



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #84 — FEB. 29, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

A Christian Dictatorship?

(posted by Friends of the Middle, Feb 29, 2012)

Rick Santorum didn't like what President Obama said in his State of the Union address last month:

Higher education can't be a luxury - it is an economic imperative that every family in America should be able to afford. —Barack Obama

Isn't the repression and dismantling of education what the world has always experienced with fascist, communist, and Islamic dictators? Is America now to be a Christian dictatorship? Will we be under "Taliban Rick" "Frothy" Santorum?

from "Obama Responds to Santorum's 'Snob' Jab?" by Alexander Mooney, CNN

Feb. 27, 2012, (<http://whitehouse.blogs.cnn.com/2012/02/27/obama-responds-to-santorums-snob-jab/>)

Standing by his comments in a subsequent interview Sunday, Santorum said, "Barack Obama is a person of the left. He is someone who believes in big government. He believes in the values that are, unfortunately, the dominant values, and political values, and overly politicized values, and politically correct values that are on most college and university campuses."

Funny how Santorum's name seems to be eerily similar to, a play on, or almost an anagram of the name, "**SATAN!**"

PASS THIS EMAIL ON. IF YOU DON'T SEND THIS TO 10 PEOPLE YOU ARE GOING TO HELL. IF YOU DO AS I SAY, HEAVEN AWAITS YOU. EMAIL! EMAIL! FORWARD! FORWARD! :-)

Pam: I love the piece on GOP panic. [Newsletter #82] Fear is the strongest emotion, and lots of Americans are very afraid right now. I am trying to understand every side, even the ones I disagree with, because unless you understand your "enemy" you will never defeat him. I do consider Santorum an enemy--of everything all Americans hold dear: personal freedom, fairness, and last but not least compassion. When he says the separation of church and state is not absolute and that people of faith are being denied a voice, he is more than disingenuous; he's perverse. He lashes out in all directions, and he makes no effort to understand the "other side." It is obvious from his speeches that Obama is all about personal freedom (gays in the military), fairness (reform the tax code and

election financing), and compassion (every American should have a fighting chance). He doesn't stoop to name-calling, and he so easily could. The epithet "fascist" comes to mind. Republicans see this election as a "tipping point" in the direction of what they admit is a majority view. Last time I looked, minorities in this country enjoy all sorts of protections. When minorities call the shots, you no longer have a democracy; you have a theocracy, an oligarchy, a plutocracy, or all three at once. We may have reached a tipping point, but it sure isn't the one Santorum teeters on.

My son is part of a voluntary organization that spends Saturday mornings building fences around unfenced yards where dogs are being chained up. The fences are free, the labor is free. Typically the yards that have chained dogs (often pit bulls) also have rusting washing machines and trucks up on blocks scattered around as well. The owners are those folks Santorum thinks so highly of--the good ol' boys, the anti-elitists, the 2nd amendment fanatics. Tanner's group isn't out to change anyone's politics or religion; it just wants to make life more pleasant for helpless animals. The people doing this are what Santorum calls godless liberals with college educations. The social stratum Santorum appeals to is precisely the sort of disgruntled, nationalistic, humiliated people Hitler appealed to. When an oppressive government puts its foot on the country's neck, it is the intellectuals, the highly educated, those capable of sophisticated analysis that it goes after. In Cambodia under Pol Pot anyone wearing glasses was shot; wearing glasses meant you could read. Keeping people ignorant, scared, and angry is what every demagogue in history has tried, often successfully, to do. This election cycle proves my point.

Santorum definitely has a "holier than thou" attitude, and we all know how attractive that is. The truth is, Santorum doesn't believe in freedom of religion or religious pluralism. He believes all laws come from a Christian (Catholic, the one true faith) god, and he wants America's law code to be based on absolutely Christian premises. How is he not a theocrat? You don't have to be an atheist to fear this guy.

Art: First of all, God bless Tanner. As a doggie rescuer myself, my hat is off to him. In western Virginia we see a lot of that "good ole boy" cr*p]My apologies. -SteveB], which usually includes abusing animals.

Does it not strike everyone that the one fairly consistent theme of these Republican candidates is that colleges and universities are viewed as hotbeds of evil. One of the previous candidates, Huey, Dewey or Louie, I forget, also referred to universities as places where young people are turned into communistic monsters.

