

The Advent of the All-Inclusive Events Law

July, 2070 – In August 2020 Congress passed the All-Inclusive Events Law which stated that all private and public events were required to have at least one event attendee representative of every race in the U.S., including American Indian, Asian, African American, Caucasian; a member of every sexual orientation represented by LGBTQ; and a practicing member of a major U.S. religions, including a Christian, Judaist, Muslim, Buddhist, Hinduist, and atheist in attendance (with the inclusion of a heterosexual member optional).

On the 27th of the same month, the brothers John and Steve Earnest became the first arrested offenders of the law. Upon raiding their shared apartment, the investigating FBI agents discovered a Bachelor Party put on for the soon to be wed family friend, Thoreau Heew. Two other friends also in attendance included Bubba Jones and Alfred Lady.

The arresting agents found the event to be shockingly white-washed with solely heterosexual males present and none of the required 15 to 16 attendants. They then informed the Earnest brothers (as the ringleaders of the crime) that they would be placed under immediate arrest for failing to maintain the melting pot idealism envisioned by the law. Heew, a law student, came to the defense of the brothers, stating that in this case, the law allowed for the waiver of the required members in the event the size of the space only allowed for a smaller number of guests. In such cases, the law stipulated that only that number be in attendance. He went on to state that while the brother's three guests were all heterosexual males, they all fulfilled a different demographic: lispers, the morbidly obese, and men who identified as Wonder Woman when they were 5-years old.

Nevertheless, since those three demographics were not on the list of accepted demographics, the agents confiscated the white cake and moved to detain the brothers. John Earnest's heinous evasion of the law ended when he suddenly stated that he was sorry that the cake was white but that he didn't like chocolate cake. The agents immediately downed the perpetrator in a hail of bullets. Bubba Jones later confessed to being the creator and mastermind behind the entirely white cake. He escaped immediate execution only after stating in writing that he was fully willing to consume deserts in any shape, form, size and color.

In court, Steve Earnest, the remaining alleged perpetrator, confessed to engineering the whole scheme with his brother. The judge sentenced him to a 10-year suspended sentence during which he would personally apologize to everyone and animal he had ever offended. After a year, having failed to consistently send in a daily 5-page report on his progress, the judge sentenced him to a 50-year prison term.

In the many ensuing years, Heew became a senator, being instrumental in adding a rock, dog, cat, and a stereotype to the required attendees list under the All-Inclusive Event Law; Jones lost 360 pounds; and Lady helped form the Justice League.

An Open Letter From Molech, God of the Canaanites

Hey guys. Molech here. You might have also heard me called Moloch. Either name is fine...I'm not really that picky about it. I'll keep this as brief as possible because I know

everyone is really busy these days with all the Facebooking, Twittering, and the general feeling of outrage at everything all the time.

When I got into this whole "god" business, it wasn't really something I planned or thought out. The people at the time decided they needed a new god to serve, someone that was going to help with crops, fertility, and winning battles. You know – the basics. They picked me mainly because I was the only one around who was eight feet tall and had the head of a bull. I have to admit, I do present a pretty striking image. Intimidating is the word people used. In the beginning, they were bringing me goats, and sheep, and maybe the odd cow or two to sacrifice. They would "pass them through the fire", I would burn them up, and that was that. Full disclosure here: I was and am a gigantic fraud. I never made it rain, helped with crops, or won any battles for anyone. Nope, I'm just an awesome looking bull man. I have no supernatural powers, but the priests decided the people needed something to worship, so I got the gig.

The problem with this whole set up is that after a time, when things didn't get better for the people, sacrificing cows and sheep didn't seem like it was enough. That's when they started bringing out the kids. I have to admit it was a genius move. The people were truly desperate – there was a famine and people were starving – and it seemed like something a power-hungry deity would want. In their minds, sacrificing a few children would save thousands of others. The math made sense.

I don't believe we need to defend our actions. The people did what they felt was necessary to satisfy their angry and demanding god. I will say this though, you people have taken our blueprint and expanded it in ways that we never even dreamed. Yes, children were sacrificed at my altar, but even in those days, the people had to pretend that it was for some greater cause. These days, all pretense has been dropped. Now you are sacrificing your babies for convenience, choice, lack

of money, and basically any other reason you can invent. You are really doing it! You have finally gotten a large section of society to believe that killing your babies is not only a good choice but in many cases, the best choice. For crying out loud, you've framed it as a basic human right! Hat tip to the evil mastermind that came up with that con. You've even defined it as smart family planning and reproductive healthcare. What the Baal?!? I thought we had some pretty devious and masterful ideas back in the day, but that takes the cake.

