INTRODUCTION

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT?

By Virgil Thorp

The more repression there is, the more need there is for irreverence toward those who are responsible for that repression. But too often sarcasm passes for irony, name-calling passes for insight, bleeped-out four-letter words pass for wit, and lowest-common-denominator jokes
pass for analysis. Satire should have a point of view. It doesn't have to
get a belly laugh. It does have to present criticism.

Paul Krassner – The Realist

Many times when we see a sign proclaiming a business is under new
management we sardonically ask where the asterisk is which
proclaims in small print "meet the new boss, same as the old boss."

Does that mean there won't be any change(s) to the AOTC Journal?
Not at all. It will evolve on its own. I'm merely the current caretaker
much like I was during my college days as the editor of the Weekly Jr.
College newspaper, Longview Slugline. (Which many people think
could be a reference to a printing term but in my case the former
horse ranch turned college campus was overrun with slimey slugs just
every where you stepped!)

In someways AOTC Journal will be like a diner that changes its'
specials every day because that's just what they were able to get. Sort
of a catch of the day. I could also say and I'm pretty sure Ed will
concur, getting contributions can be as challenging as the pulling of
teeth ... sometimes.

I feel fortunate to have evolved during an era of unprecedented
creativity in all forms of communication. Throw off the old, welcome
the new. If the new didn't exist, then we'd invent it. Often we were
told there were certain rules that were never to be broken. Hell's bells,
that just made us want to break them. Creative people took chances,
were profane, iconoclastically declaring "fuck the rules!" every chance
we got.

One of the iconoclastic publications that impressed me the most was
Paul Krassner's The Realist. Irreverent and witty just like Paul said and
which appealed to my post Vietnam delusion of a noble purpose
causing my revolution of anger and scepticism. That era's rich legacy
of sex, drugs and rock n' roll served as socially redeeming value much
to a Pope Palpatine's disingenuous excuse to blame the era for priestly
sins that encompass the entire lifetime of his church. Which brings me
to an addition of highlighting a website or a podcast that any member
can recommend.
Paul Krassner’s website remains viable and has the added incentive of having free access to all of The Realist issues. I could and have spent whole days reading some of the most lucid and outrageous literature the 1960's produced. You can too at www.paulkrassner.com/

Now that I got that out of the way, in this issue we have a varied collection from our most active writers. Yashi Nozawa shares his memories as a young student in Japan during the early days of WWII. Dan Vignau echoes Krassner’s revolutionary response to rainbow inequality in his evolution from nerd to gay revolutionary at the University of Tennessee. Jim Longo’s “Glimpse of the Unholy Trinity of the Freudian Psyche” may result in readers talking to themselves. Ed Zillioux gets to the microscopic basics with Darwin and RNA and how things evolve. Of course, you can always depend on Bert Mautz to observe and comment on the spiritual harmony of a musician and his muse.

We continue the process of increasing the distribution of this Journal in the hopes of attracting new members. If you are new to the Aware Ones and would like to know more about us please visit our website at http://www.AwareOnesOfTheTreasureCoast.com.
also welcome to join our table at Importico's Bakery, 555 S. Colorado Ave., Stuart, where we gather every Sunday around the hours of 10 to noon to share ideas and challenge your mind.

If you do not want the journal and wish to have your address removed, please email vmthorp@outlook.com for confirmation.

AOTC MEMBERS

Joan Auerbach  Stretch Graton
Marsha Banks  Bob Haskins
Ernie Breud  Barbara Lange
Eddie Buitrago  Jim Longo
Rick Burkhart  Yashi Nozawa
Sandra Burkhart  Roberta Synal
Paul Carlos  Lucy Thorp
Gloria Cosgrove  Virgil Thorp
Ray Duryea  Dan Vignau
Marilyn Graton  Ed Zillioux

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Meetings
Sunday Coffee – Every Sunday, Importico's Bakery, 555 S. Colorado Ave., Stuart, 10 a.m.ish, outside when weather’s agreeable.
TC Secular Writers – Every other Thursday, Jensen's House of Brews, 6:30 pm; May 2, 16 & 30?; June 13 & 27.

Events

May potluck? Looking for a volunteer.

Freeflo is coming! Nov. 1-3, Orlando FL. Florida Humanist Assoc. www.freeflo.org/

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WHO SAID THIS?
QUOTATION QUIZ

"I want a goddamn strong statement on marijuana. I mean, one on marijuana that just tears the ass out if them. Funny thing, every one of the bastards out for legalizing marijuana is Jewish. What the Christ is the matter with the Jews? What is the matter with them?" Answer on the last page.

Courtesy Dan Vignau

COMMENTARY
Musings and pondering

by JDanVignau

Should The Aware Ones of the Treasure Coast leave a legacy? I propose that we do. One of the real problems in our society, and I speculate that it is the biggest issue, is the susceptibility to the corporate propaganda of the populace presented by our corporately controlled political system.