Now, last I recall colleges and universities are where you go to expand your knowledge of the world and also learn how to think. Apparently dangerous stuff by Republican standards these days.

Pam: Wasn't there a political movement back in the day called the "Know Nothings"?

Art: There was indeed just prior to the Civil War. Alas, the "Know Nothing" came from their responses when asked about things. On the other hand their constituency was the same group as the Republicans appeal to today.

SteveB: I wish I were the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*! I can just imagine what they would say about Pam's write-up:

"Witty, insightful, incredibly brilliant analysis."

If you don't agree with that, then let me say this: The second or third thing Santorum and his devil's angels would do, if they had power, would be to take your damned guns! Your Constitution is toilet paper to him. It makes him want to puke, because God probably didn't write it!

We have so many dog and animal lovers in our group and in our networks of life expanding out! I love it! Thank you all!

I'm sure that says something important!

I don't think Rick Satan or Santana or whatever would allow dogs into Heaven. I think he would classify them like he does gays, because he talks so much about that "man-on-dog" thing, you know? (Psssst! I'm sure he's not revealing any of his innermost fantasies there.)

Myself? I am firmly convinced and completely believe that dogs are people too and cats are either close or, as they believe, even better than people! I expect to find both in Heaven when I get there or I'm going to be pi*sed!

SteveG: Catholics are interesting as they do think they are the one true religion. I have worked with a few folks over the years that are Orthodox – Serbian/Greek/etc – their form of religion seems to be based on earlier forms than Catholics – different dates for holidays, more rituals, etc. Theocrats have zero business running this government.

Bill: Amen, SteveG. And too many who want to be in power need to be reminded of that—and the constitution.

Pam: The scary thing is, there are lots of folks out there who admire Santorum's absolutist faith and are stoked by his anger at "liberal elites." Anger is tricky. There are times when it's absolutely the correct response and even the right remedy, but when anger is diffuse, general, and aimed at strange targets, I get suspicious. If you held a gun to my head, I'd say I'm an atheist, but the fact is, no one really has a handle on metaphysics. Belief is not fact, and faith does not explain why microbes cause disease. Some Christian patriarch (forget who) said he believed in the resurrection of Christ BECAUSE it was unbelievable. So when anyone, Christian, Jew, or Muslim, claims to have THE truth, I stop listening. Talk about kindness or tolerance or respect for others, and you can couch it in any terms you want. But absolutists like Santorum, Franklin Graham, or the Grand Ayatollah are delusional. I conclude that these religious zealots get angry at the faithless because of an underlying fear, perhaps fear that they might be wrong or fear that their god will damn them if they don't obey the rules. The more fervent the belief, the more rules and taboos there are. People want to put themselves in little boxes where they feel safe; it can be disorienting to feel like a speck in the universe, but that's what we all are. We create our own meaning, whether through religion or in other ways, and that is a noble and human thing to do. If we could think of religions as stories that explain the mysteries we hunger to have solved, then perhaps we could acknowledge that one culture's stories may not work in another place at another time. When I read a great Victorian novel, I take away profound moral lessons. That does not mean I want to embrace a Victorian lifestyle. If Rick Santorum wants to wear a hair shirt and give all his money to the poor (yeah, right), it's none of my business. When he decries non-Christians (he really means non-Catholics) as inherently and hopelessly evil, as out to attack religion or indoctrinate others in the "faith" of atheism, it seems to me that he is projecting some dark aspect of his own soul onto the rest of the world. He strikes me as a man who is angry, afraid, and potentially very dangerous.

When I was a teenager and still a Methodist, one of the ministers at my church (Gobin Memorial for those of you from Greencastle) was asked one day, at a youth group meeting, whether non-Christians were going to hell. He said it was regrettable but he was afraid that was true. Well, what is hell and what is heaven? Constructions of the human imagination. I believe that every man needs a good woman to look after him. Now, I know that is not actually true, but it is a belief that guides my life and makes me happy when my sons are in good relationships. We all need to feel that life is meaningful and that what we do is for the good, but when that desire turns against others with violence and intolerance, we are not acting for the good, and we are certainly not demonstrating the basic humility that is incumbent on all of us. Santorum displays the vengeance of religion, not its charity. "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." I'm sounding preachy, aren't I? Sorry about that, but this is what I really think.

