



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #136 — MAY 11, 2012

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

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Once Upon a Time...

(posted by MarthaH, May 11, 2012)

...[Mr. Mourdock's] embrace of an unrelenting partisan mindset is irreconcilable with my philosophy of governance and my experience of what brings results for Hoosiers in the Senate. In effect, what he has promised in this campaign is reflexive votes for a rejectionist orthodoxy and rigid opposition to the actions and proposals of the other party. —Sen. Richard Lugar

To say I have been reflecting about politics is to say the obvious, but the Lugar defeat has added to the muse. Here are some thoughts on my time with his name.

To say I was smitten during my college years by the man who dared to combine city and county government is putting it mildly. My favorite political science professor took us to his office, and I was looking for mental dust bunnies to absorb while we visited! It was a time when the Goldwater people were at one end of the spectrum, including Indiana, of course! I see now that his daring to step up and LEAD was something unique in the spectrum of Hoosier politics even more as time passes. For many class sessions for my students when I crammed in local government for them, I raved at his foresightedness. He was a liberal Hoosier Republican to dare to try it, cleverly--in Rhodes Scholar form--omitting the politics of school or police/fire consolidation which still fires fierce debate and retains its issues...When Nixon chose Agnew, I wrote the mayor asking why. He wrote back about my "perceptive" letter, but he rode the fence as a loyalist.

Some place along the years, he went Right and I went left...at least by my observations and standards, he did. I admit it! Whether it was conviction or politics on his part, I will never truly know. A big part of it was, I am convinced, his rigid, Rhodes brain that had the focus of what was right forever...not a changing world. And sadly, I think that fits with the Right, don't you? In teaching I learned through devil's advocacy that my thoughts evolved on many issues. Probably the race catalyst was the Little Rock news followed by southern race riots and vivid images that burned my soul on the evening news. It was Wrong... and having not observed the discrimination in my life first-hand, I began my shift. I now, of course, know it was there, but I didn't feel it at GHS.

Lugar, however, became a senator and served his constituents in his fashion. I was proud that he became a leader, and he was well-spoken, if not formal and stiff. His stand on nuke proliferation and Soviet compliance with various warhead, etc., issues made me proud. I could contact his office about various things and receive answers or help. Then came Zippergate where I broke with him completely. "IF you vote to impeach a president about lying about sex, I won't vote for you again." He did, I didn't. When I retired and the insurance premiums skyrocketed, I wrote YEARLY to all the relevant politicians in DC, receiving THE SAME, meaningless, form letter from one of his aides...one that answered none of my questions or acknowledged my facts, blah, blah, blah. I know how that

works--from being an intern in the legislature! I even called him/them out by name the next year. (But others never sent at least a form letter!)

Tuesday, to say my piece about the Teabagger stupidity, I broke my promise not to vote for him ever again and crossed over, a last vote for Indiana's favorite mayor. He finally made an impassioned Friday plea when announced at -10% in the polls! Now we have reality anyway, 60% of 20% who even voted voted NO on the issue of his next term! Too little acknowledgement of changing tides was his problem, although I know he wasn't going to embrace Teabagger ideas ever! The information and statistics on all that are readily available...this is personal.

I attended his announcement and speech back in the day. I told my professor to tell him he had to speak like a common man to appeal to the voters. He kept pleading this time that he "did what senators do--help constituents." He never got into the Good Old Boy campaigner...now tottering along when he used to jog and join in some fun...age catching up, demeanor not altered to appeal to "modern" politics. That he stood his ground, even when it was not mine, meant he was given the 77% conservative badge so that he was "Obama's favorite Republican" was a philosophical lie of sorts...(I begged for his common sense with our side of the aisle), he voted the opposite. Only the Far Right said that he was in cahoots with the President!

The President's management style was as consensus builder from his community leader years; that meant reaching across the aisle with Lugar on some issues and also learning about foreign affairs from a respected and knowledgeable senior senator, natural and...one smart guy teaching another. To the radicals, that was a kiss of political death. All you have to do to see who was ticked off is see the list of contributors to his successful opponent, \$4.5 million to win a primary...and surely that didn't include all the negative ads inflicted upon us...

Maybe Senator Lugar should have retired at 80 rather than run for 6 more years, but he didn't. It wasn't about age, it was about a perverted sense of governance by Teabaggers that we will all have to live with. Now the Hoosier Republican Party is "uniting" behind him, but Lugar did not call to concede to him. Good for Lugar. It was brutal and hurtful. He ended up replying in kind, nothing I ever thought he'd do! Lugar's parting letter was obviously prepared in advance, and I will close my book on him with his observations. I agree on some comments, but the writing on the wall was his to see. And he didn't. They said he was told, but he chose to do it his way. Don't we all!

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20120510-01	09:00	Pam	Re: Once Upon a Time... (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Thank you for sending this, Martha. It is so thoughtful and well-written. Unlike most Americans, you understand the complexity of politics and of human nature. I'm sure you made a huge difference in your students' lives, and I'm glad we're back in touch.

20120510-03	09:56	Art	Re: Once Upon a Time... (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Let's all vote for Martha. This is what we need in politics.

20120510-10	15:07	SteveB	Re: Once Upon a Time... (reply to MarthaH, above)
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I love this, Martha. Please let me put it on the front page tomorrow? If not, that's perfectly OK, but that's where it belongs, so let me know, OK? Your writing is exactly what we try to do here when we are at our best...to try to explain why.

[20120510-12](#) 15:26 Pam Re: Once Upon a Time... (reply to all, above)

I second that.

[20120510-02](#) 09:07 Pam Re: Re: Photo: Greencastle "Buzz Bomb" (reply to Pam, FotM Newsletter #135)

Moore's bar is still there, though we didn't go. We did go out to the Double Decker, but it wasn't the day for fried chicken livers, my all-time fave. I went with my brother and niece, and we drove through our old neighborhood, up and down Seminary and Anderson Streets, and around the square before heading out to the cemetery for a visit to our family graves. Everything looks much the same as it did the last time I was there 15 years ago. Now that I am reconnected with my nieces, maybe I'll make it back to Indiana more often. There's a long story there, but I won't bore you with it. Suffice it to say, my sister-in-law is the bitch of the world.

My brother hates that buzz bomb, always has, always will, I guess. I don't think about it much one way or the other. Greencastle was a great place to grow up, but I'm so glad I don't live there now. I was eager to get away, and when I had to move back TWICE because of employment and financial difficulties (my ex- was a piece of work), I felt it as a failure. A quick visit is quite enough for me.

[20120510-04](#) 10:35 Charis "Travel Insurance for Bolivia?"

"Travel Insurance for Bolivia?" by BoliviaBella

May 10, 2012, (<http://networkedblogs.com/xu1qV>)

It's sad, but true. Travel insurance is the last thing any of us think we'll ever need. But during recent years, Bolivia has been in the news for all the wrong reasons, and some of them have just become too serious to ignore.

This is not a scare tactic. BoliviaBella highlights the beautiful and positive aspects of traveling or living in Bolivia. But there are things you need to be aware of for your own safety when you travel Bolivia and it would be irresponsible not to mention them. We partnered with World Nomads as it is recommended by Lonely Planet, Footprint Travel Guides, National Geographic Adventure, and other highly respected travel sites, to offer you a trusted travel insurance option. Here's why:

5 deplorable safety concerns

1. Bolivian roads are awful and not well-maintained and Bolivian drivers often don't have licenses, drive drunk, or drive too fast. Nearly 200 people died in bus and biking accidents just in 2010 on various Bolivian roads, and a similar number in 2011. Tourists have at times been involved. Tour vehicles are also often not safe. This horrifying story more than any other, compelled us to take travel insurance more seriously. [Click here to view more Bolivia travel tips.](#)
2. Bolivia thrives on offering adventure tourism. Tours like the Death Road bicycle tour and Uyuni tours have resulted in several tourist deaths. Never underestimate how remote and distant some tourist attractions in Bolivia are (medical centers can be hours away) and may be poorly equipped. Tour operators often do not offer safety features or emergency plans. Learn to demand your tour operator provide safety guarantees.
3. Crime is on the rise. Bolivia has always had a problem with pickpockets and the theft of cameras, backpacks and other items. But during the past 3 years these and drug-related crimes have skyrocketed. In

addition, crimes directed at foreigners, such as express kidnappings, "pildoritas" (a woman drugs your drink, her accomplice kidnaps you, robs you, then abandons you) and fake police officers demanding your documents, are becoming more frequent in some areas, especially La Paz.