You name it:

Global Warming. Overpopulation. Pollution. Health Care. Gun Control. Racism and Gender Phobias. Reproductive Rights. Drug Prices. The ability to earn enough to support a family. Education. Religious Rights, AND nonreligious rights. All of these are issues that the world’s greedy conglomerate, known to have think tanks for both
for Corporate control of resources and programming of our minds, use to accumulate wealth at any cost, even if it destroys the planet.

We must never forget the description of greed espoused by Karl Marx, which claimed that no matter how dire their circumstances, the corporate elite is so hung up on the accumulation of wealth, that should a revolution begin to overthrow them, they will fight to the bitter end to sell us the ropes that we use to hang them.

Name anything that keeps working people down, and it all boils down to their being brainwashed to vote against their own interests. Their religious books say nothing about abortion or gun rights, yet these easily duped believers, using corporate sponsored mind control, are united by the massive imaging of the pattern recognition provided by those who seek to dominate their lives.

Why can’t the commoners, or as I must point out, the Non-Aware Ones, figure this out? They are too busy sucking up ideas that are born in think tanks, including the original one, religious brainwashing.

Martin Luther stated the answer to why people don’t think: Faith: It is the Enemy of Reason. Nietzsche knew it: Faith, It means not wanting to know. Our faith in the belief that our understanding of the world is correct keeps us from thinking and reasoning. The pattern recognition abilities of Homo sapiens is phenomenal.

We even see patterns that are not there, and that is how propaganda works. It gives us patterns of deceit.

Just maybe, since members of this group consider ourselves to be quite aware, especially when compared to non-thinkers who spit out adages and old wives tales based on a constant barrage of brainwashing, just maybe, we can figure out a way to help people reason, rather than to simply react, as programmed.

How about a book, a book co-written by us, The Aware Ones. One possible title that actually might be salable, i.e., might reach someone somewhere, “Critical Thinking for Dummies... and others”.

I suggest we each write something along these lines. We can read our ideas here, improve upon them, and actually leave something to be remembered for. It could be our next class project, so to speak.
How about it? Should we do it, or just gradually die off glad that we don’t have to witness the end, while the people remain ignorant?

In a few billion years or so, when our Sun dies out, it will mean nothing, yet we might actually improve someone’s life, or possibly kindle flames of ideas to be pondered by people who want to learn to think. Or we could just be busy jerking ourselves off.

But why not try it? It is fun.

Thinking and learning as we teach can be, too.

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A GLIMPSE OF THE UNHOLY TRINITY OF THE FREUDIAN PSYCHE

By James Longo

“It is the equivalent of one in the morning, I need to write and I have nothing,” The Ego said.

“That’s what you always say.”

“And who the hell are you?” The ego said.

“I could be your Id. I could be your Superego. Hell I could even be your Ego.”

“All I know is I have a deadline, and what the fuck is an Id, an Ego or a Superego?” The Ego asked.

“Isn’t that why God made Google?” A third voice said.

“Who the fuck are you?” The Id and Ego asked.

“I’m your Superego you fool.”
“Here I am wanting to have an intelligent conversation with myself and it turns into a three ring circus.” The Ego said.

“Don’t blame us it’s all Sigmund Freud’s fault.” The Id said.

“It is all, your fault.”

“Shut up, Superego.” The Id and Ego screamed.

“You can tell me to shut up all you want, you know in the end I’m the one that makes you do the right thing.”

“You might get me to do the right thing, but I’m the one who makes it happen,” The Ego said.

“You are both fucked up if I didn’t have the ideas in the first place you’d be sitting around with your thumb up your ass,” Screamed the Id.

“Hold on if we ran with your ideas we’d be spending our life in prison. I’m the guy that makes sure we go to work, not cheat on our mate, and functions properly in society.” Superego said.

“Thanks a lot,” Ego and Id said in unison.

“Do I hear a touch of sarcasm?”

“Not a touch, guilt boy, a load.”

“Do I need to point out that without me you would have taken to all sort of risky behaviors that would have gotten us in all kind of trouble.”

“I think you are overstating your role, I would always have taken the best course for us to maximize results. It is what I do best.

“I would have picked the eighteen-year-old with that tight ass over the chunky girl?” The Id said.

“Well Id that’s why we never listen to you! Did you see the trouble that tight ass caused that other guy: a kid, a divorce, a mental breakdown, I bet her middle name was Trouble.”

“You listened, but you just never acted and maybe that’s a good thing. But you know you wanted to hit that.” The Id said.
“But you did the moral thing and it turned out to be the right thing,”
the Superego said.

“Superego you know that wasn’t why.”

“I saw the potential in the chunky girl she was my equal and more in
so many ways.” The Ego said.

“And she was funny too.” The Id chimed in.

