. I thought they were incredibly cool.

SteveB: Well, because of your precociousness, you were in the wrong class, Pam. The "cool" class was right behind you. You missed it. :-) Didn't Mr. Hardman have some alliteration going too? Harvey Hardman? No... Bill...help?

Phil: It was Harold Hardman.

Bill: Harold Hardman. Good guy, if not galvanizing in his classroom presentation. Had a breakdown at some point in his career. It's hard to teach junior high school kids. Little bastards.

Pam: SteveB, I always thought I'd be better off with you guys. ;-)

SteveB: I wish you had been! I would have been right up there with the guys too intimidated to ask you out. Our class had a great time. Wonderful people! Your class too, I bet.

Pam: I can't imagine anyone being intimidated by me. I was so shy I was practically speechless. I didn't know Mr. Hardman had a breakdown. Did he recover? I remember him too. Not galvanizing but nice and mild-mannered.

Clark: Harold Hardman, correct, and he taught ninth grade algebra, or at least that's when I had him. The story I heard was that he had shell shock from the war -- whether WWII or Korea, I don't know -- but hence the breakdown. I did like Mr. Franklin, not Mrs., but I guess putting a tack on your teacher's chair does lead, eventually, to prison.

SteveB: I think there is almost a straight path, Clark. I hope I didn't put him up to it..

Phil: The old memory thing again, but I remember that he had placed a tack on her chair.

SteveB: Is that what it was, Phil? Not some remark? Harold Hardman. Another good teacher. I can remember hearing about the mental breakdown thing or whatever. I never knew if it was true or not. He was a calm guy. Wasn't he in the war?

SteveG: That was it – a tack. I never did like the Franklins and have no memory of having a class with them. Didn't like Mrs. Lynch in high school either and she definitely did not like me. Gilbert, Gooch, Garriott, Peterson, McCammon, O'Hair, Irwin, Minnie Mae, etc. all great teachers.

SteveB: I wonder if a kid put a tack in a teacher's chair today, and she sat on it, if the police would be called and he would be charged with assault with a deadly weapon? Here's a hard trivia question? Did Mrs. Franklin actually sit on it, or see it in time? Then I guess Beamon raised his hand and confessed, then smack!??? That tack trick is nasty. I know I was often tempted, but I don't think I ever actually did it to anyone, not even my little brothers. I'm hoping none of you remember otherwise. :-)

Clark: Nor could a teacher hit a student these days...suspensions all around.

Pam: Miss O'Hair was so cute, the perfect little school mistress. I think she even tucked a lace handkerchief up her sleeve. Mrs. Gooch and Mrs. Garriott are why I am where I am today.

SteveG: Mrs. Gooch's research papers – Rick used mine at Ball State and got an A, I used it at DPU and got a B. The 4 English teachers plus Jim McCammon really helped prepare us for college.

Bill: Mrs. Gooch, Mrs. Garriott, and Mrs. Peterson (Charlotte) were tops. Wish we had had as much quality on the math side.

SteveB: We had great if tough English teachers. What an advantage I had when I had to teach grammar years later—I still remembered the stuff. Mercurochrome and merthiolate and iodine, itself. All off the market now, contain mercury and other poisons. My Mom depended on that stuff. One was awful, one not so bad. Can't remember which. Miss O'Hair was the perfect 19th Century lady.

Bill: Mercurochrome wasn't bad, but merthiolate definitely had a sting. These cut and abrasion remedies probably cost us ten or twenty IQ points.

SteveG: Miss O'Hair lived north of Greencastle on US 231 – west side of the road after a curve. Her established family home was further north on the eastside of the highway – long history of O'Hair's in the Greencastle area.

Clark: I remember her [Miss O'Hair] house burning down -- though if she had two houses available, that was a plus.

SteveG: The house up the road was the old family home, not certain she had it available. She built an underground home on the site of the fire – it is still there. Just south of her house was a road that went to the east, a house on the corner. Dad always referred to it as Murdock corner – in one conversation with Miss O'Hair he mentioned Murdock corner and that brought the Irish out of the red head wanting to know why that was Murdock corner and not O'Hair corner – she didn't like it.

Clark: That's hilarious, SteveG. And an underground home -- amazing. She was one of a kind.

SteveG: In her geometry class she gave us a problem and said if we could solve the problem it was an automatic A, regardless of what else we did. I spent 90% of my time trying to solve the problem & did, but my solution did not adhere to geometric theorems – got a B

Bill: Pam's observation that Miss O'Hair kept her handkerchief in her sleeve, a la ladies' practice in the nineteenth century, rang the bell for me. She did indeed. And she lived in a nineteenth century house, one of those Italianate brick edifices with twelve- or fourteen-foot ceilings that would have been the center of a large farm. SteveG may know how old she was when she passed. I'll guess there was some superannuation there. Maybe the underground home doubled as a final resting place.

SteveG: Not certain when she passed, but here is her family tree from 1830 on:
<http://www.johnreckel.com/OHair/BrannPages/Page231.htm>.

Bill: Thanks. Daughter of Cyrus and Lena Leota O'Hair. Granddaughter of Greenberry.

SteveG: Don't you just love some of the old names – Greensberry, can't get better than that.

SteveG: SteveB (lower right) and friends:



SteveBA: I remember SteveB playing the sax at a convocation, I think it was the "Theme from Peter Gunn."

Pam: SteveB, Doug Stauch, and who are the other two?