I guess that is all I've got for today. Keep up the good work people. You are carrying on the proud tradition we started thousands of years ago. And you are doing it in ways that make our system look primitive and feeble. Bravo! One of these days I am going to make my comeback and when I do, I am putting all these ideas into practice. I have learned so much. Thank you for that.

Happy sacrificing!

Molech

Warriors Set To Sign Thor, Incredible Hulk to Maintain Their Gigantic Advantage Over Rest of NBA

Oakland, CA—Sources are reporting that the Golden State Warriors, in response to LeBron James signing with the Los Angeles Lakers, and just hours after signing highly coveted free agent DeMarcus Cousins, have also reached agreements with

several Marvel Superheroes to guarantee they keep their enormous talent advantage over the rest of the NBA for the third year in a row.

So far Thor and The Incredible Hulk have signed 1-year, cap-friendly deals and the team has also reached out to Iron Man and Ant-Man, though the team would have to petition the NBA to be more flexible regarding uniforms to ensure the suits would be part of the deal.

“Things got tense there for a second,” comment Kevin Durant. “I came here to make sure I would have a cakewalk to the championship every year and if the Lakers add Kawhi then my plan would have been legit in danger. Having Hulk in the low post and the God of Thunder flying all over the court, literally, is going to keep us on cruise control all season long.”

“Yeah, it’s all cool,” Commented Warriors’ guard and two time NBA MVP Steph Curry, with his typical boyish charm. “Warriors Assemble! And all that.”

Thor, explaining his decision, added, “I do not know this game of baskets and balls, but upon my honor, I shall endeavor to vanquish all our enemies. I fought for millennia alongside the Warriors Three (Odin rest their souls) and shall now wage glorious battle with the Warriors of the Golden State.”

Hulk had no comment.

In a completely unprecedented move, sources also say Bugs Bunny and Wayne Knight have reached out to the Warriors, hoping their contributions in vanquishing the MonStars 22 years ago will make them attractive potential free agents as well.

Check back here for the latest on this quickly developing story.

Enlightened Woman Leaves Christianity Due to Jesus and the Apostles' Dehumanizing Language

Portland, Oregon – Emily Van Zant has been a churchgoer all her life, until now. She was born and raised attending church “any time the doors were open,” as she puts it. But recently, the more she reads the Bible, the more problems she has with the tone and rhetoric from some of Christianity’s key figures.

“I tried for a long time to ignore the angry and hostile language that many of the Apostles were spewing. My breaking point was when I realized that this problem originated with Jesus. I decided I could no longer align myself with such intolerant and dehumanizing language and ideology. All people are valuable and created with the spark of divinity. Calling them ‘a brood of vipers’ or ‘white-washed tombs’ was just a bridge too far for me. Shouldn’t we be showing love to everyone, not just those that agree with us?”

Ms. Van Zant joins a growing number of disillusioned ex-Christians who are looking to live out their faith in a more inclusive and tolerant manner. Ms. Van Zant continues:

“I was already struggling with Paul calling Jews “dogs” in Philippians 3:2. But when a good friend of mine pointed out that Jesus called a Canaanite woman a “dog” I knew this sort of intolerance and bigotry was something I could no longer condone. I embarked on a journey of reflection and fact-finding, and I realized this intolerance went deeper than just

language. It was foundational to the entire Christian faith. Jesus' entire ministry and message were built on non-inclusivity, intolerance, and self-centeredness. He actually taught that he was the only way to heaven! The level of arrogance it takes to make that claim is mindboggling. That was his path, and I respect him for that, but you can't force your path on anyone else. You aren't allowed to tell other people that their path is wrong. That's not how this works. More and more people are seeing the truth and coming to the realization that the party is over for Jesus and his good time buddies of intolerance."

For the time being, Emily Van Zant is on her own path, seeking knowledge, wisdom, and faith in a number of religions and faiths.

"I will keep looking until I find something that works best for me. And once I do, I will be sure to tell everyone how intolerant and bigoted they are if they disagree with me."

Sonic, Buoyed by Success of the Pickle Juice Slush, Seeks to Corner the Market on Wacky Menu Items

Delighted by the response to the pickle juice slush, *Sonic* now plans to offer up a variety of other shocking food options. Here are some of their more inspired creations:

Trash Burger – Employees literally walk out to the dumpster, grab some trash, slap it between two buns and deliver it to your car. Delicious!

Brown Bag Extra Special – 9/10 chance you will get a regular brown bag special. 1/10 chance you will get a brown bag full of mustard and ketchup.

Burnt Tots – Just like Mom used to make. The tots are engulfed in flames until they are smoldering ashes, then they are served directly to your taste buds. Yum!

Decent Chicken Sandwich – Nothing weird about this one, except that they just haven't been able to crack the code on the chicken sandwich yet. Adequate!

