



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #85 — MAR. 1, 2012

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History Lessons for Christian Zealots

(posted by SteveG, Mar. 1, 2012)

One of the great benefits of having an opportunity to reflect on history (and I don't mean the tear soaked diatribes of Glenn Beck) is to really stand back and understand that there are reasons why the pious religionists have done far more damage than good. Right now we have the power hungry playing on the emotions of the weak and uneducated to hand them the reins to the future – where their "religious virtue" will triumph – yea, right – like it has done in the past. And this article doesn't take into account why people were in a hurry to get away from the Inquisitional residue of religion in England and Europe. Before we vote in a group of people who idolize Pat Robertson, Dobson and the other "Popes" of the evangelical hierarchy, ask just what agenda these lunatics have in mind. They are simply the western version of the Taliban, drunk with power from faith based funding and what they squeeze out of their delusional followers. True, big money supports them because big money has bought them. I don't get tears in my eyes when I look at their objectives, nor their attitudes toward the future. Please pass this on to stir up more debate and light on the subject. —White Crow

"5 Great Moments in History That Could Teach Christian Zealots Important Lessons" by Rob Boston, AlterNet

Feb. 29, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/154330/>)

Republican presidential hopeful Rick Santorum says John F. Kennedy's strong defense of church-state separation makes him want to "throw up." His rival on the campaign trail, Newt Gingrich, frequently knocks "secular elites" who supposedly yearn to tear down America's great Christian heritage. Meanwhile, Mitt Romney, a Mormon whose faith is not well understood by many Americans, would seem likely to benefit from an embrace of church-state separation, but fear of angering Religious Right voters keeps him from doing it.

It seems these days that a lot of public figures are wary of endorsing the separation of church and state. They shouldn't be: The principle is as American as apple pie and has long roots in our nation.

Of course, church-state separation and the religious and philosophical freedom it gives us didn't just happen in America. It was all part of a long process, an evolution of attitudes over many years. There were plenty of bumps along the way, and lots of people weren't convinced that dividing religion and government was the way to go – and some still aren't today.

There have been many crucial moments in America's church-state history, some of which took place before we were officially a nation. Here are five of the most significant.

1. The Flushing Remonstrance (1657):

Back in the day when New York was New Amsterdam, it was a good idea to belong to the state-established Dutch Reformed Church. In fact, other religions were banned in the colony, and failing to show the proper degree of government-approved piety could land you behind bars. Everyone had to pay church taxes, and the law mandated that all children be baptized in the Reformed Church.

New Amsterdam's leaders had a special antipathy toward Quakers. Members of that faith were barred from even entering the colony, and anyone who came across a Quaker was expected to turn him over to the authorities. Steep fines were levied on those who harbored Quakers.

In light of these strict laws, what happened in 1657 is nothing short of remarkable. Thirty residents of the village of Flushing (now part of Queens) sent a letter to Peter Stuyvesant, director of the colony, telling him to let up on the Quakers.

The signers argued that religious persecution wasn't in keeping with Christian theology, and they boldly closed their letter by vowing to protect Quakers. Wrote the signers, "Therefore if any of these said persons come in love unto us, we cannot in conscience lay violent hands upon them, but give them free egress and regress unto our Town, and houses, as God shall persuade our consciences, for we are bounde by the law of God and man to doe good unto all men and evil to noe man."

It should be noted that none of the signers were themselves Quakers. They were arguing for the rights of others. Not surprisingly, this didn't go down too well. Some of the signers were thrown into jail and ordered to recant. Locked in filthy, vermin-ridden cells, they did so – at least on paper. Who knows what was really in their hearts?

The Remonstrance proved to be ahead of its time, but the signers were vindicated when religious liberty was ensured in the Bill of Rights in 1791.

2. James Madison's Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments (1785):

Patrick Henry was a fiery patriot famous for uttering the line, "Give me liberty or give me death!" But there was one area where Henry could not break with the British: All of his life, he argued in favor of church-state union.