Dennis: My opinion is that Hell would be spending eternity with religious fundamentalists. Save me from that, O Lord.

Heaven is one of those days when the world is full of wonder and I'm enjoying it while I can.

Pam: I'm with you, Dennis.

SteveB: So healthy for the soul and for the human race to know that this is Heaven (too?):

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

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Dwh5_hicoE&feature=related.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9TGj2jrJk8&feature=related>,
(go to 5:55 if you don't have much time).

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYcJ9J5DggU>.

Enjoy!

Beth: Right on, SteveB!

SteveG: When our son was a freshman in high school he went with a friend to an all night church youth group – hockey game, music, bowling, etc. He spent the night arguing with a minister about who does and does not get into heaven.

Dennis has the right idea.

Belief systems – theology, ideology, personal, etc - all seem to be developed to make life palatable for the developer and of course each group thinks theirs is the one and only system.

FotM NEWSLETTER #84 (Feb. 29, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120229-00		FotM	A Christian Dictatorship? by Friends of the Middle ("Obama Responds to Santorum's 'Snob' Jab?")
20120228-01	08:37	SteveB	Fw: Avaaz Hits 13 Million
20120228-02	09:05	SteveB	Republican Presidential Candidates in Michigan Primary
20120228-03	09:46	MarthaH	Republican Politics
20120228-06	10:41	SteveB	Re: Republican Politics (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120228-09	11:38	MarthaH	Re: Republican Politics (reply to SteveB, above)
20120228-17	21:35	SteveB	Re: Republican Politics (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120228-04	10:31	SteveG	"Romney Looks to Squeak By in Native Michigan"
20120228-05	10:37	SteveG	Religion in Politics in Michigan
20120228-07	11:05	SteveB	Re: Religion in Politics in Michigan (reply to SteveG, above)
20120228-10	13:57	SteveB	Republican Primary in Michigan (to Dennis)
20120228-11	14:41	Dennis	Re: Republican Primary in Michigan (reply to SteveB, above)
20120228-12	16:57	Pam	Re: Republican Primary in Michigan (reply to Dennis, above)
20120228-08	11:25	Mark	Video: Blues at the White House!
20120228-18	21:56	SteveB	Re: Video: Blues at the White House! (reply to Mark, above)
20120228-13	19:33	Art	Global Warming Mind-Changing Experiment & "The Great Carbon Bubble: Why the Fossil Fuel Industry Fights So Hard"
20120228-14	20:35	Pam	Re: Global Warming Mind-Changing Experiment (reply to Art, above)
20120228-15	21:04	SteveB	Re: Global Warming Mind-Changing Experiment (reply to Art, above)
20120228-16	21:21	SteveG	"Why Does America Lead the World in School Shootings?"
20120228-19	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Belize Caribbean

20120228-01	08:37	SteveB	Fw: Avaaz Hits 13 Million
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from Ricken Patel, Avaaz.org:

It feels like everything is happening exponentially.

In the last 30 days, our community has grown by 2.5 million people. We were already the largest political web movement ever, and yet we're growing faster than anyone has seen before! We're taking more actions, winning more victories, donating more and generating thousands more media hits in one month than we used to in a year. It's thrilling, even a little scary, especially when we see that the pace is still accelerating...

Just to give a snapshot of the last few weeks:

- 5 million of us stood up to the ACTA and SOPA internet censorship bills, helping to put SOPA on ice, and putting ACTA under threat, with the President of the European Parliament and Germany, Poland and many other countries reconsidering their positions.
- We smuggled \$1.8 million worth of medical supplies into Syria when no one else could, and raised \$1.5 million more in donations, while our citizen journalists provided much of the world media's information and images.
- We generated thousands of news articles on 20 different campaigns.
- Our sex trafficking hotline generated information that will result in a major set of arrests this week (can't say which country yet).
- We raised over \$4 million online to supercharge our work, and are growing our staff team like mad to keep up with the need.
- We ran over 40 campaigns, took over 10 million actions and told 25 million friends about campaigns we care about, on everything from deforestation in Brazil to the Murdoch scandal in the UK -- and made a serious impact on many of these.