4. Civil unrest is on the rise. The country has been very politically unstable during the past seven years and has seen a serious spike in the number of protests, road blocks, and strikes. For travelers, this means your trip itinerary may change, flights could be cancelled or missed, or your entire trip could be ruined. In 2010 over 100 tourists were stranded for 18 days in the Potosí/Uyuni area behind road blocks and protests. Their embassies could not get food to them or extract them. Be sure to view our Bolivia news page to inform yourself before you travel.

5. Other things that can occur. You could get sick, the airlines could lose your luggage, your trip could get canceled due to weather, natural disasters, etc. In 2012, Bolivia's largest airline fell into financial trouble and its future is uncertain, as are the travel plans of thousands of travelers.

In researching travel insurance options, World Nomads stood out for its flexibility. You can read about it below. However! We only recommend products on this site that we truly believe might add value to your trip. You'll find more international insurance options here. World Nomads is recommended by many of the globally known travel companies like Lonely Planet, National Geographic, Hostelbookers, and others. Read some incredible true claims stories here. See if this is right for you.

Special note for travels in areas affected by war, terrorism, civil unrest and weather

PLEASE NOTE: Be aware, travel insurance policies may have restrictions on cover relating to regions affected by war, terrorism, civil unrest and weather.

Make sure you check the travel advice provided by your government's department of foreign affairs and stay abreast of current events within the mass media while travelling. You must observe any advice provided, as your policy may only cover you if an area is deemed safe to travel by a government's department of foreign affairs. You may not be covered by your travel insurance if advice is given as "do not travel" or restricted to "all but essential travel" in the region you intend to visit. You may also not be covered if you place yourself at risk or if specific advice was issued prior to purchasing your policy.

Please refer to your specific policy wording for more details on any limitations or exclusions to your cover. Should you have any further concerns, please contact WorldNomads.com.

20120510-05	11:33	Bill	"Bruce's History Lessons: The Long, Lost, Last — the 27th —Amendment"
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"Bruce's History Lessons: The Long, Lost, Last — the 27th —Amendment" by Bruce Kauffman, *Terre Haute Tribune-Star*

May 10, 2012, (<http://tribstar.com/schools/x1710449229/BRUCE-S-HISTORY-LESSONS-The-long-lost-last-the-27th-Amendment>)

(TERRE HAUTE, IN) Our very last constitutional amendment — the 27th Amendment — was ratified this week (May 7) in 1992 when Michigan became the 38th state to approve it.

Call it the long, lost, last amendment because it was originally proposed 203 years earlier, in 1789, when it was among the original 12 amendments Congress sent to the states for ratification. The states subsequently approved 10 amendments, which became our Bill of Rights.

The two amendments that the states failed to approve were actually the first two proposed by Congress. The proposed First Amendment dealt with how to determine the size of the House of Representatives.

The proposed Second Amendment — now our 27th — prohibited Congress from voting itself a pay raise without an intervening election.

How an amendment that had been forgotten for 200 years finally became the law of the land is a fascinating story that begins with Gregory Watson, a student at the University of Texas, who was looking for a topic to write a paper on and stumbled across the un-ratified congressional compensation amendment.

He found that of the 11 states needed for ratification in 1789, six had already done so, and in 1873 Ohio had joined them, angered by Congress's huge retroactive pay increase of that year.

Intrigued, Watson wrote a paper on the amendment's history that included an analysis of how to get this long-dead amendment ratified. His teacher, Sharon Waite, was unimpressed and gave him a "C" on the paper, but Watson still believed his cause had merit and so he began writing petitions to state legislatures, arguing his case. Astonishingly, the state of Maine bought his argument in 1983 and Colorado followed suit in 1984.

That caught the attention of state officials in Wyoming, who announced that their state too had previously ratified this amendment — in 1977 — also as a protest against a previous congressional pay raise.

Suddenly, Watson's campaign began picking up national attention and prominent supporters, including Ralph Nader, and by 1989 Watson had 34 of the 38 states needed for ratification. He got two more in 1990, one more in 1991, and finally Michigan beat out New Jersey to become the state that made it official.

Alas, the story of the 27th Amendment has, so far, not had a totally happy ending because Congress has gotten around the amendment by giving itself several pay raises in the guise of cost-of-living adjustments.

As for Sharon Waite, she was later asked if she regretted the "C" she gave Gregory Watson. She responded that she did not remember him, nor could she be expected to since her lecture classes each included some 300 students and she had been lecturing for quite a number of years.

20120510-06	13:49	Pam	Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #135)
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Tuesday was not a stellar day for North Carolina. As the whole world knows, North Carolinians, in their wisdom, voted to add a redundant, unnecessary, ill-conceived amendment to the state constitution. I really thought we had a chance with this one; everyone I know supports gay marriage and made an extra effort to be sure to vote. My son-in-law, who is the next thing to an anarchist, voted in this election because he felt it was a truly democratic opportunity to register his opinion in a way that could matter. The realist in me should have known Amendment One would be approved: it prohibits same-sex marriage AND civil partnerships. Religious folks are entitled to their opinion, and they can eschew gay marriage all they want, but marriage is not just a religious sacrament, it is also a civil contract, and as such it should be available to everyone. Discrimination against the LGBT community is as wrong as segregation and separate-but-equal. In fifty years, hopefully sooner, today's opposition to gay marriage will seem as archaic as the dodo. I'm finding it harder and harder to put up with what America has become, and I fear it's only going to get worse. That Indiana electee Mourdock is a prime example of our political decline. I always caution against name-calling, but that guy is a real jerk. One of my former students, a philosophy PhD, posted a good statement on FB that said essentially that we should respect everyone who deserves it, no matter what their opinions are, but that does not obligate us to respect all opinions. Love the sinner, hate the sin. Isn't it ironic that the folks who proclaim their Christianity the loudest are often the worst Christians.

I read an article today that talks about a political theory that wants to do what eliminates the most suffering, not what promotes the greatest happiness. I like that.

20120510-09	14:57	Dennis	Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Pam, above)
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from Pam:

Religious folks are entitled to their opinion, and they can eschew gay marriage all they want, but marriage is not just a religious sacrament, it is also a civil contract, and as such it should be available to everyone.

While I personally made a mistake in going to Reverend Love's Wedding Chapel at Lake Tahoe in Nevada for my second marriage ceremony, I would point out that there is only a civil contract required by government to be legally married in the U.S.A. Any religious component is purely an additional option. You can definitely get married in America without being in any way religious about it, despite what the delusional Bible-thumpers may believe (by the way, divorce rates are highest among evangelicals).

I might add about my wedding experience above that I nearly gagged when Rev. Love, who strongly resembled Mr. Rogers, commenced with an unexpected religious ceremony. If it hadn't been for a friend who set up the appointment at the chapel, I could have had the deed done by a judge at the Douglas County courthouse where we obtained our license. But Rev. Love and his chapel, filled with Lake Tahoe scenes on velvet, our lesbian friend witness, and the surprise to my Chinese wife of the mention by the reverend of the holy ghost ("what was that part about the ghost?"), does make a good wedding story.

[20120510-11](#) 15:25 Pam Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Dennis, above)

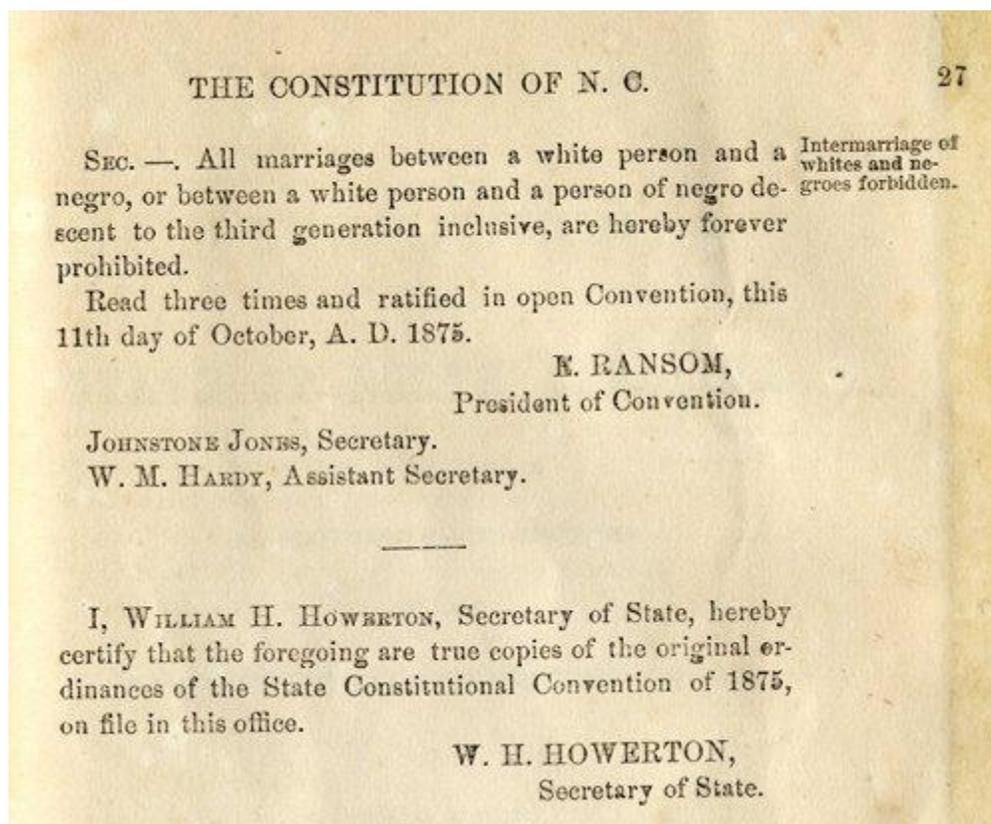
I especially like the ghost part. I've had three weddings, ceremonies, I should say. One with a judge, one with a magistrate, and finally one with a very liberal Methodist chaplain from UNCG. That was the best one, for lots of reasons, one being that there wasn't any religion in it, per our choice.