Bill: Wow, great picture! And what a forelock on that boy Baker. Who is the blondish guy? I know Harry MaGinnity and Doug Stauch but not the other guy. I don't know where you get all those old pix. Fabulous. By the way, Harry MaGinnity—a year or two older than we are—works for the Indiana Department of Transportation as its public information officer.

SteveB: Hey, that's pretty cool!! Thanks, SteveG! Harry McGinnity also on guitar (he's on Facebook and we've communicated a little). Doug really played, mainly, drums, of course. I can't place the other sax player. Doug died quite a few years ago. He must have been pretty young. Saw him last about 1989. I think he always lived in Ellettsville, home of some Spudnuts for a long time. Yum. Where did the photo come from?

SteveG: Facebook, Greencastle, In Past and Present. I remember Harry's little Reanult – riding with him one night, he would stop under a street light, shoot it out with a pellet gun, and speed away in his Dauphine.

SteveB: Thanks again. I loved that little car. We used to load it up with everything but Stauch's drums and drive all over Indiana to play places...not places like Indianapolis, but places like Fincastle and Lake Shaffer and Clinton. Belleville? The first time I ever got drunk was with those guys...I must have been 15, not quite driving yet. At Harry's house where we'd all stay over sometimes, either there or at Stauch's. But this was at Harry's and it was

peach brandy and I puked and I still can't stand even the smell of the stuff. Had to go to work at Kersey Music the next morning with a b-i-g hangover.

SteveG: Did Harry live in the big house on the west side of 231 – the old Forbes mansion?

SteveB: That sounds like it. I don't know if it was named that, but it was a big place. I thought it was east off 231 a little...

Art: Why am I dealing with all these children? —Uncle Art

SteveB: Uncle Art, it's got to be pretty boring if you didn't attend GHS in 1963, 1964. ^_^

Pam: I think by this time of life it all sort of levels out. I spoke with a woman on the phone yesterday, who informed me she is 71. She sounded about 35. We're not getting older--we're getting--ta-da--younger. When my grandmother was the age I am now, I thought she was ancient. She SEEMED ancient. God forbid I should seem such a thing, at least not for a few years yet. My grandson told me the other day that I don't look my age. Bless his sweet, little heart!

SteveB: Man, I've forgotten so much. It's great when we all remember together! Thanks!

Pam: Sock hops in the gym. Dances at the Armory. Butterscotch sundaes at Fleenor's. Chet Coan. Mr. Matthews at Prevo's. The old ladies with too much make-up who worked behind the counters at Prevo's. The Dairy Queen. Basketball games in the old gym that gave me headaches from all the noise. My moment of fame in "The Thread That Runs So True." (I had one line.)--Whew! It's all there.

Art: By then I was a sophisticated young man going on to bigger and, well maybe not, better things. :o)

SteveB: I want to go back and just do it all over again, even if not one thing were different! That would indeed be heaven.

SteveG: That would work – where in the hell is that damn time machine. By the mere fact of going back, something or one thing might be different. Marty McFly help us all.

Bill: A life of no regrets is a beautiful thing, SteveB. But that may not be exactly what you suggest. But would you want to live it all again with memories from the first cycle or just live it again *do novo*?

SteveB: I'd be happy either way, though, with memory, everyone would do some things differently, I think. With memory, it might be something other than I was thinking of. With memory, it would be power. Without memory, it would be a mini-reincarnation. And, for me, just the mini would be enough. I don't need the full blown, multiple cycles of karma thing. ^_^

Bill: Great thoughts. With memory, one would always be a little distant from the flow as thoughts about how to do it better intruded. But without memory, you wouldn't know you were repeating, and I suppose that's the karmic thing you mentioned.

Pam: You all must have had a way better time in high school than I did. I enjoy remembering the past, but I sure don't want to relive it. With distance, I can convince myself that I had an idyllic, interesting adolescence, but beneath that conviction lurks the truth. I had fun, don't get me wrong, but there was an awful lot of angst that went with it. I'm a lot more comfortable with myself now. Maybe it's different with guys.

Dennis: Not for this guy. I had plenty of angst. Took a lot of keggers in college to get over the shyness as I remember. Still, I have some fond memories of GHS, if only I could remember them.

Pam: A kindred spirit.

SteveB: I think I remember a little angst...and not to minimize anyone's...but to be young and full of life and innocent...things were far from perfect yet perfect...the tomatoes on the vine had a ripeness and taste that no longer exist...the crisp football wind scattering the maple leaves we raked into piles to leap into...throwing a line from my bamboo pole into the Big Walnut, my heart skipping a beat when the bobber got pulled under...playing basketball with my friends into the dark of night and you couldn't see a thing...thud...swish...lying in bed in the hot summer listening to the jukebox and laughter at the Dog 'n Suds in the distance, imaging what it's like to be all grown up and now I know.

SteveG: Since you put it that way, let's do over and get rid of the angst. Had fun at GHS and through college - got drunk a hell of a lot from 16 through age 24 - binge drinking was the norm. Used to go to Baker's at Purdue on a Friday night and wake up on Sunday afternoon with little recognition of what had happened - not a good plan.

Pam: Well put, SteveB. Yesterday as I was taking a walk, I swear I could smell burning leaves. There's nothing else quite like that. I think I'd have to go back to pre-adolescence to have unblemished memories, but I have plenty of those, even if I did skin my knees a lot. Remember mercurochrome? Ouch.

—Friends of the Middle,
Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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