Lunch Burrito – Tired of breakfast burritos? Ready to level up? Get ready for a lunch burrito, which is basically any regular lunch menu item lazily wrapped in a burrito shell. It costs twice as much, but you'll love it.

Flat Dr. Pepper – They bought a two-liter of Dr. Pepper, opened the cap, put it back on and left it in the cooler for a month. Who will be brave enough to drink it?! FLAT!

Tap Water – It's tap! GROSS!

Hamburger Sundae – Nothing says “frozen treat” like a big chunk of steaming hot burger slapped down right in the middle of it. Eat it up, meatheads!

Bacon Peanut Butter Shake – Basically just a peanut butter shake with what seems to be a solitary, torn up piece of bacon at the very bottom. Surprise!

Mystery Food – Someone found an unmarked food item with an expired date on it in a dark corner of the pantry. Nobody seems to know what it is, or what it used to be. You know you want to eat it though! Comes with a mystery drink.

Memories (Part 3)

This section of my personal memories deals in large part (not exclusively) with ministry-related memories rather than personal ones, and covers a period of some 20 years from 1995 until the present. I include it because, number one, these are special memories in my life, and secondly, they testify to the faithfulness and leading of God as Judy and I endeavored to be obedient to our calling as believers, spouses, parents, and missionaries.

Russia

We were in the process of completing our fourth term of

service in Panama when a phone call came from Brother Eugene Waddell, director of the Foreign (now International) Missions Department. Would Judy and I consider transferring from Panama to Russia? After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, God had opened doors to Russia and all the former Soviet Union countries, and there was the possibility of Free Will Baptists partnering with the Russian Baptist Union, most of whom were very close to us doctrinally. This was the spring of 1995.''

As we finished up that term and came to the states, with plans to visit Russia with someone from the mission that year, our feeling was that we would be transferring. I picked up some Russian grammar books, a traveler's course, and other resources, thinking that would help prepare me. By the time we went in October 1995, I had learned several phrases and lots of individual words.

The trip was unforgettable. We traveled with Jimmy Aldridge (Overseas Secretary with FWB International Mission) and Galen Dunbar (board member). We met Brother Nicolai Sobolev, pastor and leader in the Russian Baptist Union, and what a wonderful host he was! We traveled from Moscow to Chelyabinsk, and then to Yekaterinburg. We attended a conference in Moscow with many Russian pastors and leaders, and a number of expatriates. What a humbling experience to listen to Russian pastors relate their experiences of time spent in prison, torture and isolation. Their faithfulness to our God came through in their testimonies. Through impossible situations, they labored to keep the church alive in Russia.

As a result of that amazing conference, and through an extended season of prayer and reflection, we reluctantly told Brother Waddell that we didn't feel the Lord's leading to go to Russia. At that time, we did not know why God said no. A year or so later, Mike and Cathy Corley were appointed to do what we were asked to do and they did it so much better than we could have!. He knew Russian and could begin ministry without the years of language study. Don't second guess God.

His ways are always perfect.

Director of Field Operations

In not choosing to go to Russia, we opted to return to Panama for a fifth term. That concluded in the middle of 1999, and we moved to Nashville to be near our oldest two sons (Michael was married and Phillip was a senior at Welch), and to enroll David in Bible College. Stateside assignment usually lasted a year or so, and involved visiting churches, speaking in mission conferences, attending associational meetings, and other mission-related opportunities. I was in western Missouri in an area-wide mission conference when one unusually warm November afternoon I received a call from James Forlines, who had become General Director of the Mission in 1998.

Bro. James told me he was considering me as a possibility for the Foreign Missions (now International Missions) administrative staff. Was I interested and willing to be considered? I could take some time and think and pray, talk it over with Judy, etc. We prayed earnestly, considered the possibilities and implications as to what it would mean for us, and in early January 2000, I called and told Bro. James that if he selected me for the position, I would accept. In mid-January, I became the Director of Field Operations.

It was my role to supervise and coordinate the efforts of our field personnel. I had an office in Nashville, and from there traveled to approximately 20 countries over the next eight years. It was truly a great adventure, a challenge beyond anything I could have imagined. Thanks to the Lord's enablement, I was a part of several initiatives that enabled us as a people to have a greater impact around the world: partnership with Bible Mission International in Central Asia, the creation of the position of Regional Director which served us well for a number of years, although it has now been

eliminated, the creation of the Hanna Project, and ongoing efforts with our international Free Will Baptist family. One of my most special memories was going to Bulgaria with Clint Morgan and Tim Awtrey to survey that country as a potential field of service for our mission, and later making that recommendation to our Board. The Board approved opening Bulgaria, and today, nearly 15 years later, God is working there in a mighty way through four missionary couples and a growing number of Bulgarian believers.