[20120510-18](#) 17:19 SteveG Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Pam, above)

I know several people who became married in civil ceremonies – judges, justice of the peace, etc. Just as married as anyone else and for a whole lot less money.

20120510-20 18:45 Dennis Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Pam, above)

Pam: Now that the above constitutional provision is no longer enforced in North Carolina (despite it being "forever"), how long will it take for the antigay marriage law to be overturned? And is it still legal to marry your cousin there?



20120510-24 19:35 Pam Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Dennis, above)

I don't know about cousin-marriage, but this relic of the past is very interesting. I have an adopted African American-Vietnamese son and my newly-found biological son is engaged to an African-American woman. I couldn't be prouder.

20120510-25 19:39 SteveG Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Pam, above)

You and your family are cool.

20120510-27 23:57 SteveB Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to all, above)

And I couldn't be prouder of all of you!

20120510-13 15:27 Art Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #135)

You sexist pig, and I haven't gotten beyond the first paragraph :-)

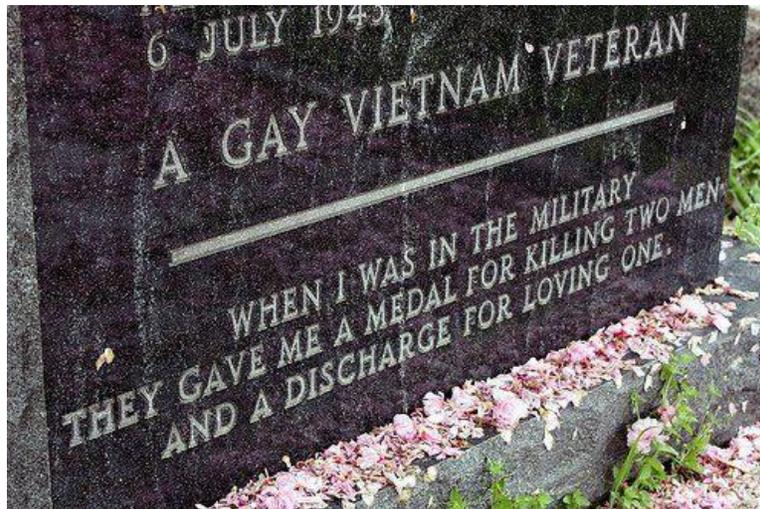
[20120510-15](#) 16:33 SteveB Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to Art, above)

Art, I am NOT a sexist p... Well, OK, maybe a tiny bit sometimes...

[20120510-16](#) 16:35 Art Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to SteveB, above)

Just say'n.

[20120510-21](#) 19:22 SteveG Re: North Carolina Bans Gay Marriage (reply to all, above)



GHANDI'S 7 DANGERS TO HUMAN VIRTUE

- ① WEALTH WITHOUT WORK
- ② PLEASURE WITHOUT CONSCIENCE
- ③ KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT CHARACTER
- ④ BUSINESS WITHOUT ETHICS
- ⑤ SCIENCE WITHOUT HUMANITY
- ⑥ RELIGION WITHOUT SACRIFICE
- ⑦ POLITICS WITHOUT PRINCIPLE

[20120510-17](#) 16:53 SteveB "Obama Comes Out for Same-Sex Marriage"

"Obama Comes Out for Same-Sex Marriage" by Jim Lobe, NationofChange

May 10, 2012 (<http://www.nationofchange.org/obama-comes-out-same-sex-marriage-1336656033>)

("I've always been adamant that gay and lesbian Americans should be treated fairly and equally." —Barack Obama)

U.S. President Barack Obama Wednesday declared his support for same-sex marriage, becoming the first sitting president to do so and thrusting the issue into the center of his campaign for re-election.

Analysts here described Obama's new position as politically risky, a point that was underlined by Tuesday's approval by 60 percent of voters in North Carolina of an amendment to the state constitution affirming that only marriage between a man and a woman is legally recognizable.

North Carolina, a critical swing state in Obama's victory in the 2008 presidential elections, joined 29 other states, including other key battleground states in November, such as Virginia, Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Colorado, with constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriages.

At the same time, however, the move could help mobilize Obama's Democratic base, and the polling during the period of his presidency has shown growing support for gay marriage. A Gallup poll released Tuesday found that 50 percent of respondent's favored legalizing same-sex marriage and 48 percent opposed.

"Many political handicappers won't be able to resist criticizing Obama for picking a fight in the culture-war terrain that evangelical-strumming, Karl Rove-types have been trying to tease out for years," wrote Steve Clemons on his widely read *Atlantic* blog.

"But President Obama is not prone to emotional leaps of faith and knee jerk shifts in policy. Their polls must show that the nation is ready to have this fight - that most independents and Democrats think same-sex marriage should be a civil right," he added.

Asked about Obama's stance, his all-but-certain Republican challenger, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, reaffirmed his opposition to the idea.

"My position is the same on gay marriage as it's been ...from the beginning, and that is that marriage is a relation between a man and a woman," he told a radio interviewer in Denver. "That's the posture that I had as governor and I have that today."

But gay and human rights groups praised Obama for speaking out.

"Today, President Obama made history by boldly stating that gay and lesbian Americans should be fully and equally part of the fabric of American society and that our families deserve nothing less than the equal respect and recognition that comes through marriage," said Joe Solomonese, the president of the Human Rights Campaign, the most prominent U.S. lobby group for gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans- gender (GLBT) issues.

"Following in the footsteps of predecessors who brought the nation forward on racial equality, this is a signature example of a president leading the people in a direction that is right and inevitable, even though some may not feel ready for it," said Suzanne Nossel, the executive director of the U.S. chapter of Amnesty International (AIUSA).

Obama, who has long supported equal rights for gays and lesbians and who abolished the Bill Clinton-era "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) policy that required homosexual U.S. servicemen and women to hide their sexual preferences in order to remain in uniform, announced his position during an interview with ABC's 'Good Morning America' to be aired Thursday. He said that his views about same-sex marriage and LGBT rights in general have evolved over time.

"I've always been adamant that gay and lesbian Americans should be treated fairly and equally," Obama said in the video that was released Wednesday:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WM-e_qEjGXI.

"I have to tell you that over the course of several years as I have talked to friends and family and neighbors, when I think about members of my own staff who are in incredibly committed monogamous relationships, same-sex relationships, who are raising kids together, when I think about those soldiers or airmen or marines or sailors who are out there fighting on my behalf and yet feel constrained, even now that Don't Ask Don't Tell is gone, because they are not able to commit themselves in a marriage, at a certain point I've just concluded that for me personally it is important for me to go ahead and affirm that I think same sex couples should be able to get married," he said.

Obama was put on the spot on the issue on Sunday, when his vice president, Joe Biden, told the widely watched "Meet the Press" public affairs television program that he was "absolutely comfortable" with same-sex marriage, a position that was immediately endorsed by Obama's education secretary, Arne Duncan.

Same-sex marriages are recognized in six states - including New York and, ironically, Romney's Massachusetts, which became the first state to grant marriage licenses to LGBT couples in 2004 - and the District of Columbia. The legislatures of both Washington state and Maryland have also approved laws granting same-sex marriage licenses, but they may be challenged by proposed referendums in November.

California legalized same-sex marriages in 2008, but voters in a referendum in November that year overturned the law.