If all that wasn't enough, we're about to launch a couple of big projects (stay tuned) that will take our community to a whole NEW level!

It's a thrilling privilege to serve this amazing community, and while the challenges we face are growing, the surge of spirited people rising to meet these challenges is growing even faster and stronger. We've come together and built something special, and it's taking off. Let's shoot for the stars.

<http://www.avaaz.org/en/>

20120228-02 09:05 SteveB Republican Presidential Candidates in Michigan Primary

I know there are many factors at work, especially today in Michigan, yet I can't help but notice the following:

1. Mitt Romney's criticisms of President Obama are fundamentally flawed and even Republicans are starting to notice. "A guy who's an eloquent speaker who made a lot of promises he hasn't been able to keep." (The truth: despite great odds and opposition, Barry has done a good job. Not as good as Democrats had hoped for, but much better than Republicans wanted and worked to achieve, counterproductively.)
2. Rick Santorum has no such problem, because his criticisms are rooted in religiosity and lunacy. He doesn't even believe in the separation of church and state. (The truth: LOL! I maintain that we need a constitutional amendment that will clearly and forever state this complete separation, else we will be made to become like the Taliban instead of free men and women.)
3. The Republican establishment must be going nuts today, and will break into total unMITTigated panic if Santorum wins Romney's "home state" of Cadillacs...er...Michigan.
4. Yet you reap what you sow; this is the monster that Big Money created.

20120228-03 09:46 MarthaH Republican Politics

I was rethinking 2000 and that debacle...and adding the "corporations are people, too" decision and how the make-up of the court group has sent us further down this path. I remember the "no way" on PBS when W. got the nomination. OOPS...and here we are! A blink and 12 years, and what will the children inherit...a long way from what the children of the Greatest Generation did. Incredibly sad. Pandering is not a really high item on what I want to hear from a candidate. Lugar was just in Greencastle, and he and our "new" gerrymandered Congressman Rokita spoke right down the line to get their "R" \$\$\$\$\$. And then after I read their remarks, I find the "gas prices cannot be blamed on Obama's not accepting the pipeline" so had to cut and paste to Lugar. Doubt I will hear back (again!) His interns never reply with a truth...I have frequently begged him to step away from the caucus and lead...wonder if any one of the interns might have seen a truth there. Before I saw the light, I saw Lugar as my (college) hero...and wanted some dust from his mayor's perch when we went there! Not so much now...BUT THEN there's the teabagger bunch wanting him out...so...a rock and a hard place.

20120228-06 10:41 SteveB Re: Republican Politics (reply to MarthaH, above)

I agree with you so much about how our generation screwed-up the handoff from the GG (Greatest Generation) and Dick "Hoary" Lugar. Thank you for your activism on all our behalves.

Love your "rant"! Feel free anytime. :-)

I graduated in 1964, smack dab in the middle of God's Country at just about the mid-point of the Golden Age.

20120228-09 11:38 MarthaH Re: Republican Politics (reply to SteveB, above)

Ah, small towns! I do appreciate the ability with which we all (sometimes I fall short in my passion!) can write...I majored in PS/US/English and taught 31 years. There, for Putnam County high school brains, I honed my "devil's advocate" mode and began to truly believe that which I taught...love that our president can also quote the Constitution verbatim! I read his books for a look-see, convinced Art after myself that he was a Real Deal with the things I observed and believed. IF only they governed like I taught--from the middle!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! As lemmings, our grandchildren will face extinction, and I can only do so much. Art is on the global warming page which is the "primary mover after God." It's not like He hasn't smacked us in the face many times already. Over the edge...is...too far!

Have you read Howard Zinn? He shows what we know and the rest deny about history...The rich run over poor on the way to opulence. But...the poor an outnumber...and all HECK breaks loose, duh! I say raise them up through education and the rest falls into place. How can WE be so stupid with such poor educations by the "standards" of the nay-sayers. I really want to show up for a Teabagger meeting and give them my Government 12 final. They and too many political mouths would FAIL, big time. I believed in teaching and demanded learning...or repeating, ha.

I do NF in winter and then fiction in summer to "escape" reality and bask in warmth. So far, it has been a too warm Hoosier winter. Fleas will be vehicles when we get gas at \$6, ha.