James Madison disagreed. And when Henry proposed a bill in 1785 to require all Virginians to pay a tax to support "teachers of the Christian religion," Madison swung into action. The diminutive Virginian penned the "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments," one of the greatest documents in American church-state history.

Madison's Memorial and Remonstrance is essentially a list of 15 reasons why no one should be forced to pay taxes to support religion. The broadside circulated throughout the state, and petitions flooded the Virginia legislature demanding the defeat of the Henry bill. It was rejected.

What's amazing about Madison's document is that its arguments remain so relevant today, in this age of "faith-based" initiatives and demands for vouchers to fund religious schools.

Consider Point 5:

[T]he Bill implies either that the Civil Magistrate is a competent Judge of Religious Truth; or that he may employ Religion as an engine of Civil policy. The first is an arrogant pretension falsified by the contradictory opinions of Rulers in all ages, and throughout the world: the second an unhallowed perversion of the means of salvation.

Point 7 is also powerful:

[E]xperience witnesseth that ecclesiastical establishments, instead of maintaining the purity and efficacy of Religion, have had a contrary operation. During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the Clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution.

After the defeat of the Henry bill, Madison used the momentum he gained to push Thomas Jefferson's Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom through the legislature in 1786. The bill disestablished the Anglican Church in Virginia and ensured that no resident "shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities."

Historians agree that the Virginia struggle reverberated nationally. Five years later, Madison helped draft the First Amendment, writing church-state separation into the federal constitution.

3. George Washington's Letter to Touro Synagogue (1790):

Jews were uncertain of their status in the new nation of the United States of America. Even after the revolution, many states retained established Christian churches, and some states even barred non-Christians from holding public office.

In 1790, one year before the Bill of Rights was adopted, members of Touro Synagogue in Newport, RI, wrote to President George Washington to express their support for complete religious freedom.

Washington's reply is a classic of religious liberty. He didn't say that America was a "Christian nation." He didn't tell the Jews that they could expect toleration but little else. Instead, Washington assured the members of the synagogue that they need have no fears, and he assured them that they were valued members in the American experiment of freedom of conscience. Washington wrote:

The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

Religious Right activists who believe that Washington favored an officially Christian America must find this letter vexing. Their vision was of a nation that favored Christianity by law but that might deign to extend toleration to other faiths. The father of our country explicitly rejected this vision in his missive.

4. Thomas Jefferson's Letter to the Danbury Baptists (1802):

Although the Bill of Rights was adopted in 1791, it wasn't made binding on the states until Congress passed the 14th Amendment after the Civil War. After the Revolution, Connecticut retained its established church, Congregationalism. Members of other religions were compelled to support the church through taxation and were harassed in other ways.

Members of the Danbury Baptist Association were aware that Thomas Jefferson was a champion of religious liberty; they also knew Jefferson wrote the law that ended Virginia's state-established church. In 1801, the Baptists wrote to Jefferson to thank him and express their hope that his view of religious freedom would someday come to Connecticut.

Jefferson knew his reply would become public and decided to use it to make a pronouncement on his views about church-state relations. He consulted with two members of his cabinet before sending the letter, revising and editing as he went along.

Jefferson's response, dated Jan. 1, 1802, is rightly famous for this passage:

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, thus building a wall of separation between Church & State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties.

Our third president's "wall" metaphor has infuriated the Religious Right over the years, and they have labored in vain to dismiss the letter as a mere courtesy reply. The history of the document shows that the opposite was true: In a cover memo to Attorney General Levi Lincoln, Jefferson said he hoped his reply would assist in "sowing useful truths and principles among the people, which might germinate and become rooted among their political tenets."

5. John F. Kennedy's Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association (1960):

This is the speech that makes Rick Santorum nauseous. It wouldn't if he had a real appreciation for religious tolerance in America.

John F. Kennedy had to deal with a great deal of anti-Catholic prejudice during the 1960 presidential campaign. Rumors circulated that a Catholic president could not put loyalty to America above Rome, and some feared JFK would seek to impose Catholic doctrine on a nation that was still culturally Protestant.