The International Fellowship of Free Will Baptist Churches, Inc

In 1992 a historic event happened for Free Will Baptists around the world. Panama was host to a consultation that would bring representatives from a number of countries where our missionaries served. Spearheaded by Dr. Melvin Worthington, Executive Secretary of the National Association of Free Will Baptists, USA, the consultation became the catalyst for an international movement.

The International Fellowship of Free Will Baptist Churches, Inc. was officially organized in 1995 in Brazil. They decided to meet every three years. I missed the 1995 and 1998 meetings in Brazil and Uruguay, respectively, but starting in 2002 (we skipped 2001 because it was so close to the terrorist attacks of 9-11), I attended every meeting through 2010, plus a number of executive committee meetings on off years as a translator-advisor, or as a member of the committee. Bro. Worthington decided to postpone the next session until 2002, and we met near Nashville, Tennessee at Camp Garner Creek. We met in Panama in 2004, France in 2007, and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma in 2010.

We'd basically meet every three years or so for a general assembly. The other years I would help coordinate an executive

committee meeting, sometimes as a liaison and sometimes as a member of that committee. Working with men like Gerardo Acevedo (Uruguay), José Manuel Parrón (Spain), Luis Felipe Tijerina (México), and others remains a joy I can't adequately describe and has led to some treasured friendships as well.

Panamá, Part II

God is truly a God of surprises. I had served as Director of Field Operations at International Missions, truly loved it, and was able to visit around 20 countries during those years. However, I was having some health issues (turned out to be sleep apnea at the time, and later some more problems), and I also began to sense some unrest in my spirit that perhaps it was time to leave and find a different ministry. The Lord graciously opened doors. I would leave the position of DFO, but stay on with the Mission. The original plan was to stay involved with the International Fellowship of Free Will Baptist Churches and help countries that had received the gospel from Free Will Baptist in the United States develop plans and strategies to begin sending out their own cross-cultural missionaries. At the same time, it was felt that Judy and I should have a field ministry somewhere, so we decided to divide that role between Panama (helping the Bowermans at the seminary) and Uruguay (teaching Bible institute classes). However, by the end of 2008, Eddie's health had deteriorated, and he was going to have to return stateside immediately and go on a liver transplant waiting list. We made a trip to Panama in early January 2009 to meet with Eddie and LaRhonda Bowerman getting a crash course in the operations of the Seminary in Chame. Someone would need to assume leadership of the seminary, and it seemed that the Lord had brought us back to Panama for that hour. We served the next five-plus years in Chame, which turned out to be some of the most rewarding years of ministry. But it was not easy. The daily schedule was

exhausting, on call 24/7, readjusting to the heat and humidity of Panama, and responsibilities without number. My undiagnosed health problems also left me extremely tired most of the time. Only God can be credited with giving us strength for each new day.

Judy had some flowers planted around the porch of the dorm where we were living. The beautiful small purple flowers bloomed every morning and then faded away in the heat of the day. Judy said they reminded her of Lamentations 3:23, "They (God's mercies) are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness." It was a reminder every morning when we walked out the door, that God is faithful and His mercy to us is new and refreshing each day.

Another blessing to us was how God sent us Ariadna and Lazaro Riesgo from Cuba to help us in the seminary! "God sent" is putting it lightly! They came and stepped in immediately relieving us of many of the duties we had.

Also, the churches in Panama were seeing the importance of the seminary and taking ownership. Pastors were willing to dedicate two days a week to teach classes and this was essential. We had students in three different years so it was necessary to have three classes simultaneously. Not only was it a great help to us but the students learned from seasoned pastors. Another benefit was the pastors caught the vision and shared it with their congregations.

It is hard to believe that we're talking about nearly 20 years here. From a middle-aged couple with children still at home to watching those same children grow up, go off to college (all went to Free Will Baptist Bible College, now Welch College), meet their future spouse, get married, and start their own family. Now we're grandparents, several times over, but "greatly blessed, highly favored." As the old saying goes, "how time has flown!"

Bethany

A highlight of 2014 for us was our trip to Peru to see David, Bethany, and their three children; Isaac, Jude, and Naomi. Peru is a beautiful country, Lima is a fascinating city, and being with the kids was special. We actually had them to ourselves for a few days while David and Bethany went away to have a short vacation and celebrate their 10th anniversary. The next time we saw them was just before Christmas 2014 when they flew in to spend their Christmas break with the Lytles Bethany's family in the Huntsville Alabama area. How could I ever forget the night Bethany told us she might have cancer? She didn't feel well from the time they arrived, and kept getting worse. Judy and I were to have gone to Panama on January 7 for a special "Passing the Baton" meeting that weekend in which International Missions was turning the work there over entirely to the National church. Because Bethany was feeling so bad, Judy decided not to go and went down to Huntsville, AL with Sheila Sass. I was to go on to Panama, but that very morning David called to say that cancer had spread throughout Bethany's body. I got the message en route to the airport, so I canceled my trip, went down to Alabama that morning straight to the hospital. Bethany went home to be with Jesus the next morning around 2:30.