20120228-17 21:35 SteveB Re: Republican Politics (reply to MarthaH, above)

I really enjoyed your stories and reminders of our little hometown. I definitely remember your father and his shop. I'm sure Bill was there at least sometimes, because I bet your dad's was the closest welding shop to his house. :-) That boy loved welding! He once welded a rocket for me in those days. In later years, during summer jobs when I was teaching, I learned that I really liked welding too.

Howard Zinn was a great man. I believe American public schools are still largely incredibly good, with very many dedicated teachers—all so endangered by Republicans right now.

I remember many of the people you mention, but I don't remember you or Larry, I guess. But I'm so very happy to be in touch with you and so many of our fellow Greencastlonians (???)

20120228-04 10:31 SteveG "Romney Looks to Squeak By in Native Michigan"

from "Romney Looks to Squeak By in Native Michigan" by Matt Taylor, The National Memo

Feb. 27, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/article/romney-looks-squeak-native-michigan>)

"His father was a beloved governor because he was pragmatic and compassionate and moderate," said Former Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm. "Mitt Romney, while he may have been some of those things while he was governor of Massachusetts, is vying to outflank Rick Santorum on the right, and he is not his father. He has morphed into something his father would not recognize."

20120228-05 10:37 SteveG Religion in Politics in Michigan

In an interview yesterday AM on Morning Joe, Franklin Graham stated that Sanatorium is more of a Christian than Obama is and that Romney is not a Christian, he is a Mormon.

I have also heard that the Southern Baptist denomination is looking for a different name so that they feel like they will appeal to more northern people.

As SteveB has said, we complain about some middle eastern countries being run by theology and we are traveling down the same road.

[20120228-07](#) 11:05 SteveB Re: Religion in Politics in Michigan (reply to SteveG, above)

Muslims use a book that is not the Christian Bible. Scientologists use a book that is not the Christian bible. Mormons use a book that is not the Christian Bible. All are faultless actions. All say the Christian Bible is basically OK with them, as far as it goes. No one should have any problems with this.

But to then say that any of them is "Christian" would, by definition, be a fallacy, no matter how much Mormons might wish to be Christian or, as in Mitt Romney's case, wish to appear to be Christian. Clearly, they are not, or they would have to forsake the *Book of Mormon*, which I don't see happening anytime soon.

[20120228-10](#) 13:57 SteveB Republican Primary in Michigan (to Dennis)

Hey, Dennis, are you voting for Rick today?

[20120228-11](#) 14:41 Dennis Re: Republican Primary in Michigan (reply to SteveB, above)

If I vote in the Repub primary it will be for Fred Karger:

<http://motherjones.com/mojo/2010/04/fred-karger-president>.

[20120228-12](#) 16:57 Pam Re: Republican Primary in Michigan (reply to Dennis, above)

He sounds better than today's front runners.

[20120228-08](#) 11:25 Mark Video: Blues at the White House!

Finally Obama has done something that I'm all "on board " with.....however, Mick Jagger doesn't seem to fit in as nicely as the rest. Gary Clark Jr is new to me and man, I like him!.....Buddy Guy's band members (not on this show) are playing at my car show this July 8, you're all invited....Democrats and Republicans.....cheers, mark

Click here: "In Performance at the White House" (PBS):

<http://www.pbs.org/inperformanceatthewhitehouse/>.

[20120228-18](#) 21:56 SteveB Re: Video: Blues at the White House! (reply to Mark, above)

THIS IS JUST SO VERY, VERY COOL!!! GREAT, HAPPY MUSIC. WONDERFUL TO SEE BARRY SING!

Thanks, Mark!

I'll take my POTUS over Mr. Roboto or Mr. Satan any day or night.

LONG LIVE THE BLUES!

20120228-13

19:33 Art

Global Warming Mind-Changing Experiment & "The Great Carbon Bubble: Why the Fossil Fuel Industry Fights So Hard"

Little experiment I am running. This guy and I go back to Desert Storm, when I was the G-5 of VII Corps and he commanded a civil affairs brigade that was attached to us. We became pretty good friends and devised a rather innovative way to manage civil affairs actions in Desert Storm. Got us both quite a bit of internal recognition.