With polls showing Kennedy running neck and neck with Richard M. Nixon, the Massachusetts senator decided to tackle the matter head on. He entered the lions' den and arranged to deliver a major address on religion to a collection of Protestant ministers in Houston.

The Sept. 12, 1960 speech, strongly worded and deftly delivered, is today remembered as both a turning point in the 1960 campaign and a powerful affirmation of tolerance and church-state separation. Asserted Kennedy, "I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute – where no Catholic prelate would tell the President, should he be Catholic, how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote – where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference – and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the President who might appoint him or the people who might elect him.

He continued, "I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish – where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the Pope, the National Council of Churches or any other ecclesiastical source – where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials – and where religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all."

During his presidency, Kennedy put those words into action. He rejected demands from the Catholic hierarchy to extend tax aid to Catholic schools, and when the Supreme Court struck down mandatory school prayer in 1962, Kennedy reminded people that they could pray at home. Kennedy's full-throttle endorsement of church-state separation and his vow to put the interests of the people ahead of church dogma still infuriates today's budding theocrats.

Separation of church and state isn't always respected today. Plenty of Religious Right activists, TV preachers and even politicians blast it. They should know that when they assail a principle that has given our nation a greater degree of religious liberty than any other people, they're at odds with our history.

The current flock of GOP candidates might understand that if they spent less time pandering to religious zealots on the campaign trail and more time reading documents like these.

(Rob Boston is senior policy analyst at Americans United for Separation of Church and State.)

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More signs of the times...



[I am sorry to see Olympia go, though it would be good if Democrats picked-up her seat. She's definitely one of the last true Independents. I love this photo! That look she's giving her fellow Republicans! She can't believe how stupid and stubborn they are. Are they really serious? This is just like the look our cat used to give us when we'd give him a cat food he didn't like. "I can't believe you gave me that, a*s-hole!" Such looks of assured superiority and condemnation! As my mother used to say, "If looks could kill..." –SteveB]

"Maine Sen. Olympia Snowe to Retire in Blow to GOP" by Chris Cillizza and Aaron Blake, *The Washington Post*

Feb. 28, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/post/maine-sen-olympia-snowe-to-retire-in-blow-to-gop/2012/02/28/gIQAkzWkgR_blog.html)

In announcing her plans, Snowe, 65, emphasized that she is in good health and was prepared for the campaign ahead. But she said she was swayed by the increasing polarization in Washington.

"Unfortunately, I do not realistically expect the partisanship of recent years in the Senate to change over the short term," Snowe said in a statement. "So at this stage of my tenure in public service, I have concluded that I am not prepared to commit myself to an additional six years in the Senate, which is what a fourth term would entail."

Snowe's retirement represents a major setback for the GOP's efforts to regain a majority in the Senate. As a moderate Republican, she may be the party's only hope to hold a seat in the strongly blue state.

Republicans did get some traction in the state in 2010, including electing Republican Paul LePage as governor.

But in a more neutral political environment, and in a federal race, Democrats will be heavy favorites to steal this seat from Republicans — their best pickup opportunity in the country, for sure.

Snowe's announcement took Republican leaders completely by surprise; she informed Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (Ky.) and National Republican Senatorial Committee Chairman John Cornyn (Texas) of her decision today, according to a person familiar with the decision.

The person noted that Snowe had given no indication that she was doing anything but planning to run an aggressive reelection bid; she had hired Justin Brasell, a renowned Republican operative, to manage her campaign.

One Republican said Snowe had sent an invitation for a fundraiser as late as Monday. [It's like something very specific precipitated her actions. I'd love to know what happened. –SteveB]

Among the names mentioned as possible replacements on the ballot for the GOP: 2002 gubernatorial candidates Peter Cianchette, 2010 gubernatorial candidate Steve Abbott, state Treasurer Bruce Poliquin, state Attorney General Bill Schneider, state Senate President Kevin Raye and Jock McKernan, Snowe's husband and the state's former governor. Businessman Scott D'Amboise was already challenging Snowe in a primary.