Epilogue

I told one of the editors of Rambling Ever On that the Epilogue would be relatively short. We left Panama as missionaries assigned to that field in 2014 and retired from the Mission in June 2015. Growing health concerns led to an MRI which revealed that I have Intracranial Hypotension, a spinal fluid loss, which causes the brain to sag and, in my case, led to severe headaches, especially when preaching, lack

of balance which caused me to not be able to walk a straight line, and even speed up, trip, and fall. To that, we could add lethargy, slurred speech, and delayed reactions that at times made it dangerous to drive. God has been merciful, and though it took a while, we've learned that getting horizontal and resting every day has helped tremendously.

Judy and I have both had a number of health issues, mostly minor, and for that we praise the Lord. It's all part of the aging process. Speaking of aging, our pastor at Cofer's Chapel, Allen Pointer, asked us to serve on staff at the church part time and work with the senior adults and to begin a ministry to internationals. God has allowed us to start a Hispanic ministry, and we now have around 30 Spanish-speaking folks to whom we minister, and whom we're seeking to fully integrate into the life of our church. It's also exciting to get to know our seniors better, especially since we are a part of the group!

At this stage of life, watching our grandkids be born and grow is truly one of life's greatest blessings. We have nine, with another on the way.

Why Social Media Died: A Blog Post I Apparently Sent to Myself from the Year 2040.

Guest Post by [Jon Forrest](#)

This is crazy. Apparently sometime in the future, we figure out how to send mediocre blog posts back to the past! I know! It shocked me too. It just showed up in my cloud. You should

totally check yours. It looks to be from around the year 2040. Good news: the fonts are still pretty much the same. Bad news: my writing doesn't improve one little bit. (allegedly)

I know most of you were hoping never to be reminded of the social media era again, but I think it's important for us to remember our past mistakes or else we are doomed to repeat them.

For those of you young and fortunate enough not to remember the "Enlightened Dark Age" as we know it today let me give you a little refresher. Not long after the advent of smart phones, the age of social media began. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (now known as Ursource) ruled the lives of the masses.

It seems ridiculous now but these sites were platforms where people could say things like, "I'm totes dreading the dentist tomorrow." Then the next day they could post a picture of themselves with their mouths full of gauze. Please don't ask me why we did it. The old days were weird. Remember this is before Dan Cathy and I became best friends and I automated *Chick-fil-A* on that one day so it could open on Sundays after church. It was my pleasure. But yeah, we had it rough. They were indeed the bad ole days.

Here are 5 of the reasons it mercifully, finally, thankfully failed.

1. It was an absolutely false representation of our real selves.

I remember when and where I was when I realized social media was doomed. Back in 2018 we had a fast food place called Sonic. We drove cars back then and the unique thing about this restaurant was you could drive your car to small station and hit a button to order your food and have it brought to you by a carhop. They were known for their delicious ice. Yes. Back before we all had dihydrogen monoxide units strapped to our

backs we had to drink liquids. We also ate frozen pellets of water for fun. And Sonic had the absolute best frozen pellets.

One hot June day in 2018 when I pulled in and ordered a diet cherry limeade (too much to explain) I saw a girl sitting at one of the tables taking a selfie. "Selfie" is slang for taking a picture of yourself. Selfies were a huge part of social media. This girl at the Sonic took a picture, looked at it with disgust, reposed and took another one. She did this 4 times! She looked so unhappy sitting there with her friend who was also on her phone, but in the selfie her smile beamed as she got the light just right for "exposure's" sake.

It's impossible not to compare this girl's actions to Narcissus who appeared in Greek mythology. We get our idea of Narcism from him. He was so pretty, one day when he saw his reflection in a pool he was unable to leave the reflected image to continue life. Ultimately he died in that exact spot.

This 2018 Sonic version of Narcissus who couldn't look away from her image was telling people "I'm having a blast here at the Sonic while you live your miserable thirsty life in shambles." The crazy thing is we all bought it for 20 years! Social media survived this "emperor's new clothes" lie for 20 years. I can't explain it. I'm just so thankful some enlightened soul spoke up one day and said, "Hey, y'all know this chick we're all jealous of is basically just eating a corn dog at the Sonic like the rest of us. Why are we wasting our time 'liking' it?"

2. We got tired of making photo ops instead of memories and cameras can't do memories justice.

I do not have a picture of my wife when they opened the back doors of the church and I saw her standing there arm in arm

with her dad, but it would not do that moment justice if I did. There was no videographer in the room when the nurse handed my daughter to me for the first time, but I promise if I had a video of that occasion I'd say, "They missed it. That's not even close to what I felt that day."

