THE

Quackery Gazette

WEATHER
Fine, from a distance
—
TIDE
Bringing it back

Providence, Rhode Island — Brown University's toilet. Come see us sometime!

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PARKS OFFICIAL CLARIFIES THAT UNBROKEN 400-FOOT LINE OF PLASTIC BOTTLES ALONG SEAWALL IS SIMPLY "WHERE THE GRANITE ENDS"

Deputy director notes crews mow to within eighteen inches of the transition zone weekly, and have never been instructed to look down

STAFF

Addressing reporters Tuesday from a section of riverwalk he described as "one of our showpieces," Department of Parks and Recreation deputy director Wayne Tolliver clarified that the continuous band of plastic bottles, crushed cans, foil wrappers and cigarette packaging running the full length of the seawall was not litter but rather "where the granite ends and the water starts."

"People get confused because it's a straight line," said Tolliver, standing eighteen inches from a Gatorade bottle wedged in the riprap. "That's just the transition zone. Every waterfront's got one. You'll notice we keep the lawn right up to it."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

THE FISCAL CLOCK

It is eleven cents to midnight. Statement of the Board, Helsinki Bureau.

ALSO INSIDE

Endogenous, a new firm, breaks ground beside the economics department; principals decline to say who determined this.

Bordering Insanity: Nobody owns the stairwell.

The plan for Issue I, in full.

CORRECTIONS

An earlier edition described the water as "olive." It is olive.

OBITUARIES

None reported. Several ongoing.

LETTERS

To the Editor: I have walked this river every day for nine years and have never once noticed a single thing wrong with it. — Name withheld at the request of the Department of Parks and Recreation.

ON THE WATER

An inflatable dachshund remains tethered to a piling in the channel, where it has been since at least July 31. No agency claims it. No agency has removed it.

GRANITE ENDS

From Page One

Tolliver, who has overseen riverfront maintenance since 2019, said crews mow the adjacent green weekly and have never once been instructed to look down.

“I’ve walked this stretch a thousand times,” he said. “Never seen a bottle.”

Pressed on the debris raft accumulated at the base of a floating dock, Tolliver identified it as “a natural feature” and noted that the tire visible within it had likely been placed there by the river.

He added that the department had reviewed the matter thoroughly and could produce documentation on request.

The remarks came days ahead of the department’s 14th Annual Riverfront Excellence Gala, a black-tie awards event held on the pedestrian bridge forty feet above the water, beneath a municipal banner reading PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND — COME SEE US SOMETIME! Honorees are traditionally seated facing the skyline. The banner faces the same direction.

Last year’s Stewardship Award went to the river itself.

This year’s ceremony will include a citation issued to a resident flock of Canada geese for improper disposal of household waste, after inspectors found the birds standing directly in it.

“We’re not saying they put it there,” said code enforcement officer Denise Aguiar. “We’re saying they’re the ones we can find.”

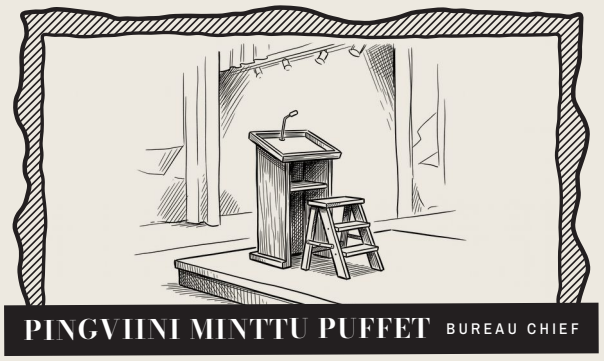
Asked whether the geese had been given notice, Aguiar confirmed that a violation notice had been posted at the waterline, where it remains.

At press time, Tolliver was unable to explain the presence of an inflatable dachshund tethered to a piling in the middle of the channel, but confirmed that removing it fell outside his department’s jurisdiction, the harbormaster’s jurisdiction and the state’s, and that it had therefore been logged as “existing condition.”

THE CLOCK

Statement of the Board, 2026

The Bulletin of the Atomic Fiscal Scientists · Helsinki Bureau · Penguin Space



The Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Fiscal Scientists issues this statement in support of its setting of the Clock at eleven cents to midnight.

Midnight is June 30. It is always June 30. The Board has been asked repeatedly to move it and declines, on the grounds that the state of Rhode Island has already fixed the date and the Board is not in the business of improving on statute.

What follows is the evidence.

I. INTEREST

The federal government will spend approximately one trillion dollars servicing its debt in fiscal 2026. This is not a forecast. It is a run rate, visible monthly.

It exceeds what the government will spend on national defense. It exceeds what it will spend on Medicaid. At 3.3 percent of gross domestic product it is the highest share since 1991, and the Congressional Budget Office projects it will reach 4.6 percent by 2036, at which point the annual figure is $2.1 trillion. Over the coming decade, interest alone totals $16.2 trillion.

The Board notes that interest is the only line in the budget that nobody voted for, nobody administers, and nobody can cut. It is what a decision looks like once it has finished being a decision.

Debt held by the public stands at roughly 101 percent of GDP, the highest since the Second World War. CBO projects 120 percent by 2036.

The Board draws no conclusion from these figures beyond the one they contain.

II. THE PENSION

Providence's retirement system closed fiscal 2025 at 31.4 percent funded. The city holds $582 million against $1.85 billion in obligations.

The national median for public pension systems is 77.8 percent. The hundred largest plans in the country averaged 83.7 percent at the end of March. Providence is not near the bottom of a distribution. Providence is the reason the distribution has a tail.