Let me get this straight according to Freud, we have three distinct
beings almost like a Looney tunes cartoon. You have the devilish Id
who comes up with raw ideas that says let’s do that. Meanwhile the
angelic Superego says you can’t do that -- it wouldn’t be right or what
about the consequences. In the middle sits the Ego who has to take
those raw ideas, think about the consequences of those ideas and turn
them into a workable plan,” The Ego said.

“I think it is a debate on what you want versus what you should, and
the Ego mediates that debate to try to make 'the want' and 'the
should' satisfied, and personally I think you come down on the should
side way too often,” the Id said.

“For a guy who supposedly listens to the Superego way too much you
still manage to get into shit load of trouble.” The Superego said.

“You have to remember everyone is dancing with these three distinct
beasts. It is amazing society works at all. I do the best I can,
considering you don’t know who is in control with any person you are
dealing with.” Ego said.

“And you wonder why the average person is so screwed up,” The
Superego said.
The Id asked, “Does Donald Trump have a Superego?”

The Superego and Ego screamed in harmony, “I doubt it!!!”

My objection to Christianity is that it is infinitely cruel, infinitely selfish, and, I might add, infinitely absurd. -- Robert Ingersoll

A SURVIVOR'S STUDY IN CRITICAL THINKING

By A. Heretic (aka Virgil Thorp)

It's springtime and that's when the swirly storms come out of the heavens and the savagely strong and angry winds lay waste to homes, barns and trailer parks; anything that has the misfortune to be in their way. Survivors almost always compare the noise to the sound of a
hurtling freight train, grinding and rattling its way down the tracks until the hurricane force zephyrs strike, devour and destroy.

Of course, you have a better chance at winning some monetary lottery than by being consumed in the equinocital cyclones that are produced by nature -- scary and frightening that they are -- yet many of our fellow creatures can't wait to thank their imaginary friend for protecting them from the catastrophe and will find all sorts of absurd justification for being spared except for the obvious “why the fuck did 'HE' let this happen to me?”.

It irritates me beyond belief when someone thanks Jesus for sparing their home and the dwelling across the street is shredded like coleslaw. But, I am entirely baffled when that battered believer is interviewed in their tattered ruin and testifies with diabetical sweetness that if it wasn't for their 'gawd's' protection they, too, would be as shattered and scattered as everything they used to own above their stripped clean foundation.

As I was surfing the web I came across a story on the current wave of catastrophic apologetical evangelism on Yahoo Lifestyle by Hope Schreiber concerning an Alabama storm victim's alleged luck at the the phenomenon of the only walls remaining upright in their tornado ravaged homestead were two of the four walls of their so-called “prayer room”. Hope had discovered the story after it was posted on
twitter by “Jason”, a member of the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team as evidence of divine intervention:

“Listen to me please. I just left a family who survived the tornado in this house and the only (thing) left standing is this closet. It's the grandmother's prayer closet, and the whole family survived. Are you kidding me!!! My God is awesome!!! Shout somebody! --Jason ***--”

Which is the absolute dichotomy of another biblical reference that echoes the parable of the publican and the pharisee that Hope ended the piece with:

“For the uninitiated, some Christians take the word of the Bible quite literally and will set aside a room, or a closet, that is dedicated to prayer, as per Matthew 6:5-6. The verse reads, 'And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.'”

I once heard the televangelist, Pat Robertson, take credit for praying for a hurricane to miss his home state of Virginia and strike Maryland instead by saying he had divine revelation that the acceptance of homosexuality and abortion was the direct cause of most if not all our calamities including the 9/11 terror attack, Hurricane Katrina (even though the center of gay life in New Orleans was the little touched French Quarter), and, among a myriad of other travesties, he blames the devastating 2010 Haitian Earthquake on the rebellious former slaves because they had allegedly made a pact with the devil to liberate themselves from the oppressive French plantation owners. I can't prove that he is wrong but I also cannot prove he has any pull with an imaginary barbarian deity any more than that deity cares which team might score a touchdown because they have the most righteous members in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes on their squad.
It is really fucking tacky to have such a repugnant god who whispers infanticidal orders to fathers, condones slavery and sadistically drowns practically every living thing on the planet out of a tantrum of pique. Raise your hand if you believe that the bible is the best book to prove how dis-rational it is in itself. Uplifting? Hell's bells, the book is damned disgusting and hardly anything that should be looked up to and revered and certainly nothing that should be the basis of civilization, government or morality.

Is there any wonder about the veracity of calling on an unseen Yahweh to provide your temporal and eternal insurance policy? Of course not. How fucking ignorant must an individual be to think there is a guardian angel or a guardian supreme being who watches and protects you while you do every thing including taking a poop!

Another story happened nearby recently and I just missed witnessing it by a scant minute. A couple – who knows if they were in love or not but they had been cohabitating for nearly ten years – had taken an unwise course on a sunny Tuesday afternoon and decided to capture a prized fish for the lady’s birthday dinner. Their demise came as they were tranquilly fishing and according to a copyrighted story by Will Greenlee in the Ft. Pierce Tribune, the engaged couple were talking about God on a railway trestle across Taylor Creek when a grinding and rattling act of that very same god struck them both, killing the man and making the woman another grieving consort of the non-discriminating almost Darwinesque deity they both prayed to.