Sure we can see things in 5d QR Crystal Lens now, but even that is like looking through a filthy foggy window compared to the resolution of our minds. God blessed us with that. I'm so glad we realized it sooner than later. I'm just sorry we wasted two decades of memories.

3. Although we all enjoy the right to freedom of the press, not all of us should exercise that right.

How do I put this gently? Many of the people I knew in 2018 had ideas that were insane. I'm not talking about my close friends who read my blogs. Those guys... geniuses, but most of the other people who posted on social media were wackos. No, they had wacko ideas in a moment and they shared them.

Proverbs 17:28 is so right. "Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive." (NKJV) Back in 2018 NO ONE shut his lips and we were all dumber for it.

4. FOML finally caught up with FOMO.

In 2004 Patrick J. McGinnis coined the term "FOMO." Steady yourself. This isn't going to make sense to you. FOMO is the fear of missing out. We were slaves to these platforms to the point of being unable to stand in line, ride in a car, or simply sit in a chair without looking at our device. Constant

checking overtook us. “Finally awake. I better check Facebook.” “Break time. I better refresh my Instagram feed.” “Red light. Wonder what’s on Snap.” “I’m between contractions. Let me update Twitter.”

This is actually one of my posts from 2017. “Just got stung in the belly by a wasp. Not sure if it’s swollen or if I’ve put on a few lbs.” Someone neglected a sunset because he was afraid he’d miss out on that nugget of nonsense.

Fortunately at some point we replaced the “fear of missing out” with of the “fear of missing life.” We looked up from the recipe video our neighbor posted and took our neighbor a plate of cookies. We shut our laptops and topped our laps with the kids we had been yelling at for not holding the pose we needed to get for a post. We laid down our notebook and took note of the books including THE Book that had gathered dust.

We took back life.

5. We finally all blocked one another.

You know I’d love to be able to say we experienced this great renaissance of knowledge and that’s the sole reason social media collapsed, but truthfully we all finally got so sick of one another’s baloney we each ended up blocking everyone except 4 followers. And it turned out those 4 remaining “followers” were fake accounts we’d set up to like our posts.

Whoa! Look at the time.

There are a couple of other reasons social media ended but I have to get back to work. This country isn’t going to run its self. I probably wouldn’t have agreed to this 4th term if I’d

known it would be this busy. Not to mention these people from Time apparently need a new picture every time you win “Person of the Year.” And I have a Kessel run today and only 8 parsecs to do it in.

If I can get this time bending copy machine to load the stupid paper and you’re reading this before 2021 when social media meets its demise, do yourself a favor, beat the crowd and start to ween yourself off of it today.

(Editor’s Note: A big thanks to Jon Forrest for allowing us to run this post today. You can read more of his stuff over at [Steal My Youth Ministry Stuff](#). Trust us, you will love it.)

July, 2068 – Remembering the Writer’s Flood of 2018

It came unexpectedly during a particularly stagnant summer. Some say that the writers were to blame, but there was actually plenty of blame deserved by a wide array of sources. It cannot be denied, though, that the writers got the whole catastrophe going that fateful day.

They were at a complete loss as to what to say. The lot of them gathered in the park banging their heads on the side of the huge Witty Tank of Words. From dawn till dusk, from dusk till dawn they beat upon its sides begging for it to relinquish its life-giving liquid of language and punctuation. No one noticed that as they pounded on its witty walls,

periods and ellipses began oozing from its seams. The gathered writers began becoming alarmed when this slow ooze turned into exclamation points suddenly loudly popping out into the crowd with loud sounds like screams, howls, and yells.

Suddenly the witty sides of the tank burst completely asunder and all manner of verbiage and grammatical technicalities spewed forth, ensnaring even the hapless billions of longsuffering readers in chaotic waves.

The enormous blob of grammar that rolled through the middle of town was encased in every punctuation known to mankind. Surviving witnesses say commas, periods, semi-colons, jots, and tittles were apparently the most common. As the outer case of punctuation fell off, the alphabet of over 7,000 different languages shot through the gaps like water from fire hoses. The ultra-powerful streams felled a number of schools, libraries, and government buildings.

There was much carnage and mayhem that day, my friends.

There were many a run-on sentence that went on and on and on for miles, bewildering everyone.

One college professor was slain when a tidal wave of misspelled words fell on heels howze.

Three enormous waves of LOLs, JKs, and ROFLs slammed into the side of a car of a teenager who was texting while driving.