Historically, state governments have determined who may legally marry, although the U.S. Supreme Court in 1967 declared state miscegenation laws – laws prohibiting inter-racial marriages – unconstitutional.

In 1996, conservatives in Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act which, for the first time, defined marriage under federal law as a union between a man and a woman.

The upshot of that law has been the denial by the federal government of a variety of benefits, such as Social Security, health insurance, and even hospital visitation rights, to LGBT couples who, if legally married, would be eligible to receive them. Same-sex "civil unions", a status short of legal marriage, are recognized by a contract.

In 2010, a federal court in Massachusetts held that the denial of such rights and benefits to same-sex married couples in that state was unconstitutional, a ruling that is currently under appeal and may yet reach the Supreme Court.

In 2008, Obama expressed support for "civil unions" that have been passed by a number of states to provide individuals in longstanding same-sex relationships with the same state benefits and rights that are accorded legally married couples. But federal rights and benefits were still denied them.

In explaining his evolution, Obama stressed the religious roots of his thinking, noting that he had talked with his wife, Michelle, about this "over the years. ... (I)n the end, the values that I care most deeply about and she cares most deeply about is how we treat other people, and, you know, we are both practicing Christians, and obviously this position may be considered to put us at odds with the views of others, but ...when we think about faith, ...what we think about is, not only Christ sacrificing himself on our behalf, but it's also the Golden Rule – you know, treat others the way you would want to be treated."

20120510-07 14:13 SteveG Fw: Change.org Petition: Tell the DNC You Want Marriage Equality

from Change.org:

I was devastated on Tuesday night when word came down that voters in my state of North Carolina passed Amendment 1, which bans same-sex couples from getting married. But on Wednesday, my sadness turned to joy when President Obama told the nation that he supports the rights of all couples to get married.

I'm a brand new mom, and I want my baby to grow up in a world where everyone is treated equally. I was born, raised, and married in North Carolina, and I want the same opportunities for my son -- no matter who he falls in love with someday. That's why I think it's important that the Democratic Party make marriage equality part of its 2012 Platform.

President Obama will be nominated for a second term this September in my home state of North Carolina -- and while I'm ashamed that my state has banned marriage equality, I'm hopeful for the opportunity to make history: this could be the first time a major political party endorses marriage equality.

That's why I started a petition on Change.org asking the Democratic Party leadership to include marriage equality as part of the 2012 party platform. Click here to add your name to my petition:

http://www.change.org/petitions/democratic-national-committee-include-marriage-equality-in-the-2012-party-platform?utm_campaign=cghZLfZEPk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=action_alert

Party platforms have long served as a symbol about the direction of our country -- back in the 1950s and 60s, historians say that the inclusion of Civil Rights as part of the Democratic platform was a key precursor to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

This year, a fight was already underway to include marriage equality in the Democratic Party Platform, and the idea has support from dozens of senators, party chairs, and other Democratic Party leaders. The biggest obstacle to the party endorsing marriage equality was that President Obama still didn't support it -- and that's no longer a problem. I know that if thousands of people sign my petition, the leaders of the Democratic Party will see that both leaders like President Obama and the American people value the importance of this issue.

Click here to sign my petition asking the leaders of the Democratic Party to follow President Obama's lead and include marriage equality in the 2012 Democratic Party Platform.

Thanks, Shannon Ritchie

20120510-08 14:18 MarthaH "Election 2012: The End of the Middle of Everything"
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"Other than that, things are going fine."...

"Election 2012: The End of the Middle of Everything" by Howard Fineman, Huffington Post

May 9, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/howard-fineman/election-2012-lost-middle-consensus-internet_b_1502845.html)

(WASHINGTON) Dick Lugar was a nice guy who stayed too long. But his crushing loss is also a valid data point in a profound and troubling trend, obvious not only in politics but in every other aspect of American life.

We are losing the mediating middle of everything, and the result is a country paralyzed by social and economic as well as political division.

The remorseless logic of global capital (think: big banks and super PACs) and the middleman-crushing power of the Internet (think: Amazon and the Tea Party) are combining to end not only the "small r" republican vision of the Founders but also many essential, intermediating business and social structures.

The Founders feared both the Monarch and the Mob. Now the salving, balancing middle is being ground to dust between the two.

Like an engine without oil or a knee without cartilage, we are in danger of seizing up. We are losing many of our lesser but essential sources of authority, credit, guidance, service and judgment. Face-to-face dealings, accidental acquaintances, the happenstances of geography and commerce are being replaced by a net-based cacophony of political flash mobs, stovepiped thinking and mail-order trade for virtually every product and service.

A partial list of who is under pressure: families with time to be a family, independent-minded elected representatives, small farmers not beholden to Monsanto or Cargill, county chairmen, "big tent" politics, independent business and sales agents, weekly newspapers, local radio and TV stations, teachers with freedom to teach, principals with latitude to run their schools, local religious leaders respected for their character and judgment.

In politics, the national parties have ceased to be mechanisms of consensus or even mechanisms at all. The power resides entirely with ideological, commercial, or personal money.

Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, two cool, aloof, effective assemblers of the new machinery, rely entirely on their own purpose-built campaigns, which have allegiance to no one but them.

Congress is now a home for the politically incapacitated. Senators who once had a year or two to attempt statesmanship and independent thought begin running for reelection even before they are sworn in.

As for the media, the days are long gone when a news anchor like Walter Cronkite could end his broadcast by saying, "And that's the way it is," and most people in the country would nod in agreement. There are no such truly unifying figures today, and most of the money in televised news is spent on ideologically discrete presentations of it.

The Internet makes possible the assembly of new intermediating institutions, but those are still in their infancy for the most part. In the meantime, mighty and basically unaccountable companies such as Google, Facebook, Amazon and others conduct, facilitate and dominate monarch-to-mob-and-back commerce.

To fend off both the monarchy and the mob, the Founders resurrected the Roman ideal of republican government, updated with a Newtonian clockwork of countervailing powers. They saw further protection against political tyranny in an economy of widely dispersed private property -- the ideal for them was the English yeomanry -- and in a rich social soil of education, family and homage to faith that would produce solid citizens.

Today, the Monarchy isn't a Hanoverian in a dusty wig, but rather a silent alliance between an all-knowing, all-benefit-dispensing Washington and billionaires (real people or corporate "people") given new freedom to exert their power by spending at will.

Today, the Mob isn't a witch hunt in Salem, but rather an Internet increasingly ruled by the worship of the viral and made profitable largely by companies that specialize in the Schumpeterian work of wiping out social supply lines of local human interaction with generations or even millennia of tradition.

The risk is that in the name of democracy, we are going to destroy it; that in the name of freedom, we are going to lose it; and that in the name of bringing the budget under control and saving the middle class, we are going to lose both to the Monarchy and the Mob.

Other than that, things are going fine.

20120510-14	15:34 Pam	"Mitt Romney Apologizes for the 'Dumb Things' He Did in Prep School"
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This sounds like the behavior of a spoiled, rich kid, who thinks he's entitled to--well, everything. Do jerks really grow up to be Presidential, or do they just become bigger jerks? I've heard some interesting things about GW and his high school years as well.

"Mitt Romney Apologizes for the 'Dumb Things' He Did in Prep School" by Dylan Stableford, The Ticket/Yahoo! News

May 10, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/ticket/mitt-romney-apologizes-dumb-things-did-prep-school-152935856.html>)

Mitt Romney has apologized for incidents described in a *Washington Post* story about his prep school years in Michigan. Some of the events include forcibly cutting a boy's bleached-blond hair and hassling a closeted gay student in English class.

"Back in high school, I did some dumb things," Romney said in an interview on the "Kilmeade and Friends" talk show on Fox News radio Thursday. "And if anybody was hurt by that or offended by that, I apologize." He added: "There is no question I became a very different person since then."

Romney emphasized that he had no idea the boy was gay. "I certainly don't believe that I thought the fellow was homosexual," said Romney in the radio interview. "That was the furthest thing from our minds back in the 1960s."

According to the Washington Post, which conducted interviews with the presidential candidate's former classmates at the Cranbrook School in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., Romney forcibly cut the "bleached-blond hair that draped over one eye" of a "soft-spoken" new kid because he felt the boy didn't belong. The story is a 5,400-word profile of Romney's formative years; the incident occurred in 1965.

"He can't look like that," an "incensed" Romney told one of his friends upon seeing John Lauber's hair, according to the friend's account. "That's wrong. Just look at him!"

A few days later in a dorm room, several other students pinned down Lauber—who was "perpetually teased for his nonconformity and presumed homosexuality"—while the presumptive Republican nominee "clipped his hair with a pair of scissors." A "terrified" Lauber was crying and screaming, according to the paper.