The survivor, Karen Nicholson, said that even though “No Trespassing” signs were posted in several places around the bridge, the Croaker fishing was best underneath it and her fiancee, Clarence Taylor, had
fish there many times. How ironic that their biblical discussion
distracted them from the on-coming destruction. Nicholson stated she
never heard the train even though the conductor reported sounding
the horn as the train approached the bridge and neared a busy, gated,
light flashing and bell ringing automobile crossing. Why didn't their
gawd miraculously prevent the tragedy? Could not he just as easily
averted Clarence's death by booting his fat ass into the channel before
the train made contact? Could it be that the basis for their fervent
belief is based on fallacy and fear of an unpleasant afterlife?

So, if we are considering making the bible the ultimate arbiter of
goodness and what our country and government is based on, we must
look at it critically. When you do (that also means thoroughly) you find
that your “good book” is full of not only false hope, it contains hatred,
animosities and degradations. And for my money any goodness and
decency it contains is accidental. And when you use that critical point
of view, the realization dawns on you that this book was written by
uncivilized tribal barbarians and then you find it doesn't fight
misogyny, hatred and bigotry, it hides it.

We've all heard the ancient adage; “there are no atheists in foxholes.”
as a rebuke to the non-religious. There is no doubt that the religious
will pray whenever and where ever they perceive danger. Perhaps the
non-religious do too but that is not verifiable and they just might
respond like Sigourney Weaver (as Ellen Ripley) did in the first Alien
movie when she realized the xenomorph had stowed away on the
escape shuttle craft after murdering the other Nostromo crew
members including the blubber-praying Veronica Cartwright (as
Lambert) as she was being obscenely caressed and drooled upon by
the vicious alien. Ripley realizes that she's in extreme peril and instead
of invoking a deity, she softly repeats “lucky, lucky, lucky” to herself as
she stealthily slithers into her spacesuit for protection prior to flushing
the ravenous alien out the airlock into interstellar space.

There was no utterance of “Save me Jesus” or “Squash that bug with
your enormous holy great toe, Jehovah.” Just “lucky, lucky, lucky,” as
her mind raced to think of a way to avoid being being cocooned as a
baby xenomorph hostess.

In many a combat situation I have no doubt there is praying to be
saved from dying but not by everyone and often, there is also a string
of blasphemies being yelled, somewhat similar to what you might hear
during sexual orgasms. Whether there is a gawd listening or not, it is
the hypocritical pharisee broadcasting their thanks or their self
congratulations for their deliverance that is the source of my disgust
and irritation.
And what about Karen and Clarence? Shouldn't a merciful gawd have at least nudged them into the brackish water and saved their future? Could it be the capricious icon just let nature take its course and since the couple was in the way of destruction let it Darwinistically happen while snickering gleefully about what dumb clucks he had created?

After all is said and done, if you are a believer, my sad condolences should that savagely sadistic son-of-a-bitch ever let something similar happen to you. But just keep in mind, you can always jump out of the way if your head is not too far up your ass to hear the warning that the grinding and rattling runaway train is hurtling down the tracks right at you. Use some sense. Learn from Clarence. Don't stop to pray! Jump motherfucker, jump!

ARTICLES

The Many Paths to Creation
By Ed Zillioux

The explanation of Darwinian evolution has, in the past, gotten hung up on the question of what kick-started the whole process. That’s no longer the case. The search for a self-replicating precursor of life on Earth, once thought to be an intractable problem, is now yielding to broader scientific enquiry. It turns out that there are many possible mechanisms that might have led to the self-sustaining replication of nucleic acids and the cellularization of genetic material that is the basis of life on Earth. Protocell division has now been demonstrated based on simple physical and chemical mechanisms. Simple organic replicators also can be generated, and chance trial and error in template-substrate pairings would have led to more robust repli
cators. Once an early replicator established itself, the feedback cycle leading to the evolution of additional catalysts would have been difficult to derail. It all might have taken millions of years, but that’s nothing but

a blink in the geological time scale. Strong candidates for early replicators are RNA enzymes or rybozymes. We carry RNA (ribonucleic acid, the single-strand cousin of the familiar double-strand DNA) in every cell in our bodies. Francis Crick and others have espoused the concept of RNA as a primordial molecule and its presence in modern cells has been referred to as fossils of nucleic acid enzymes. That is, our cellular RNA is likely an evolutionary remnant of an RNA-based enzymatic system that preceded the protein-based one seen in all extant life, although it has taken on a number of essential tasks so it’s still paying its own way. But there are so many plausible paths to prebiotic synthesis that we don’t even need to evoke RNA enzymes for
the Grand Initiation. It could have started with just a simple gas mix and an electric spark.