Bob and I have remained distant friends since the war and see each other once a year at our annual reunions. Last Saturday he and his brother and I got into a short discussion on global warming. Although we had never discussed politics previously, I could quickly tell they were both ardent Republicans and President Obama haters. They, especially the brother, really got very heated very fast. They both seem the stereotypes of the Republicans identified in that recent article who simply deny the facts of a matter. I am going to continue to push this and we will see where it goes. The interesting thing is these folks are not bad people but they are absolutely fixed in their beliefs.

Thought you might enjoy.

Pam, the quote from the "right wing friend" is TerryP, whom I often despair of but who may be turning a bit.

From: rbeahm

To: Art

Sent: 2/28/2012 1:09:41 P.M. Eastern Standard Time

I enjoyed Saturday night and look forward to some golf. I will get a copy of the book you referenced. There may, in fact, be a warming trend, but I'm not even convinced of that. If there is a warming trend, I'm certainly not convinced it's man made. This year has only been the seventh warmest winter on record. The warmest were in the '30s. The earth's climate has continually cycled forever.

From: Art

To: rbeahm

Sent: Tuesday, February 28, 2012 11:10 AM

Hi Bob. Just wanted to say thanks again and say again what a great talk you gave. Really thought it hit the mark about this Memorial Service being the only "Wall" these guys will ever have.

Sorry we didn't get a chance to chat a bit more but that little start off crisis kept me busy. I also didn't mean to touch a third rail when I mentioned climate change but I am interested to hear other positions. I have really been digging into this for the past few years and the more I learn the more concerned I have become. There are many scientific articles and books out but the most readable I have seen so far is "Six Degrees" by Mark Lynas. It was written in 2008, so a bit older, but still seems right on the mark. If you could find time to read it, I'd value your take.

Both you and your brother seemed to be pretty knowledgeable on the subject and diametrically opposed to the idea that there is a problem and I am curious as to why. If bright accomplished guys like the two of you don't see it, then what am I reading that is wrong? At any rate, if you have the time and could send me the opposing scientific facts, I would be really grateful. Maybe we can discuss during a round of golf. Winter is getting to be the best time to play these days.

I think my current position is best described by a somewhat politically oriented right wing friend:

"The global warming analogy.....I would rather trust the scientific evidence supporting the theory of global warming, of which I know little about, and find out 50 years from now that it was all bunko science, than find out 50 years from now that it is too late to reverse the environmental collapse."

The below article just forwarded to me the other day. The picture is a satellite shot of North America on 1 JAN 2012.

"The Great Carbon Bubble: Why the Fossil Fuel Industry Fights So Hard" by Bill McKibben, TomDispatch

Feb. 7, 2012, (<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2012/02/07-2>)

20120228-14 20:35 Pam Re: Global Warming Mind-Changing Experiment (reply to Art, above)

Winter is the best time to play golf. Right. It doesn't matter who or what caused global warming; the science proves that it is happening. If we keep adding carbon to the atmosphere, we will burn ourselves off the face of the earth. Then it won't matter whose fault it was, because there will be no one left to blame. I know this sounds apocalyptic, but that's just where we're headed: apocalypse. Of course climate changes in the normal course of geologic ages, but we live here, now, and what we're doing is despoiling our climate here, now. Even the scientists who were supposedly doubters of climate change now admit it is real. I think your friends are in what's called denial. I will be very interested to hear what they have to say. Don't let them wriggle off the hook.

20120228-15 21:04 SteveB Re: Global Warming Mind-Changing Experiment (reply to Art, above)

More power to ya, Art. I wish you the best in this endeavor. The results might tell us all if logic is possible with some of our, shall we say, "contrarian" friends, many of whom we still love dearly.

I'm sure you'll find plenty of help and resources (or good argument) from Friends of the Middle.

20120228-16 21:21 SteveG "Why Does America Lead the World in School Shootings?"

The US is # 1 in school shootings. Another scary statistic.

"Why Does America Lead the World in School Shootings?" by Frank Ochberg, CNN

Feb. 28, 2012, (http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2012/02/28/why-does-america-lead-the-world-in-school-shootings/?hpt=hp_t3)

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/themes/adventure-travel/dive-into-the-big-blue/?intaffil=lpemail>

Great Blue Hole, Belize



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

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Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
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