On the Democratic side, Reps. Chellie Pingree (D) and Mike Michaud (D) could run, as well as former congressman Tom Allen (D), who unsuccessfully challenged Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) in 2008.

The filing deadline is fast approaching: March 15.

Snowe is known for her independent streak, often voting with Collins against many of her Republican colleagues. According to the just-released National Journal 2011 vote rankings, only Collins voted with Democrats more than Snowe last year.

The most moderate Democrat in the Senate — Sen. Ben Nelson (D-Neb.) — is also retiring.

[20120229-02](#) 10:18 Phil Fw: Lemon Picker

For your comedic relief:

[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com says this is definitely NOT true! :-)] –SteveB]

Sally Mullihan of Coral Springs, Florida decided to take one of the jobs that most Americans are not willing to do.

The woman applying for a job in a Florida lemon grove seemed to be far too qualified for the job.

She had a liberal arts degree from the University of Michigan and had worked as a social worker and school teacher.

The foreman frowned and said, "I have to ask you, have you had any actual experience in picking lemons?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I have! I've been divorced three times, owned two Chryslers and voted for Obama."

[20120229-07](#) 11:38 SteveB Re: Lemon Picker (reply to Phil, above)

PHILLIP! I'm giving you that look! (See above.)

[20120229-03](#) 10:41 Pam Re: Republican Politics, the Decline & Dick Lugar (reply to MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #84)

It's great to see you on here, MarthaH. I always enjoy hearing about Indiana politics, because in North Carolina we never know about anything that isn't happening in Raleigh. I haven't lived in Greencastle in a long time, but I still feel I have roots there.

I'm reading Howard Zinn's *History of the United States* as we speak. Incredible. Perhaps it's merely a matter of perception, but doesn't it seem like the Right is always in your face with their opinions and hatreds, yet the so-called Left is ignored by everyone who's not a liberal or a progressive? I'm so aware of them. I don't think they are as aware of us, only what they think we are (by "we" I mean smart, thoughtful people). Tea-baggers are essentially absolutists; they would have rallied around the French king in the 18th c. I don't see them as analogous to the peasants, certainly not to the intellectuals in the Revolution. I don't defend the excesses of the French Revolution--it's the kind of political extremism we all want to avoid--but I hope that, just as in 1793, our government is also moving in the direction of increased freedom, not loyalty oaths and witch hunts. They called Robespierre "The Incorruptible." Sanitary Santorum is cut from similar cloth. Sincerity is no argument.

20120229-04	10:48	Art	Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #84)
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If all those kids in that school had been "carryin'" this wouldn't have happened. What we really need is more guns in the hands of kids. Just say'n.

20120229-05	11:05	SteveB	Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to Art, above)
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ARTHUR! (See the [look](#), above.)

20120229-06	11:29	Pam	Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to Art, above)
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I know a lot of you fellas own guns, and I never expect America to be gun-free. I'm not even sure that would be a good thing. I have heard NO ONE calling for a ban on guns, yet the NRA carries on as if they were under siege by a despotic government. Why do they think automatic rifles and heavy weapons are necessary or desirable? What is their objection to adequate gun registration (we register our cars), adequate control of access to guns (we require a driver's license), and a limit to how many guns an individual can buy at one time? None of those safeguards infringe in any way on the right to bear arms. If they use the slippery slope argument, they should realize that's a logical fallacy. We require prescriptions for drugs. How is getting certified to own a gun any different? Both can be dangerous when used improperly. We recently had a deranged individual go on a shooting spree in our neighborhood. We were evacuated from our house for an entire day while the police used our sunroom for a lookout. Fortunately, no one was hurt, though it took 13 hours for this guy to be subdued; he fought back until the end. How is it that someone as crazy as that was able to stockpile an arsenal in his home in a neighborhood filled with kids and families? We get all in a tizzy whenever a shooting incident like the one in Ohio occurs, but we take no steps to prevent the next one.