Tidal waves of a multiplicity of languages wreaked havoc in many different neighborhoods. One woman said ten strands of what she thought were Mandarin dialects plowed through her garden. A family eating a picnic said a German stream plowed through the park, taking their bratwurst and sauer kraut with it. Two boys said they learned to count to ten in French after it floated down the creek in which they were playing.

Onlooking readers groaned as a wave of puns struck a chicken

farm. It was poultry in motion.

Several writers drowned in an ever-deepening cesspool of commas.

More than a hundred fragment sentences streams. Just stopped mid-thought. In the middle of the street.

A steaming black mess of profanity in the form of @\$%& streamed into the river, turning it as black as night.

At long last, an army of editors came in to save the day. It took them three months to clean up the mess. Even after most of it was cleared, all over town people were stuck to hashtags, question marks hung off the eaves of houses, nouns were smashed into verbs. It took a team of linguists a month to extricate a boardroom of council people from a congealed mass of really long, complicated sentences that didn't say anything.

In the end, most of the chaotic mess was dumped into the already blackened river. It would be over 20 years before vowels returned to its fsh and rcks.

As for the rest, the editors made a new, sturdier Witty Tank of Words. Only this time they called it Witty Tank of Wise Words knowing full well that that would fix the problem forever and for all time. (Sarcasm had been restored.)

The carnage was over, but the smell of newsprint and gigabytes lingered in the air for years. They say that sometimes during particularly stormy weather long dead languages and hieroglyphics still float to the surface of the raging river.

REO Exclusive! Chipotle Announces Groundbreaking “No cups. No straws. No waste.” Beverage Dispensation Policy

Denver, Colorado: In its continued efforts to combat the rise of Global Warming and environmental devastation, the popular Mexican cuisine restaurant chain, Chipotle, has made dramatic changes to how it serves beverages to its customers. Read the press release here first:

“The science is settled! We have long known how damaging and horrible plastic and Styrofoam cups are to the environment. We now know the terrible toll that plastic straws exact on our oceans and waterways. Chipotle has always been at the forefront of social and environmental improvement, which we have proven with our ahead-of-its-time switch to biodegradable paper cups and our strong support for all disenfranchised communities. We believe our latest initiative is just further proof of how innovative, progressive, and dare we say it, inspiring we are. Starting in the Fall of 2018, we are unveiling our new “Communal Drinking Spout” at all our locations nationwide. Our new policy, “No Cups. No Straws. No Waste” is as follows: As customers get thirsty, we ask that they come to the front counter, tell us what drink they ordered, and we will spray said drink directly into their mouths. “No cups. No straws. No waste.” Just thirst-quenching, environmentally clean deliciousness. We trust that our loyal customers will see the benefits of this new plan and adapt their eating and drinking habits accordingly. We see it as a true win-win scenario for our customers and for Mother Earth.”

Five Classic Toys of Our Youth

Ah, the days of youth, how quickly they flew away. They were the days that we spent hours of fun enjoying our toys of choice to the fullest. Here are five classic toys members of REO loved in the days gone by.

Slip'N Slide



South Carolina is insanely humid in the summers and while I was blessed to have a local public pool to go to and regular beach trips, some days you just wanted something cheap and convenient to help keep you cool (when you weren't working out in the field, that is). If whatever this was also happened to be fun, then you had done the impossible.

Enter Wham-O's Slip'N Slide, a marvel of an invention that millions of kids all over the US have enjoyed for decades now. The set up is so simple: water, a garden hose and a thin sheet of plastic a few yards long. Yet it felt like you had your own water park in your own backyard. Hours and hours of fun were to be had, changing up the way you slid and watching and cheering on others and they did the same. The very name conjures up images and memories that bring nothing but the joy of youthful innocence to this middle-aged heart. (Gowdy Cannon)

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles



I'm still not sure exactly how much of my childhood fascination with the Ninja Turtles was fueled by how much I actually liked the show. I tried to go back and watch some of the original cartoons a few years back, and it hadn't held up in my mind exactly like I remembered it. The hype at the time, though, was real. And the toys that I played with gave an added physical dimension to the cartoon. One where I created my own stories and added to the lore that was already there.

My favorite toy of them all was the 1989 pizza thrower tank/van. You inserted little plastic pizzas into the top slot, and then a big grey button on the side would launch a pie right out the front, knocking down whatever toy was in its path. The poor foot soldier figurine that I had took regular pizzas to the face, only to be then pummeled constantly by the turtles and friends. Shredder usually put up a better fight, if I recall correctly. I would string zip lines up around my bedroom and have them slide down and crash into the enemies below.