"It was a hack job," Phillip Maxwell, a student who witnessed the incident, told the Post. "It was vicious." Lauber died in 2004.

Romney also chided another student presumed to be gay, wrote the *Post*:

In an English class, Gary Hummel, who was a closeted gay student at the time, recalled that his efforts to speak out in class were punctuated with Romney shouting, "Atta girl!" In the culture of that time and place, that was not entirely out of the norm. Hummel recalled some teachers using similar language.

According to his campaign, Romney doesn't recall the incidents.

"Anyone who knows Mitt Romney knows that he doesn't have a mean-spirited bone in his body," Romney spokeswoman Andrea Saul said in a statement to the Post. "The stories of fifty years ago seem exaggerated and off base and Governor Romney has no memory of participating in these incidents."

It's worth noting that the Romney campaign, itself, is notorious for its pranks.

On April 1, Romney's campaign staff scheduled a speech for the former Massachusetts governor in a completely empty room.

"I think they're much funnier when I do them on other people than when they do them on me," Romney later said of the prank, captured by a campaign staffer on video. "But this was very good. This was classic."

Eric Fehrstrom, a senior adviser to the Romney campaign, recently told the Hill that Romney is a "closet prankster." When Romney was governor, a state trooper on his security detail "short-sheeted" the bed in his hotel room, Fehrstrom said. Romney retaliated by composing a fake letter from the hotel that said the maid staff had been fired.

20120510-19	17:24 SteveG	"Mitt Romney's Prep School Classmates Recall Pranks, But Also Troubling Incidents"
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"Mitt Romney's Prep School Classmates Recall Pranks, But Also Troubling Incidents" by Jason Horowitz, *The Washington Post*

May 10, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/mitt-romneys-prep-school-classmates-recall-pranks-but-also-troubling-incidents/2012/05/10/gIQA3WOKFU_story.html)

(Mitt Romney's prep school classmates recall pranks, but also troubling incidents.)



(BLOOMFIELD HILLS, Mich.) Mitt Romney returned from a three-week spring break in 1965 to resume his studies as a high school senior at the prestigious Cranbrook School. Back on the handsome campus, studded with Tudor brick buildings and manicured fields, he spotted something he thought did not belong at a school where the boys wore ties and carried briefcases. John Lauber, a soft-spoken new student one year behind Romney, was perpetually teased for his nonconformity and presumed homosexuality. Now he was walking around the all-boys school with bleached-blond hair that draped over one eye, and Romney wasn't having it.

"He can't look like that. That's wrong. Just look at him!" an incensed Romney told Matthew Friedemann, his close friend in the Stevens Hall dorm, according to Friedemann's recollection. Mitt, the teenage son of Michigan Gov. George Romney, kept complaining about Lauber's look, Friedemann recalled.

A few days later, Friedemann entered Stevens Hall off the school's collegiate quad to find Romney marching out of his own room ahead of a prep school posse shouting about their plan to cut Lauber's hair. Friedemann followed them to a nearby room where they came upon Lauber, tackled him and pinned him to the ground. As Lauber, his eyes filling with tears, screamed for help, Romney repeatedly clipped his hair with a pair of scissors.

The incident was recalled similarly by five students, who gave their accounts independently of one another. Four of them — Friedemann, now a dentist; Phillip Maxwell, a lawyer; Thomas Buford, a retired prosecutor; and David Seed, a retired principal — spoke on the record. Another former student who witnessed the incident asked not to be identified. The men have differing political affiliations, although they mostly lean Democratic. Buford volunteered for Barack Obama's campaign in 2008. Seed, a registered independent, has served as a Republican county chairman in Michigan. All of them said that politics in no way colored their recollections.

"It happened very quickly, and to this day it troubles me," said Buford, the school's wrestling champion, who said he joined Romney in restraining Lauber. Buford subsequently apologized to Lauber, who was "terrified," he said. "What a senseless, stupid, idiotic thing to do."

"It was a hack job," recalled Maxwell, a childhood friend of Romney who was in the dorm room when the incident occurred. "It was vicious."

"He was just easy pickin's," said Friedemann, then the student prefect, or student authority leader of Stevens Hall, expressing remorse about his failure to stop it.

The incident transpired in a flash, and Friedemann said Romney then led his cheering schoolmates back to his bay-windowed room in Stevens Hall.

Friedemann, guilt ridden, made a point of not talking about it with his friend and waited to see what form of discipline would befall Romney at the famously strict institution. Nothing happened.

Romney is now the presumed Republican presidential nominee. His campaign spokeswoman, Andrea Saul, said in a statement that "anyone who knows Mitt Romney knows that he doesn't have a mean-spirited bone in his body. The stories of fifty years ago seem exaggerated and off base and Governor Romney has no memory of participating in these incidents."

Campaign officials denied a request for an interview with Romney. They also declined to comment further about his years at Cranbrook.

In a subsequent interview Thursday morning with Fox News Channel, Romney said he didn't remember the incident but apologized for pranks he helped orchestrate that he said "might have gone too far."

After the incident, Lauber seemed to disappear. He returned days later with his shortened hair back to its natural brown. He finished the year but ultimately left the school before graduation — thrown out for smoking a cigarette.

Sometime in the mid-1990s, David Seed noticed a familiar face at the end of a bar at Chicago O'Hare International Airport.

"Hey, you're John Lauber," Seed recalled saying at the start of a brief conversation. Seed, also among those who witnessed the Romney-led incident, had gone on to a career as a teacher and principal. Now he had something to get off his chest.

"I'm sorry that I didn't do more to help in the situation," he said.

Lauber paused, then responded, "It was horrible." He went on to explain how frightened he was during the incident, and acknowledged to Seed, "It's something I have thought about a lot since then."

Lauber died in 2004, according to his three sisters.

Romney came of age during his six years at Cranbrook. First as a day student and later as a full-time boarder, he embraced and became emblematic of the Cranbrook way — a strict disciplinary code and academic rigor that governed the school by day and a free-wheeling unofficial boys code of "Crannies" at night. Wherever the action was, so was Romney. He wrote the most letters to the girls at the sister school across the lake and successfully petitioned to get placed in the top classes. He was not a natural athlete but found his place among the jocks by managing the hockey team and leading megaphone cheers for the football team. Although a devout Mormon, one of the few at the school, he was less defined by his faith than at any other time in his life. He was a member of 11 school organizations, including the Spectators' Club and the homecoming committee, and started the school's booster outfit, the Blue Key Club.

It was at Cranbrook where he first lived on his own, found his future wife and made his own decisions. One can see the institution's influence on his demeanor and actions during those years, but also how it helped form the

clubbiness and earnestness, the sense of leadership and enthusiasm, apparent in his careers as a businessman and a politician. "He strongly bought in to community service," said Richard Moon, a schoolmate at the time. "That hard work was its own reward." What is less visible today is what was most apparent to his prep-school peers: his jocularity.

Now, nearly half a century later, Romney's presidential campaign has turned to the candidate's youthful antics as evidence of his capacity for harmless, humanizing pranks and as an indication of his looser, less wooden self.

"There's a wild and crazy man inside of there just waiting to come out," Romney's wife, Ann — a graduate of Cranbrook's sister school, Kingswood — attested in a television interview this month, evoking what she saw as his endearing and fun-loving prep-school persona. Many of Romney's peers from his high school days echo that version of the candidate, describing him as the humble son of an automobile executive-turned-governor who volunteered at the nearby mental hospital. They recall an infectious laugh, a characterization first documented in his senior yearbook.

"If you should ever by chance be walking down the [Stevens Hall] corridor at 2:00 a.m. and hear rising tones of boisterous, exuberant laughter, you are almost sure to find its source is Mitt Romney," the yearbook reported. "A quiet joke, a panicky laughter and another of the Friedemann-Romney all-night marathon contests has begun."

But Friedemann and several people closest to Romney in those formative years say there was a sharp edge to him. In an English class, Gary Hummel, who was a closeted gay student at the time, recalled that his efforts to speak out in class were punctuated with Romney shouting, "Atta girl!" In the culture of that time and place, that was not entirely out of the norm. Hummel recalled some teachers using similar language.

Saul, Romney's campaign spokeswoman, said the candidate has no recollection of the incident.

Teachers were also the butt of Romney's brand of humor.

One venerable English teacher, Carl G. Wonnberger, nicknamed "the Bat" for his diminished eyesight, was known to walk into the trophy case and apologize, step into wastepaper baskets and stare blindly as students slipped out the back of the room to smoke by the open windows. Once, several students remembered the time pranksters propped up the back axle of Wonnberger's Volkswagen Beetle with two-by-fours and watched, laughing from the windows, as the unwitting teacher slammed the gas pedal with his wheels spinning in the air.