20120229-08	15:33	Dennis	Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to Pam, above)
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This is all so perfectly logical that it is pointless as an argument with the right-wing fanatics who intimidate Congress. If Jim Brady couldn't convince Congress to pass minimal legislation, such as banning military assault weapons, then all appeals to sanity are just blowing in the wind.

"Washington, D.C. — U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder has stated that the Obama administration would like to resurrect the Clinton ban on semi-automatic firearms, as well as other gun control laws... According to a recent poll conducted by The O'Leary Report and Zogby International, a vast majority of the American voting public disagrees." (from "New Poll Finds Majority of American Voters Don't Fault U.S. Gun Laws for Mexican Drug Violence" by Brad O'Leary, Mar. 30, 2009, <http://archives.hawaiireporter.com/storyPrint.aspx?4167be41-f79e-4803-af58-e2a43e32900d>)

America historically is a violent country and is absolutely determined to stay that way. So it's best to stay out of the woods during hunting season, out of Texas bars at all times, and if you have to go to school, better wear your Kevlar vest (now on sale @ <http://www.safeguardclothing.com/15-bullet-proof-vests?gclid=CPXr0Yj2w64CFe4DQAodb1RB5g>).

[20120229-09](#) 15:38 Art Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to all, above)

I was joking of course but I'll bet money some NRA nimrod has already penned the same thing. As Pam says much better, when are we going to wake up and realize people with guns kill people, a lot? Solution, get guns under control.

[20120229-11](#) 17:38 Pam Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to all, above)

There are days when I don't think much of human nature.

[20120229-12](#) 19:13 SteveG Re: We're #1 (in School Shootings) (reply to all, above)

When we lived in Crawfordsville, IN, the estimate of people out at night with hand guns was 200 (population about 15,000). In Yakima the number has to be higher – 22 homicides last year down from 29 the previous year. Police here tend to shoot first and ask questions later.

[20120229-10](#) 16:17 SteveB Re: Global Warming Mind-Changing Experiment (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #84)

Here are a couple of little things:

<http://www.cosmosmagazine.com/features/print/4376/merchants-doubt>

<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2011/12/02/1041875/-Pew:-Dems,-Indies-Moderate-Repubs-Agree-Global-Warming-is-Real>

<http://news.msu.edu/media/documents/2011/04/593fe28b-fbc7-4a86-850a-2fe029dbeb41.pdf>

<http://mediamatters.org/research/201112190006>

Good luck! May the Force be with you.

[20120229-13](#) 20:24 SteveG "Bonus Withdrawal Puts Bankers in 'Malaise'"

The "poor" 1% (Boo-hoo-hoo!)

Don't you just feel sorry for them?

"Bonus Withdrawal Puts Bankers in 'Malaise'" by Max Abelson, Bloomberg

Feb 29, 2012, (<http://finance.yahoo.com/news/bonus-withdrawal-puts-bankers-malaise-050100338.html>)

Andrew Schiff was sitting in a traffic jam in California this month after giving a speech at an investment conference about gold. He turned off the satellite radio, got out of the car and screamed a profanity.

"I'm not Zen at all, and when I'm freaking out about the situation, where I'm stuck like a rat in a trap on a highway with no way to get out, it's very hard," Schiff, director of marketing for broker-dealer Euro Pacific Capital Inc., said in an interview.

Schiff, 46, is facing another kind of jam this year: Paid a lower bonus, he said the \$350,000 he earns, enough to put him in the country's top 1 percent by income, doesn't cover his family's private-school tuition, a Kent, Connecticut, summer rental and the upgrade they would like from their 1,200-square-foot Brooklyn duplex.

"I feel stuck," Schiff said. "The New York that I wanted to have is still just beyond my reach."

The smaller bonus checks that hit accounts across the financial-services industry this month are making it difficult to maintain the lifestyles that Wall Street workers expect, according to interviews with bankers and their accountants, therapists, advisers and headhunters.