Nevertheless, many researchers still agree that life as we know it likely emerged from an RNA world. It is now postulated that the formation of RNA may have occurred as early as 4.35 billion years ago - a mere 183 million years after the Earth was formed. It took another 920 million years (3.43 billion years ago) before the first fossils attributed to microorganisms were laid down and preserved in crystals of zircon. This scenario favors a much earlier emergence of life on Earth than previously imagined.

This series of events was precipitated when a moon-sized object sideswiped the Earth only 40 million years after our own Moon was formed. The resulting explosion left an orbiting cloud of molten iron and other debris. The metallic hailstorm that followed split oxygen atoms from water leaving hydrogen behind. The oxygen bonded readily with the iron forming the rust-colored iron oxide deposits that encircle our planet. As the temperature cooled, organic molecules formed under the blanket of hydrogen, and it is thought that these molecules linked up to form the first RNA.

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THE WAY WE WERE

How I changed from a serious nerd to a revolutionary
In the fall of 1969, a Unitarian minister in San Francisco, Fred Stolle, was defrocked by the local Unitarian-Universalist Church of San Francisco, because he came out as gay during the church’s annual convention. This event changed his life to that of a gay activist. Along with his contemporary Troy Perry, a defrocked Church of God minister who had recently founded the now 222 congregation Metropolitan Church for gay Christian worshipers, these two men provided the foundation for West Coast Gay Activism.

A few months before Stolle’s ouster, and a year after Perry’s founding of his MCC church, the patrons of New York’s gay oriented Stonewall Inn decided to revolt against the constant harassment and raids by the New York Police Department. This uprising is honored as the benchmark of gay rights movement encouraging it to become much more militant by standing up and saying “enough is enough” to police oppression.

Situated directly across from this club was a tenement owned by Donald Trump’s Dad, Fred. Notably, the musician and activist Woody Guthrie resided there, and wrote about his landlord:

Beach Haven ain’t my home
No, I just can’t pay this rent
My money’s down the drain
And my soul is badly bent
Beach Haven is Trump’s tower
Where no black folks come to roam
No, No, Old Man Trump,
Beach Haven ain’t my home!

So, on both sides of the country, the first successful gay activism was born toward the end of the turbulent 1960’s.

Back home in East Tennessee, a sexually troubled student saw Fred Stolle speak, and decided to bring this activism to Knoxville.

Having joined the UU church a few years earlier, and using its resources to become the second atheist person in the country to be allowed to claim conscientious objector status for the Selective Service draft, I was already prepared for the gay fight ahead.

The university administration was not!

Needing three faculty members to sign my petition for my budding Gay Liberation Front, I confronted my Sociology and Psychology professors, along with the gay program director of the Campus classical and jazz radio FM station, who, interestingly and 25 years later ran for city council as the gay environmentalist candidate, garnering 17 percent of the vote, but not enough to be elected.

With signatures in hand, and our so-called Constitution, I headed up to the University Administration offices, where I was curtly rebuked. It seems that homosexuality was a mental illness, at least according to the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, as well as the American Medical Association. Not only that, homosexual acts were a felony in Tennessee and most other states.

For some odd reason, the university had this silly policy of not allowing campus groups that espouse law breaking to meet on campus.
Alas, what could we do?

My schizophrenic partner went through the files of other groups try to find an exception to go by, but to no avail.

We absolutely could not meet on campus. I was having none of that, and placed an ad in the school’s newspaper, The Daily Beacon, for a committee to discuss how to proceed. After a bit of brainstorming, I had an idea: we would form a temporary group, which of course was soundly rejected by the school administrators.

Homecoming was coming up, and a lot of organizations were being formed to make floats and do other silly college things. Notably, they were all listed as temporary groups, with a set purpose, and a time frame for their activities, both of which were requirements for meeting on campus with automatic administrative approval. We put together a plan for a temporary group, a group that would meet on campus for a predetermined time, with specific goals, and a plan for disbanding when our goals were accomplished.

Our project was quite simple: we would meet at the Student Center to discuss and plan how we would get the law changed, and to get shrinks and medical doctors to study whether we should really be classified as mentally ill. Simultaneously, we would study how to get homosexuality legalized.

Once under study, we would continue to meet until our short term goals were accomplished, then we would disband; of course, when our goals were met, we would be deemed sane and legal, and thereby be allowed to form a permanent group.

Simple, huh?

Well, not exactly. Since we had just had a big campus riot, with a mishmash of gays, pot smoking hippies, draft dodgers, an anti-Vietnam contingency, and especially, a huge football “We’re Number One” crowd, the Administration was gun shy and relented when we came back every day to hear, “You just can’t do that.”

The UU church, which had been embarrassed by the way too quick, Fred Stolle defrockstation, said, “Go ahead, but keep minutes of your meetings.” We complied, but were overwhelmed by a young lady who insisted on writing up the goings on in our group. Since no one else volunteered, we let her do this, without realizing that she, along with
two really cute male students who kept trying to have gay sex with our organizers, so they could have us arrested by their police bosses, were all planted by the Knoxville Police Department.