As an underclassman, Romney accompanied Wonnberger and Pierce Getsinger, another student, from the second floor of the main academic building to the library to retrieve a book the two boys needed. According to Getsinger, Romney opened a first set of doors for Wonnberger, but then at the next set, with other students around, he swept his hand forward, bidding the teacher into a closed door. Wonnberger walked right into it and Getsinger said Romney giggled hysterically as the teacher shrugged it off as another of life's indignities.

"I always enjoyed his pranks," said Stu White, a popular friend of Romney's who went on to a career as a public school teacher and said he has been "disturbed" by the Lauber incident since hearing about it several weeks ago, before being contacted by *The Washington Post*. "But I was not the brunt of any of his pranks."

In later years, after Romney went on a Mormon mission, married and raised five sons, he seemed a different person to some old classmates. "Mitt began to change as a person when he met Ann Davies. He gradually became a more serious person. She was part of the process of him maturing and becoming more of the person he is today," said Jim Bailey, who was a classmate of Romney's at Cranbrook and later at Harvard.

By the 1950s, George and Lenore Romney had cracked the Motor City firmament and made their home in the exclusive enclave of Bloomfield Hills. When it came to educating their children, the clear choice was Cranbrook.

Built in 1927 by George Booth, publisher of the Detroit News, and named after his father's alma mater in Kent, England, Cranbrook stood out as an architectural gem in the Michigan woods. Modeled on British boarding schools with "forms" instead of grades, "prefects" instead of RAs, "masters" instead of teachers, it also boasted the work of

famed Finnish architect Eiel Saarinen. Cranbrook had all the trappings of an elite school where kids walked around like junior executives and, as Tom Elliott, Class of 1966, recalled, learned mantras such as, "Remember who you are, and what you represent."

"If you went to Cranbrook," said a classmate, Peter "the Bird" Werbel. "You were creme de la creme."

The Romney children walked under arches reading *A Life Without Beauty Is Only Half Lived*, past a field overlooked by Greek-style sculptures where the Detroit Lions practiced; and then a statuette of the school's symbol, the archer from Book V of Virgil's *Aeneid*, who "aimed an arrow high." (In the mug honoring Romney's Class of 1965, a naked woman replaced the aiming archer.) They looked out of leaded-glass windows in the academic buildings, crossed the spruce-spotted quad lined with modernist fountains and sleek statues of coursing hounds. They studied in reading rooms featuring frescoes and marble friezes. In the chandeliered dining room, students waited on fellow students and sat on straight-backed spindle chairs bearing the school's insignia of a proud crane. After dinner, they wiped their mouths with cloth napkins.

In 1959, Mitt Romney enrolled at Cranbrook as a 12-year-old seventh-grader.

For the most part, the school broke down along the usual lines of jocks and brains, popular kids and introverts, all trained with the expectation of joining the next generation's elite. The students gave one another chummy nicknames. There was Moonie and Butch, the Kraut and Flip. Romney, his name short to begin with, was playfully teased with chants of Wiillard, Wiillard by his friends.

Ron Sill, a Romney classmate especially attuned to the counterculture of the 1960s, rolled his eyes at the dance instruction and lessons on how to hold a teacup and properly shake a man's hand. He preferred to listen to folk music in the coffee shops of neighboring Birmingham. Taro Yamasaki, the son of the architect of the World Trade Center and several Bloomfield Hills houses, then went by the name Michael and encountered what he called a "veiled racism." "I was a linebacker in football," said Yamasaki, who went on to become a Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer. "And the coaches would call me Kamikaze." Sidney Barthwell, the son of a prominent Detroit pharmacist, was the only African American student in Romney's class from the seventh through 12th grades. Now a Detroit magistrate, he said he tried to introduce some west Detroit swagger to the school, but it was, he said, "pretty Republican and pretty WASP-y."

There was a significant Jewish contingent, and several of those students said they never sensed any obvious prejudice. During Romney's tenure, there were also Middle Eastern exchange students, usually from Kuwait.

Abdulhadi M. al-Awadi, a Kuwaiti student, had fond memories of the school and the respect and special attention he received from teachers. He recalled Romney as the "son of Governor Romney" who was "very sociable." When some students put up pictures of Israeli statesman David Ben-Gurion in the hallway near his room, he did not believe it was meant intentionally to offend him, but he was bothered by it. "It's human nature. But they did it. That's their right."

Faisal F. al-Abduljadir, a Kuwaiti student spending his senior year at Cranbrook in part to improve his English, said the teachers and students went out of their way to treat him with respect, showing consideration for his celebration of Ramadan and bathing requirements. But he acknowledged being "angry" about a caption under his picture in the senior yearbook that read, "Take a left at the next Synagogue."

Religion was not much of an issue for the students. There was mandatory chapel time on Tuesdays and Thursdays when they sang Episcopalian hymns and the school song, "Forty Years On," but it was studiously nondenominational. The campus's elegant Christ Church had a Star of David, an Islamic crescent, and yin-and-yang sign above its wooden door. The Mormon Romney joined Jews and Protestants on Cranbrook's Church Cabinet, which focused on community service.

Some students admired Romney for what they saw as his lack of airs, saying he did not trade on his father's status as an auto executive and governor. Romney even came in for teasing because American Motors, the company his father ran, was considered at the bottom rung of the big-auto hierarchy, below General Motors, Ford and Chrysler.

"Boys in a boys' school can tease and make fun of almost anything," said Bailey, a scholarship student and head prefect of the school who described Romney at the time as an awkward adolescent with a penchant for practical jokes. The children of other auto executives would taunt Romney for the Ramblers he and his father drove. "That's not a car, that's a bicycle with a dishwasher for an engine," Bailey recalled them saying.

Others noticed a distance between themselves and Romney. "I was a scholarship student, and he was the son of the governor," said Lance Leithauser, now a doctor, who attended the school with his brother, Brad, now a noted poet. "There was a bit of a gulf." Even a close pal like Friedemann felt that distance; their friendship was confined to the dorms. When Romney left the campus on weekends, he never invited him. "I didn't quite fit into the social circle. I didn't have a car when I was 16," Friedemann said. "I couldn't go skiing or whatever they did."

Lou Vierling, a scholarship student who boarded at Cranbrook for the 1960 and 1961 academic years, was struck by a question Romney asked them when they first met. "He wanted to know what my father did for a living," Vierling recalled. "He wanted to know if my mother worked. He wanted to know what town I lived in." As Vierling explained that his father taught school, that he commuted from east Detroit, he noticed a souring of Romney's demeanor.

Romney was bowled over by the wealth of some of his friends. He briefly dated Mary Fisher, the daughter of the philanthropist and diplomat Max Fisher, who acted as a finance chairman to George Romney's political campaigns. At her house, he watched the James Bond film "Goldfinger" in the family's private theater before it was widely released. He reported excitedly back to Friedemann about the theater, noting that the seats even had numbers.

The largest chasm of all at Cranbrook was between the boarders and the "day boys." Students within the limits of Detroit's Eight Mile Road had the option to attend the school without boarding. The requirements for enrollment as a day student were generally tougher, leading day boys to consider themselves academically superior. Day boys also had the freedom to leave campus when school let out late in the afternoon. Often those with cars would gas up at nearby service stations, cruise Woodward Avenue and plot "how and where we could get some beer," said Gregg Dearth, who went by the nickname Daiquiri Dearth. Drugs were generally unheard of, but day boy parties often included someone downing beers or toting bottles of scotch.

Romney began his Cranbrook career as a day boy and quickly adapted to the school's unofficial code. He was prohibited by his religion from drinking alcohol but excelled at elaborate practical jokes.

During spring break of his senior year, when most of his friends went to Florida for vacation, Romney stayed behind to make movies for an upcoming Cranbrook talent show. For one, he filmed his friends Stu White and Judy Sherman seated at a table to dine on fine china on a Woodward Avenue median as their friend Pike John, now deceased, acted as the waiter. Romney filmed the luncheon until a police officer pulled up. "And that was it," Sherman said.

But in a well-known prank in which Romney flashed a police siren and, bearing a fake badge and cap, approached two friends and their dates parked on a dark country road, there was a stronger undercurrent of fear to the incident than commonly conveyed. Candy Porter, a Kingswood boarder from a small town in Ohio, had a strict 11 p.m. curfew. As Romney and his Cranbrook pals played out the joke, pretending to be shocked over empty bourbon bottles in the trunk, Porter thought of the dorm mothers waiting at the door and the threat of expulsion. "I just remember being like a deer in headlights," she said. "I just remember being terrified." Once she realized it was all a prank, and was safely back at her dorm, Porter joined in the laughter.