"People who don't have money don't understand the stress," said Alan Dlugash, a partner at accounting firm Marks Paneth & Shron LLP in New York who specializes in financial planning for the wealthy. "Could you imagine what it's like to say I got three kids in private school, I have to think about pulling them out? How do you do that?"

Bonus Caps

Facing a slump in revenue from investment banking and trading, Wall Street firms have trimmed 2011 discretionary pay. At Goldman Sachs Group Inc. (GS) and Barclays Capital, the cuts were at least 25 percent. Morgan Stanley (MS) capped cash bonuses at \$125,000, and Deutsche Bank AG (DBK) increased the percentage of deferred pay.

"It's a disaster," said Ilana Weinstein, chief executive officer of New York-based search firm IDW Group LLC. "The entire construct of compensation has changed."

Most people can only dream of Wall Street's shrinking paychecks. Median household income in 2010 was \$49,445, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, lower than the previous year and less than 1 percent of Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein's \$7 million restricted-stock bonus for 2011. The percentage of Americans living in poverty climbed to 15.1 percent, the highest in almost two decades.

House of Mirth

Comfortable New Yorkers assessing their discomforts is at least as old as Edith Wharton's 1905 novel *The House of Mirth*, whose heroine Lily Bart said "the only way not to think about money is to have a great deal of it."

Wall Street headhunter Daniel Arbeeney said his "income has gone down tremendously." On a recent Sunday, he drove to Fairway Market in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn to buy discounted salmon for \$5.99 a pound.

"They have a circular that they leave in front of the buildings in our neighborhood," said Arbeeney, 49, who lives in nearby Cobble Hill, namesake for a line of pebbled-leather Kate Spade handbags. "We sit there, and I look through all of them to find out where it's worth going."

Executive-search veterans who work with hedge funds and banks make about \$500,000 in good years, said Arbeeney, managing principal at New York-based CMF Partners LLC, declining to discuss specifics about his own income. He said he no longer goes on annual ski trips to Whistler (WB), Tahoe or Aspen.

He reads other supermarket circulars to find good prices for his favorite cereal, Wheat Chex.

"Wow, did I waste a lot of money," Arbeeney said.

\$17,000 on Dogs

Richard Scheiner, 58, a real-estate investor and hedge-fund manager, said most people on Wall Street don't save.

"When their means are cut, they're stuck," said Scheiner, whose New York-based hedge fund, Lane Gate Partners LLC, was down about 15 percent last year. "Not so much an issue for me and my wife because we've always saved."

Scheiner said he spends about \$500 a month to park one of his two Audis in a garage and at least \$7,500 a year each for memberships at the Trump National Golf Club in Westchester and a gun club in upstate New York. A labradoodle named Zelda and a rescued bichon frise, Duke, cost \$17,000 a year, including food, health care, boarding and a daily dog-walker who charges \$17 each per outing, he said.

Still, he sold two motorcycles he didn't use and called his Porsche 911 Carrera 4S Cabriolet "the Volkswagen of supercars." He and his wife have given more than \$100,000 to a nonprofit she founded that promotes employment for people with Asperger syndrome, he said.

'Crushing Setback'

Scheiner pays \$30,000 a year to be part of a New York-based peer-learning group for investors called Tiger 21. Founder Michael Sonnenfeldt said members, most with a net worth of at least \$10 million, have been forced to "reexamine lots of assumptions about how grand their life would be."

While they aren't asking for sympathy, "at their level, in a different way but in the same way, the rug got pulled out," said Sonnenfeldt, 56. "For many people of wealth, they've had a crushing setback as well."

He described a feeling of "malaise" and a "paralysis that does not allow one to believe that generally things are going to get better," listing geopolitical hot spots such as Iran and low interest rates that have been "artificially manipulated" by the Federal Reserve.

Poly Prep

The malaise is shared by Schiff, the New York-based marketing director for Euro Pacific Capital, where his brother is CEO. His family rents the lower duplex of a brownstone in Cobble Hill, where his two children share a room. His 10-year-old daughter is a student at \$32,000-a-year Poly Prep Country Day School in Brooklyn. His son, 7, will apply in a few years.