Luckily, the secretary who kept track of all the minutes, claimed that these boys instigated all sexual advances. Strangely, even as the cofounder and President of the group, I never even knew any of this was going on. What I did know was that I got A’s in Sociology and Psychology for my papers on the riots.

I was literally sitting on the hood of a car to take notes, while eating a horrible Moon Pie and drinking my favorite soft drink, a Nehi Orange soda, when one of the cops grabbed me off of the car and threw me into a paddy wagon. About a dozen of us outliers, not the actual rioters, were driven to jail. When the van backed into the loading dock, it stopped about two feet away so we had to try to jump from a crouched position onto the dock, which was lined with a gauntlet of baton wielding cops. My head was split open and we were all afraid we would die that evening. One student, a local pot smoking known bisexual hippie, was pulled from the drunk tank and beaten in front of us, then taken out of our site where we could hear even more hitting and thrashing about until he was out cold. When he was returned to us, the cop screamed, “Which of you faggots want to go next?”

After a few hours, we were let out of jail and told to keep quiet if we knew what was good for us. Most of us went straight to the student
Fifth Grade Year Part 1

What is the penis thinking?

By Yashi Nozawa

April first of the two thousand six hundred second year in the Japanese Imperial Calendar (1942 in the Western calendar); a typical spring day, cherry trees in the schoolyard in full bloom. A gorgeous day, making everybody cheerful, it was a reflection of people's mood in general. We were winning the war against the West, far better than our expectation. On February 22, Singapore surrendered. The American commander in the Far East, General Douglas MacArthur, escaped in haste and abandoned his stranded soldiers in the Philippines. On March 9, the Japanese Army completed conquest of the Dutch East Indies.
It was also the day of the beginning of the new school year. I had just been promoted to the fifth grade. I had a faint hope of being assigned to a new teacher. I had had the same teacher, Mr. Sakura, for the past four years. I rushed to the bulletin board on which class assignments were posted. Names of the fifth grade students were listed in the order of A-I-U-E-O (Japanese alphabet). My name was usually three-quarters away from the beginning. The list continued, Nagano, Nakamura, Nishino, Nogi, Nomura, and Nozawa.

I found my name. Nozawa was assigned to the first class, of which the homeroom teacher was Mr. Sakura. I was disappointed. I didn't dislike Mr. Sakura. I admired and respected him. It was just that he was not a suitable teacher for my preparation for the entrance exam to a metropolitan middle school. He had never finished any textbook during the past four years.

A few days later, Mr. Sakura said, “How many of you plan to go to a middle school? Raise your hand.”

He counted, “One, two, ... ten, good. I will guarantee all of you get into a middle school, and I'll show them this is the best class this school ever had.”

Then he noticed me, “Nozawa, you too!”

“Yes, sir. I want to go to Ninth Metropolitan Middle School, sir,” I said.

“You are ambitious, but...” he hesitated, “do you know a new policy was implemented this month? Under the new policy, your admission to a metropolitan middle school will be determined mostly by two factors, even though they will also conduct a token written test. One factor is
the recommendation from our sixth-grade teacher and the second factor is the number of A's in your report cards during fifth- and sixth-grade.”

“No, I didn't know, sir,” I said.

“I can recommend only two from this class of fifty boys for all five metropolitan middle schools in this district,” he said, “so you should apply for a private middle school. Pity, its tuition may be too high for your family!”

His statements shocked my friends and me studying together for the written test. We had formed a private study group early in our fourth-grade. We wanted to take advantage of abundant self-study hours in our class to prepare ourselves for a metropolitan middle school entrance exam.

Everybody in my class knew whom Mr. Sakura would recommend: Okura-kun, the class president and Murata-kun vice president. Mr. Sakura had designated them for these positions every term for the past four years. I believed a rumor that their parents, who made lots of money by black-marketing rationed commodities, bought these positions. Okura-kun's father owned a rice store. Murata-kun's father ran a textile factory.

The Japanese people had been euphoric for the past four months because of the initial victories in the war against the United States and Great Britain. However, the drain of resources from the preceding four years of undeclared war against China had caused acute shortages of goods and materials. The Japanese government rationed food and clothes. It also reorganized its countrywide education system and revised curriculum to supply motivated patriotic soldiers and support personnel for the war effort.

I had chosen to become a career Army officer, the contemporary equivalent of samurai, and wanted to become a general, to rescue my parents from the slums. As the first step to my goal, I had to enter a metropolitan middle school, not a private one. Only a metropolitan middle school could provide me the high-level education necessary for an army officer's school with affordable tuition.

Mr. Sakura smashed my dream in its first step. We believed that entrance examinations for public universities and middle schools in the Japanese education system are the fairest and least corrupt system; and all applicants are equally treated regardless of their
family backgrounds or economic conditions. The selection is strictly based on the score of the written examination.