Romney's sense of humor ran through his family.

Sherman, a friend of the Romneys from high school, recalled Ann telling her about the time Romney and his older brother, Scott, dressed up in white coats and wheeled a gurney up to the Birmingham train station to meet their aunt. When she got off the train, they rushed her away as if to a madhouse.

By the time Romney started dating Ann in his senior year, he had immersed himself into the Cranbrook culture. In 1962, when his father won the governorship and his parents moved to Lansing, he entered the boarding life as a resident of Stevens Hall, named after the school's first headmaster. From the inside, Cranbrook was an entirely different place.

"The day students," said Steph Lady, a boarder and now a screenwriter in Hollywood, "it was like they didn't even go there."

Romney breathed Cranbrook day and night.

He met the Kingswood girls at the Get Acquainted Dance in the school gym. There was the Chateau de Noel girl-ask-boy dance at Christmas, and the World A-Fair, in which students dressed up in the garb of other nations. He sang in the Glee Club and started the Blue Key Club, an organization of students who "know the campus and Cranbrook traditions well" and served as ambassador to parents and prospective students. The school newspaper noted that his "diligent and capable leadership" of the homecoming weekend, where he delivered a "brilliantly hilarious monologue," earned him a citation reserved for "students whose contributions to school life are often not fully recognized through already existing channels." He was co-chairman of the Speculators Club and played a leading role in the American Field Service, which helped bring foreign students to the campus. He also served a leadership role on a student cabinet organization and during his senior year took a bus with some Kingswood girls to volunteer at the nearby state mental hospital. There, he danced to spinning 45s and talked and ate chips with the young patients.

"His altruism was apparent then and is apparent now," said Candy Porter, who volunteered with Romney at the hospital. "I just remember him being really nice," said Mary Fisher.

Romney also found time to contribute to the school paper as a special correspondent at the funeral of President John F. Kennedy. "Mitt Romney Comments on Kennedy Funeral," read the front page headline on the Dec. 17, 1963, edition of the Crane. "Note: Personal comments and observations made by Mitt Romney in Washington, Nov. 25, 1963."

The old Washington theory of relativity, briefly: one is important only until a bigger brass appears, was blatantly [sic] obvious for whenever before have we had the top potentates of the world here to outrank our dignitaries? We all recall the day when we saw a senator of the like in some big, black limosine [sic] drive through our town. Most likely our mouths were hanging wide open as our Mommies and Daddies told us the man out there was a very important person who worked in Washington.

Even without extracurricular activities, Cranbrook demanded long days. The morning bell rang at 7 and breakfast was served in the dining hall at 7:30, coat and tie required. After breakfast, students returned to clean their rooms in anticipation of white-gloved senior prefects who scoured the bed frames for dust. After classes and study hall at 9:30, students could go beneath Stevens Hall to the school store, where the boys received letters, via an inter-school postal service, from the girls at Kingswood. Some were perfumed.

The letters Romney wrote were delivered to the Green Lobby in Kingswood. Around 10:15 every morning, the girls, all wearing saddle shoes, hoped to hear their names called amid walls of rich green tile, and banisters, benches and clocks all in the art deco style.

"The person who wrote the most consistently was Mitt," said Lyn Moon Shields, who dated Romney in the fall semester of 1964. Gentlemanly and fun, Romney was her best date in her six years at school. He called every evening and picked her up in his powder blue Rambler and drove her up and down Woodward Avenue on weekends, and to school dances where she wore blue-green formal dresses and he a dark suit and tie. "Things were so innocent," she said. "We kissed each other, I think Mitt would admit to that." One day, she said, Romney just stopped calling. He had taken an interest in a Kingswood sophomore. "They got intentional about their relationship very soon," Shields said of Mitt and Ann.

Like every other student, Romney completed a rigorous workload that made most college requirements seem easy by comparison. Between the seventh and eighth grades, the faculty selected a dozen or so students to enter an advanced-placement program. Romney at first was not among the chosen, and he objected. "He went into the headmaster and convinced him that 'I should be in this,'" John French, who had been friends with Romney since they served together as Cub Scouts, recalled Romney telling him. "He had gumption. He had his sights on what he wanted to achieve."

The time after class was set aside for sports. Romney was not a natural athlete, according to classmates. He wore the Cranbrook "C" on his white tank top as a cross-country runner, but the greatest impression he made in that pursuit was collapsing near the finish line during a meet — although his perseverance won him admiration and applause. He was more at home on the sidelines, cheering the football team on as a member of the Pep Club, chanting such cheers into a megaphone as "Iron them out. Iron them out. Smoooooth."

He participated on the school's hockey team as its manager, lugging a duffle bag full of pucks and sticks. Dressed in suit and tie and three-quarter coat, he rode the bus with the uniformed players and kept stats in the coach's box at the cold outdoor rink. The team's senior year began with promise, but ended badly. The players took out their frustration on the ice, getting into brawls with Lakeview and Catholic Central. During one fight, Maxwell pulled the jersey over the head of an opposing player and pummeled away. Romney dashed onto the ice, slipping and sliding in his Brogan wingtips in an apparent attempt to break up the fight.

During the winter of Romney's sophomore year, the faculty assigned him and Maxwell to mop the floors of the academic halls, part of a World War II-era program meant to instill a work ethic in the students. During their six-week detail, the two old friends had long, rambling conversations about religion, and Maxwell pressed Romney on how he could believe in Mormonism.

As Maxwell later recalled their discussion, he asked Romney, "How can you believe that thing about the tablets?" referring to the divine gold tablets Mormons believe were discovered in New York and translated by Joseph Smith.

Romney, he said, responded, "What about the Virgin birth and the holy trinity?"

"I don't believe that, either," Maxwell responded. The discussions ultimately came down to a faith vs. reason equation.

"You simply have to have faith," Romney concluded.

"That's a cop-out," Maxwell said.

While there were seeds of Romney's future devoutness at Cranbrook, he was then more interested in goofing off. In the evenings, he cut loose with Friedemann, a scholarship kid from the small town of Romeo, dubbed the Kraut. The two boys stayed up late, joking around and racing mops like racehorses up and down the hallway.

One regular in the Stevens Hall revelry was the school's security guard, Chester. In police uniform, chubby and middle-aged, Chester would let Romney and Friedemann examine and play with his gun. In the student yearbook, Romney posed with his arm around Chester wearing thick black glasses, similar to those the guard wore, but also a ski hat and a silly Jerry Lewis expression. At the Swingin' Sweeney Dance, Romney pointed a toy gun under his chin as two girls shook hands in front of him. A photo of the pose ran in the yearbook above the caption, "Give a guy enough rope and he'll hang himself."

Romney spent months trying to convert Friedemann, the son of New Deal-worshipping Democrats, to the Republican Party. He asked to meet his friend's grandmother, so that he could convert her, too. "He talked politics all the time," Friedemann said. "It was more big government versus small government. He was a business guy back then."

Romney's political and personal idol, George Romney, was never far away. Once Crawford Elder, a student a year behind Romney, saw the governor in the basement under Stevens Hall getting a haircut from Everett Arthurs, the school barber and part-time bartender at faculty cocktail parties. When Ev, as he was widely known, dropped dead after a round of golf, Gov. Romney eulogized him at a tree dedication ceremony on the quad, a few steps away from his son's room.

After lights out, John Lauber often left his door open. Larry Olson and some other boarders would check for the hall monitor they called Sneaky Pete and slip into Lauber's room. From there, they would crawl out his window, climb over the bushes and scurry off campus to Lone Pine Road, where a pizza truck regularly parked. Sated, they would

climb back through the window and check on the bottles of apple juice that they hoped fermenting grapes would turn into hard cider. Then Lauber and his friends played poker until the early morning.

When Lauber's younger sister, Betsy, visited the campus, she said she found him happy and sporting a preppy look. He took her to an off-campus party at a fellow student's house where they danced to Motown records and laughed.

But he was always a bit different from the rest. During breaks from school, he worked as a mortician's assistant. He spent more time devouring books than making friends in clubs.

"He was very quiet, not a jock," said Steph Lady. "Very soft-spoken. I know nothing, probably gay, but who knows. We were so stupid and naive. I know there was homosexuality there, but we didn't even have a word for it. And there was homophobia then, too."

On an overcast Saturday, David Craig, a senior prefect and day student, drove his car down Martell Drive along the school grounds and saw a figure duck into the hedges. He thought the person might be trespassing and stopped, only to find Lauber puffing on a cigarette. In a move that he said he later regretted as an excess of the "dorm trooper" mentality instilled by Cranbrook, Craig reported Lauber to the headmaster. Soon after, Lauber was expelled.