"I can't imagine what I'm going to do," Schiff said. "I'm crammed into 1,200 square feet. I don't have a dishwasher. We do all our dishes by hand."

He wants 1,800 square feet -- "a room for each kid, three bedrooms, maybe four," he said. "Imagine four bedrooms. You have the luxury of a guest room, how crazy is that?"

The family rents a three-bedroom summer house in Connecticut and will go there again this year for one month instead of four. Schiff said he brings home less than \$200,000 after taxes, health-insurance and 401(k) contributions. The closing costs, renovation and down payment on one of the \$1.5 million 17-foot-wide row houses nearby, what he called "the low rung on the brownstone ladder," would consume "every dime" of the family's savings, he said.

"I wouldn't want to whine," Schiff said. "All I want is the stuff that I always thought, growing up, that successful parents had."

Vegas, Ibiza

Hans Kullberg, 27, a trader at Wyckoff, New Jersey-based hedge fund Falcon Management Corp. who said he earns about \$150,000 a year, is adjusting his sights, too.

After graduating from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania in 2006, he spent a \$10,000 signing bonus from Citigroup Inc. (C) on a six-week trip to South America. He worked on an emerging-markets team at the bank that traded and marketed synthetic collateralized debt obligations.

His tastes for travel got "a little bit more lavish," he said. Kullberg, a triathlete, went to a bachelor party in Las Vegas in January after renting a four-bedroom ski cabin at Bear Mountain in California as a Christmas gift to his parents. He went to Ibiza for another bachelor party in August, spending \$3,000 on a three-day trip, including a 15-minute ride from the airport that cost \$100. In May he spent 10 days in India.

Wet T-Shirt

Earlier this month, a friend invited him on a trip to Mardi Gras in New Orleans. The friend was going to be a judge in a wet T-shirt contest, Kullberg said. He turned down the offer.

It wouldn't have been "the most financially prudent thing to do," he said. "I'm not totally sure about what I'm going to get paid this year, how I'm going to be doing."

He thinks more about the long term, he said, and plans to buy a foreclosed two-bedroom house in Charlotte, North Carolina, for \$50,000 next month.

M. Todd Henderson, a University of Chicago law professor who's teaching a seminar on executive compensation, said the suffering is relative and real. He wrote two years ago that his family was "just getting by" on more than \$250,000 a year, setting off what he called a firestorm of criticism.

"Yes, terminal diseases are worse than getting the flu," he said. "But you suffer when you get the flu."

'Have to Cut'

Dlugash, the accountant, said he's spending more time talking with Wall Street clients about their expenses.

"You don't necessarily have to cut that -- but if you don't cut that, then you've got to cut this," he said. "They say, 'But I can't.' And I say, 'But you must.'"

One banker who owes Dlugash \$20,000 gained the accountant's sympathy despite his six-figure pay.

"If you're making \$50,000 and your salary gets down to \$40,000 and you have to cut, it's very severe to you," Dlugash said. "But it's no less severe to these other people with these big numbers."

A Wall Street executive who made 10 times that amount and now has declining income along with a divorce, private school tuitions and elderly parents also suffers, he said.

"These people never dreamed they'd be making \$500,000 a year," he said, "and dreamed even less that they'd be broke."

[Gee! And we've been told so often by those on the Right that rich individuals are somehow superior to the rest of us, and smarter. LOL!!! Welcome to the real world, a*s-holes! -SteveB]

20120229-14 22:18 Dick Video: The Candy Man

SteveG

http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?feature=player_embedded&v=5u03KAcEbEo#%21

20120229-15 22:26 SteveB Re: The Candy Man (reply to Dick, above)

I hate to do this three times in one day, but...

Richard! (Yer gettin' "the look" too.) :-)

20120229-16 11:59 SteveB Photo: Santa Cruz Cathedral
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<http://ac-frieden.travellerspoint.com/3/>

Basilica Menor de San Lorenzo, Santa Cruz, Bolivia



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

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