Tuition of public universities and middle schools are very affordable even for the poorest family, and ample scholarship opportunities are available. Furthermore, they provide the highest level of education in Japan. In essence, entering into a metropolitan middle school, was the only way to have a successful career for boys from poor families without any nepotistic connections, like me. Because of the war, education officials of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government had been tweaking the entrance examination system for the metropolitan middle schools for the past few years. The previous year's new system included an emphasis on a recommendation from elementary schools with a token written exam, as Mr. Sakura described.

“Mom, Mr. Sakura said I wouldn't be able to go to a middle school,” I said.

“Yes, you will, and you shall go to a metropolitan middle school. If you perform your duties to the best of your ability, Kami-sama (Our Deities) will take care of you. The time for your application is still twenty months away. Meanwhile, the admission procedure might change again. Don't be discouraged and don't use Mr. Sakura’s statements as an excuse to slack off in your study effort. Your duty is to study no matter what happens. Have faith in Kami-sama and keep studying,” Mon said.

“Okay, Mom. I will keep studying.”

“Don't worry, just do your duty. Kami-sama will take care of you,” Mom repeated.

Several days later, we had a surprise attack on Tokyo and several other cities by American bombers, but the damage was minor. The results of the air raid were intensified air defense drills and a reorganization of the air defense system. Since the Japanese were still winning, we kept carrying on our daily lives with a minimum of disturbance. For instance, on May 6, America's last stronghold, Fortress Corregidor in the Philippines, surrendered. The conquest of Burma was completed May 20. Japanese forces secured the entire Philippines on June 9.

I ignored the war situation and concentrated on preparation for the entrance exam believing that a written exam would be revived.
My family and I thought that Mr. Sakura was not a good teacher for students who wanted to go to Middle schools. However, he had many solid supporters, included our principal and superintendent, who regarded him as the greatest teacher. I detailed the reason for his good reputation in “Don't Be Afraid of Air Raids”, but I will repeat it briefly.

Yes, he was the greatest patriot in our school. Before my time, our school building burned down, including the principal's office and an adjacent sacred room, where portraits of three emperors and empresses: Meiji, Taisho, and Kinijo (present) were kept. Realizing the peril of the sacred portraits, Mr. Sakura, disregarding the risk to his life, jumped into the fire and rescued them. His heroic act was evidenced by his facial burn mark. He had proved not only his patriotism but also his devotion to the Emperor. His action also preserved the principal's and the vice principal's employment.

When a new school building was rebuilt with the same two-story wooden frame structure, a separate small, but fireproof reinforced concrete shrine, Hohanden (Holy Safe shrine), was erected near the main gate of the school for the safekeeping of the sacred portraits.

Mr. Sakura was also a good trainer for military marching. Last year a visiting superintendent praised my fourth-grade class, “I never saw such a perfect parade march in any elementary school.”
Also, Mr. Sakura was the best teacher for Shushin (morality), the most important course in the new curriculum to tutor loyal subjects for the Emperor. The course taught us moral grounds and proper behaviors as patriotic Japanese. Mr. Sakuro usually started his class by asking a pupil to recite the Imperial Rescript on Education, issued by Emperor Meiji on October 10, 1881. Only five or six pupils in our class of fifty had memorized the entire Rescript. One time I had the honor of reciting the two page long indecipherable sacred text without any mistake.

“Chin omou ni waga koso kos kunio hajimuru koto ... gyomei gyoji.”

No pupil, including me, knew the exact meaning because it was written in a special Imperial language. The opening sentence of “Chin omou ni...” was especially bothersome for me because we knew that a conventional interpretation was wrong, but we didn't know the real meaning. However, it was a matter related to the Emperor, we dare not ask a question.

One day, after we recited the Imperial Rescript, the class comedeian, Kinoshita-kun, could not hold his curiosity anymore.

“Sakura-sensei, what is a penis thinking? He asked.

“Kinoshita, what are you saying! Big fool! Come here! “ Mr. Sakura demanded.

Kinoshita-kun hesitantly walked toward our teacher. The classroom was quiet. All pupils wondered what would happen. We knew Mr. Sakura was really angry even though we could not quite understand the reason for his rage.

When Kinoshita-kun reached the front of the teacher, Mr. Sakura said, “Attention! Stand straight.” Then he slapped Kinoshita-kun's left cheek with his right palm. The hit was so hard that Kinoshita-kun almost fell to the floor.

Mr.Sakura ordered again, “Stand straight.”

Poor Kinoshita-kun stood straight again. Mr. Sakura slapped his right cheek this time. Kinoshita-kun fell to the ground. This time Kinoshita-kun took a while to raise himself up from the floor.
Mr. Sakura said to him, “Attention! Listen carefully! If you're disrespectful again to our beloved Emperor, I'll expel you from this school. Now you may go back to your seat.”