"He just disappeared," Lady said.

Sudden disappearances at Cranbrook were not unheard of. Students might pass a dorm neighbor on the way to class and come back hours later, with all their belongings gone and their beds stripped by maintenance staff. Bad behavior and bad grades were not tolerated.

Ben Snyder, who as an assistant headmaster later spearheaded the school's effort to recruit inner-city students, said Cranbrook in Romney's time "had its standards and applied them briskly when needed." As chairman of a group of faculty members and students who were in charge of discipline, he described a strict school in which offenders could be "dismissed, period." Snyder could not recall dealing with any transgressions involving Romney. "I wouldn't expect to see him," Snyder said of the disciplinary tribunals. "The family was so straight, they don't do those types of things."

On June 12, 1965, Romney concluded his Cranbrook career at a commencement ceremony at the Christ Church, in which his father delivered a keynote address reported on by the local papers.

"This is a special occasion for us as a family," George Romney told the gathered boys before emphasizing that religion and "the one girlfriend whom you finally take the greatest interest in" and good health habits were critical for a successful life. So, he said, was character. "Developing character is going to be more important than your education from now on." The ceremony concluded with all the boys singing a final rendition of their school song, "Forty Years On."

Forty years on, when afar and asunder
Parted are those who are singing today,
When you look back, and forgetfully wonder
What you were like in your work and your play,
Then, it may be, there will often come o'er you,
Glimpses of notes like the catch of a song—
Visions of boyhood shall float them before you,
Echoes of dreamland shall bear them along,
Follow up! Follow up! Follow up!

Forty years on, Mitt Romney accepted the school's 2005 Distinguished Alumni Award.

A year earlier, John Joseph Lauber died at a Seattle hospital.

The boy few at Cranbrook knew or remember was born in Chicago, grew up in South Bend, Ind., and had a hard time fitting in. He liked to wander and "had a glorious sense of the absurd," according to his sister Betsy. When the chance to get out of Indiana presented itself, he jumped at it and enrolled at Cranbrook. He never uttered a word about Mitt Romney or the haircut incident to his sisters. After Cranbrook asked him to leave, he finished high school, attended the University of the Seven Seas for two semesters, then graduated in 1970 from Vanderbilt, where he majored in English.

He came out as gay to his family and close friends and led a vagabond life, taking dressage lessons in England and touring with the Royal Lipizzaner Stallion riders. After an extreme fit of temper in front of his mother and sister at home in South Bend, he checked into the Menninger Clinic psychiatric hospital in Topeka, Kan. Later he received his embalmer's license, worked as a chef aboard big freighters and fishing trawlers, and cooked for civilian contractors during the war in Bosnia and then, a decade later, in Iraq. His hair thinned as he aged, and in the winter of 2004 he returned to Seattle, the closest thing he had to a base. He died there of liver cancer that December.

He kept his hair blond until he died, said his sister Chris. "He never stopped bleaching it."

(Researcher Julie Tate contributed to this report.)

[20120510-22](#) 19:33 Dennis Fw: Sen. Bernie Sanders Petition: End Polluter Welfare



At a time when we have a record debt, Congress should not continue to give away taxpayer money to the established, highly profitable fossil fuel industry.

- Fossil fuels are subsidized at nearly 6 times the rate of renewable energy. From 2002 to 2008, the US Government gave the mature fossil fuel industry over \$72 billion in subsidies, while investments in the emerging renewable industry totaled \$12.2 billion.
- The fossil fuel energy industry does not need taxpayer subsidies. In 2011, the Big Five oil companies alone made \$137 billion in profits. During the first quarter of 2012, the Big Five oil companies earned a combined \$33.5 billion, or \$368 million per day.
- Unlike renewable energy incentives which periodically expire and require Congress to approve extensions, the fossil fuel industry has dozens of subsidies permanently engrained in the tax code from decades of successful lobbying. In 2011, the oil, gas, and coal industries spent a combined \$167 million on lobbying the federal government.

Use this link to sign sponsorship petition:

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[20120510-23](#) 19:34 SteveG Re: Sen. Bernie Sanders Petition: End Polluter Welfare

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"JPMorgan Chase Discloses \$2-Billion Trading Loss" by Scott Reckard, Andrew Tangel, and Walter Hamilton, *Los Angeles Times*

<http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-0511-jpmorgan-chase-20120511,0,4625412.story>

May 10, 2012, 5:56 p.m.

Barely four years after Wall Street's wrong-way bets plunged the world into a financial crisis, JPMorgan Chase & Co. admitted it lost \$2 billion from a trading portfolio that was supposed to have helped the bank manage credit risk.

"These were egregious mistakes," said Chief Executive Jamie Dimon, who is considered one of the world's savviest bankers. "We have egg on our face, and we deserve any criticism we get."

The announcement stunned the financial industry, in part because it came from such a highly regarded bank. Dimon had navigated JPMorgan through the crisis in good shape by clamping down on some of the excessive risks that torpedoed rivals.

Dimon told analysts that the bank racked up \$2 billion in trading losses during the last six weeks, and that could "easily get worse." He said JPMorgan could suffer an additional \$1-billion loss from the portfolio during the second quarter.

"My jaw is on the table," said Nancy Bush of SNL Financial. "I never expected this right now — not in a million years."

The losses stemmed from derivative bets that backfired in the company's Chief Investment Office. This part of the bank was in charge of trading to balance the company's assets and liabilities, although it had been criticized by some analysts for operating more like a hedge fund.

There had been media reports that a single JPMorgan trader in Europe, known in the bond market as "the London whale," was making massive bets that were influencing prices in the \$10-trillion market.

Investors bailed out of JPMorgan stock in after-hours trading, a sign it will open sharply lower in New York on Friday. The stock fell 6%, and rivals such as Citigroup Inc., Wells Fargo & Co., and Bank of America Corp. also posted modest declines.

The blowup at the nation's largest bank came amid a heated debate in Congress over how much regulation is needed to rein in the risk-taking that caused the near-meltdown of the financial system in 2008.

The crux of the argument had been whether the so-called Volcker rule, which limits how much federally insured banks can risk in trading for their own accounts, had gone too far.

Indeed, Dimon acknowledged that the trading losses might lead to more calls for stronger banking regulations.

"It's very unfortunate, plays right into all the hands of a bunch of pundits out there, but that's life and I'll have to deal with that," he said.

Critics of Wall Street lost no time in calling for regulators to proceed with cracking down on big banks such as JPMorgan, which began the year with \$863 billion in federally insured domestic deposits.

"The enormous loss JPMorgan announced is just the latest evidence that what banks call 'hedges' are often risky bets that so-called 'too big to fail' banks have no business making," U.S. Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.) said in a statement.

This "is a stark reminder of the need for regulators to establish tough, effective standards to protect taxpayers from having to cover such high-risk bets," he said.

Bank lobbyists had argued that the biggest U.S. banks need more flexibility if they are to compete against global financial giants. But the latest debacle provided new fodder for critics.

At a minimum, JPMorgan's admission shows that large and unforeseen losses can erupt at any time despite the banks' efforts to limit risk-taking.

"It demonstrates that even at an institution like JPMorgan, which has done a remarkable job at staying out of trouble compared to other banks, a bolt out of the blue can come at any time," said Anthony Sabino, a law professor at St. John's University in New York.

The problems at JPMorgan stem from the trading of synthetic credit products, which are derivatives whose values are tied to a portfolio of underlying bonds. The bank lost money when it was trying to unwind these exotic instruments, which were originally intended to hedge JPMorgan's credit exposure.

Dimon said that the investments' extreme volatility could continue to roil JPMorgan for months to come.

The CEO said he hopes to have the situation under control by the end of the year.

He previously had dismissed reports of an out-of-control trader in London as "a tempest in a teapot," Bush said. "How do you go so fast from a tempest in a teapot to a \$2-billion loss and maybe more?"

"There's something here we're not being told," Bush said.

She recalled a series of debacles in the 1990s involving rogue traders such as Nick Leeson, who hid losses that eventually totaled \$1.3 billion, wiping out the reserves and capital at England's august Barings Bank.

Credit Agricole securities analyst Mike Mayo asked if the failure of Dimon's main risk-avoidance unit might foreshadow similar problems at other banks.

Dimon demurred on speaking for the industry.

"Just because we're stupid doesn't mean anyone else was," he said.

20120510-28 23:58 SteveG Quote: Equal Rights



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<http://bustedcoverage.com/tag/drunk-indy-500-infield/>

Beer Hose-Down (by Jay Koot, May 27, 2011)



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Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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