For a kid my age, they were spot on. The toys articulated enough to show lots of expression. They came in tandem with a show that was marketed directly toward my demographic, and

they were bigger and bulkier than the G.I. Joes...but in a good way. I probably earned half of my collection by not crying when I had to get a shot at the doctor. My mom always promised me a new toy if I was tough. And for a brand new ninja turtle? Not a speck of moisture would dare pool up in the corner of my eye. (D. A. Speer)

Transformers



It's cool that the Transformer toys have come to the new generation. It really is. But the new vision has yet to become the bulwark of awesome that is the 80s transformers toys. Although I ever only owned one. It was Jazz – the greatest toy I've ever owned. Took me about two months to perfect the transforming process though.

I largely enjoyed every other Transformer toy through my friends. At my elementary school, Transformer toys were huge. Classmates were constantly bringing their newest robots in disguise to school to show the masses. If I was lucky one friend, in particular, would invite me over for a slumber party where we could play with his armies of Autobots and Decepticons all night long. My favorites of my classmate's toys included Optimus Prime, Megatron, Sound Wave, and all of the Dinobots.

It may be me just glorifying them in my mind, but the T-toys

of that era seemed so much cooler, more durable, and way more complex than the cheap stuff you see at the store now.

I also loved the cartoon, but somehow in my mind, I was able to keep the two separate. That is, I would have liked both just as much if the other never existed. But if I was forced to choose one, it would have been the toys. Truly, my friends, they were worth more than all the gold in Erebor. (Ben Plunkett)

LEGO



I grew up in Panama. The country. Not the city in Florida. Naturally, things were different for me as a child than for someone who grew up in the United States. With that said, I had access to pretty much all the popular toys. My brothers and I played with G.I. Joe, Transformers, He-Man, and anything else we could get our hands on. And we got our hands on a lot of toys. I probably owned as many as 70 different G.I. Joe action figures at one time.

When I was in the third grade, we spent half the year near Asheville, North Carolina and the other half in St. Louis, Missouri for what was called furlough at that time. (The name has been changed to “stateside assignment” for missionaries because “furlough” sounds like a vacation.) While in St. Louis, I attended a Christian school. My classroom had the largest collection of LEGO bricks I have ever seen in one place – outside of a store. Inspired by years of watching cartoons like Voltron – where five robot lions join together to form the giant robot Voltron – I decided to create my own giant robot made out of smaller robots all constructed using LEGO bricks. I spent hours working on it – every recess, every break. Each robot had the same design, though some were bigger than others depending on what part of the body of the giant robot they were to become. It was glorious.

I never completed the giant LEGO robot. I arrived at school one day, with just a few more parts to finish, only to discover that all of my robots had been dismantled and placed back in the bin used to store the bricks. To this day, I have no idea who decided to destroy my work. Why had they waited until I was this close to finishing? Why did they hate all the good things? It left my third-grade spirit broken and miserable. It was okay though as I learned an important lesson that day: Bad things happen and when they do, the best way to deal with the sense of loss and disappointment is to go obliterate all competition on the dodgeball court. A nice dodgeball to your opponent’s face is a healing balm. And trust me when I say this, I healed so much that day in recess playing dodgeball. So much. (Phill Lytle)

BRIO Railway



From 1985-87 my family and I lived in the St. Louis, MO area (across the Mississippi River on the Illinois side), and one of our favorite things to do was visit Union Station. My favorite part of Union Station (besides eating chili dogs at the now non-existent O. T. Hodge Chile Parlor) was visiting the toy train store. I enjoyed watching the model trains running all around the store; but, most of all, I loved playing with the BRIO wooden train sets. My parents could've dropped me off there and left me all day, and I would never have noticed they were gone. I'm pretty sure they never actually did that...

When I was a kid, those wooden train sets were exotic; and, as far as I knew at least, only BRIO made them. Now, of course, they are very commonplace and affordable. Many children own their own train tables and multiple sets of tracks and trains. I, however, had only the trains at the train store in Union Station, which I had to share with strangers and only got to visit once a month or so. Until...

It was either Christmas of '86 or my birthday in early '87, I don't remember which, I was absolutely shocked to receive not one, but two BRIO train sets of my own. I'm not sure how my parents were able to do it, but it was probably my favorite present of all time. One set was a figure eight track with a small bridge and a small station with little wooden passengers waiting on the train. The other set was a larger bridge.

I have played with those trains for countless hours, possibly more than I've played with Legos, possibly more than I've played video games. I've cared for those train sets with much love. Even the original packaging lasted until just a few short years ago. Yes, I still have them, 31 years later. I've passed them on to my own children, adding on some cheap generic trains and tracks from Ikea and many, many trains from the Thomas the Tank Engine stories. All of the original pieces from my childhood are still there, surviving the many purges of moving. And, now, I think I must dust off the conductor's hat and go play... (Nathan Patton)

In the comment section below, tell us about your favorite childhood toys. And if you enjoyed reminiscing with us, feel free to share this article with your friends.