Even after this episode, I didn't find out the real meaning of the opening phrase. I could not wait any more so as soon as I came home, I asked my mother.

“Mom, do you know the Imperial Rescript on Education?”

“Sure, everybody knows that. Even when I was in elementary school we had to recite it.”

“Do you know the real meaning of its opening sentence, 'Chin amouni kohso kohso...’”

“Yes it means that I Emperor, was thinking when Imperial Ancestor established a country, etc. I know what is bothering you. Many boys misunderstand the sentence and get into trouble. I hope you were not in trouble.”

“No, not me, but our class comedian Kinoshita-kun was hit by Mr. Sakura when he asked a question about the sentence.”

“I am sorry for Kinoshita-kun. His teacher should have taught him the meaning when he recited it the first time in the fourth grade. “Chin” is a special court or Imperial word and mean simply 'I', so it is usually translated as 'I, Emperor,' Every teacher knows that every fourth-grade boy thinks 'Chin' is a penis because their sounds are the same in colloquial language. Teachers are instructed to make sure that all fourth grade boys know the correct meaning of the word 'Chin.' Do you know who his fourth-grade teacher was?”

“I believe Mr. Sakura was his teacher.”

“Was Mr. Sakura upset about Kinoshita-kun?”

“Yes, he was. Mr. Sakura gave Kinoshita-kun a double-slap on his cheeks. Poor Kinoshita-kun fell on the floor and could hardly stand up by himself. But why did Mr. Sakura get angry about Kinoshita-kun?”
“It's pride and fear. Mr. Sakura is proud about his reputation being of the most patriotic teacher in Tokyo. But Kinoshita-kun's question indicates the fact that one of the most disrespected pupils came from the class of the most famous patriotic teacher. It implies that Mr. Sakura was incompetent as a teacher who could not teach the most fundamental issue of respect for the Emperor. So, if the story of Kinoshit-kun spreads, his reputation will be ruined.”

I was so glad I did not ask the question to Mr. Sakura, instead of Mom.

P.S. This article is a part of my autobiography series. I sometimes quote materials from previously published parts without a specific reference. To clarify the context of such portions, please refer to the following books, which are available in both print and e-book versions from Amazon.
1. Boy General: Becoming Samurai in Wartime Japan
2. Don't Be Afraid of Air Raids: Memoir of a Japanese Boy During the Pacific War

POETRY

(AWOL)
CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS

BILL MAYS – JAZZ PIANO

all, wanted to share and recommend bill mays' playing – bert

Anticipating this concert, a first time exposure to the pianist, listened
to several of his albums, enjoying his playing, as well as hearing what Jim van Voorheis said about Bill Mays being among Jim’s favorites; Bill Evans and Billy Taylor – technique in expression of improvisational creativity. Jim’s exposing me to his pianist’s perspective was informing and provocative when compared to my own lifetime assembling a roster of feel good favorites.

Cause for some reflection. Raised on a steady diet of classical music emanating from mother’s AM radio in the kitchen in the fifties. She played exclusively the universities’ classical programming. Pop music of the day was directed at someone older than I. Played string bass in high school; including the “dance band.” From here it was a short step to the Student Union grotto to listen to the Music School’s jazz band and various combos. Transfixed by improvisation, particularly when riffs took off on a known melodic line, transfixed, who does this kind of thing? And a jazz appetite was born. Of course, must not forget Heidi’s influence; Mozart concerto playing live on the ancient Steinway at the Baird’s cottage and Brubeck’s “Take Five,” on the car radio after ice cream in town. Henceforth impervious to rock n rolls’ siren song.

A dozen years of piano lessons beginning at age seven. Studying string bass with the U of I Music School Bass Professor, Edward Krolick, and several summers of U of I Summer Youth Music Camp, and my indoctrination was complete. Improvisational jazz is a first love to this day. Back to the Bill Mays’ performance last night.

Fortunate to sit about four rows back from the stage with an eye level view of the key board and Mr. Mays hands. Communications/signals between Mr. Mays and Dr. Jamie Ousley, virtuoso bassist were an additional layer/nuance of their performance. Have mentioned elsewhere, listening to Bill Mays’ albums in no way prepared me for the physical, visual, oral, and audio intensity of his playing live. As a result, rehearing the newly released album this morning, here in the kitchen while I type, is a different experience altogether with the total sensual experience overlain with the audio. Bill Mays will never be the same to my listening.

Another point to make to close. Bill Mays playing can express a full range of emotions from happy to sad. Confessing, to be susceptible to his happy, rollicking, rhythmic, percussive power playing. All of his considerable body mass “tickling those ivories,” was and will be ever a joy. For this I must thank Jim van Voorheis.
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO PUT THIS, SO I'LL JUST COME RIGHT OUT AND SAY IT... MOM, DAD - I'M A HOMOSAPIEN.
I'm just saying if we're stuck here for 40 days and nights, maybe we should get to know other couples...

Origin of the Platypus