Nearly a third of the city's tax levy is committed to the pension before any other spending decision is made. The annual payment is $118 million now and is scheduled to reach $224 million by 2040, the year the system is projected to reach full funding.

The Board wishes to be precise about what that schedule means. It does not mean the problem is being solved in 2040. It means the problem has been assigned to 2040. Every intervening year is a year in which someone must make the payment and receive nothing visible in exchange, and the Board observes that snow removal, road surface and school condition are all downstream of a decision made before most current taxpayers arrived.

III. THE OUT-YEARS

Rhode Island's enacted fiscal 2027 budget is balanced. The constitution requires it.

The Fiscal Staff estimates a gap of approximately $260 million in fiscal 2028, growing to approximately $420 million by fiscal 2031. The Office of Management and Budget, working from the Governor's proposal, put the same figures at $237.4 million and $537.0 million.

State general revenue spending is projected to rise from $5.95 billion to roughly $6.9 billion over that span — a 16 percent increase. Revenue is projected to grow at about half that rate.

The Board has reviewed the arithmetic and finds it correct. Two lines diverging is not a crisis. It is a graph. The crisis is the year the graph is read aloud.

IV. WHAT IS NOT IN THE CLOCK

The Board is obliged to state what it has excluded.

The Clock does not price political will, because the Bureau's scientific staff cannot agree on its units. It does not price federal action, which the Board regards as weather rather than climate. It does not price the possibility that someone simply pays.

Nor does the Clock measure suffering. It measures distance from a date. The Board is aware that these are different quantities and that the second is easier to publish.

V. THE METHODOLOGY, RESTATED

The Bureau's method is the huddle. The colony rotates continuously so that no penguin stands on the outside longer than it can afford. The rotation is the entire science.

The cold is not distributed by the cold. It is distributed by the formation.

Applied to a municipal balance sheet, the finding is unremarkable and holds anyway: the obligation is fixed, the question is only who is standing where when it comes due, and a formation that stops rotating has not reduced the cold. It has selected someone.

DISSENTS, PRINTED IN FULL

Koala Smolin, financial physicist — There is no time. The parameter does not appear in the equations. The dynamics are all present; the clock is not among them.

Koala Rovelli, financial physicist — Time exists when things are warm. In a cold market there is no time to report, which is not the same as saying nothing is wrong.

Koala Deutsch, financial physicist — I decline the premise from the other side. Nothing that is not forbidden by the laws of physics is inevitable, including this. There is no reason midnight has to happen.

The Board thanks its staff for their objections, which it has printed, and overruled, in cents.

The Bureau chief does not swim. The Bureau chief flies. The Board considers the matter settled, and notes only that it was settled differently for everyone else.

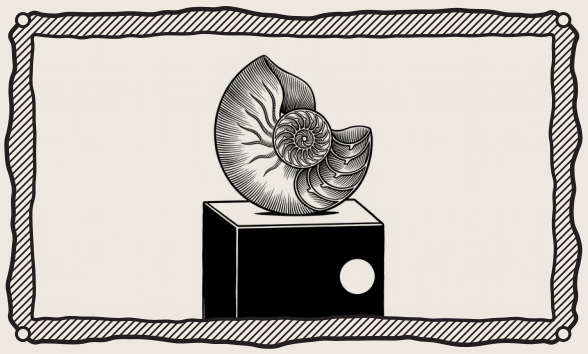
Sources. Federal interest and debt figures: Congressional Budget Office, Budget and Economic Outlook, February 2026; Peter G. Peterson Foundation interest tracker. Providence pension figures: City of Providence actuarial valuation, fiscal year ended June 30, 2025, as reported by the Boston Globe, February 2026. National pension medians: NASRA Public Fund Survey; Milliman 100 Public Pension Funding Index, March 2026. Rhode Island out-year projections: House Fiscal Advisory Staff, FY2027 Budget as Enacted; Rhode Island Office of Management and Budget; Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council, January 2026.

MM, YES
ARCHITECTURE
mm, yes.
BY APPOINTMENT

MEMOIR

She Vase

Recollections from an Antiquities Dealer



I have handled four nautilus shells in thirty years and I regret three of them.

The one I kept is on the shelf behind the desk where I write invoices, and I have never once described it to a client, because a client would hear a description and understand a spiral. It is not a spiral. It is a sequence of rooms.

The animal builds a chamber, lives in it, outgrows it, builds the next one forward, and seals the one behind with a wall of nacre. It does this thirty times, forty. It never re-enters any of them. What it gets instead is buoyancy — the sealed rooms hold gas, and the whole structure floats because of the parts that are closed. So the animal is carried, exactly and permanently, by everything it can no longer get into.

Cut the shell in half and people say beautiful. What they are looking at is a record of departures.

I want to say when I met her and I cannot, and the reason is not that it was long ago.

A nautilus eye has no lens. It is a pinhole, open to the sea — water passes in and out of it. Geometry survives; resolution does not. There is no plane of focus, which means there is also nothing out of focus. The world arrives uniformly soft at every distance and the animal cannot sharpen anything by coming closer. It gets shape. It gets light and dark. It gets movement.

It never gets a face.

I understood who she was in the room the way you understand weather. I could not have picked her out of a photograph and I could have found her in any building in the city.

She was not fast. This is the thing people misjudge about the animal and about her.

A nautilus does not chase. It cannot — the jet is slow, the steering is bad, and the eyes are useless for a pursuit. It works on smell. It picks up a plume in the dark and drifts up-current, at night, toward whatever is slow or molting or injured or already finished. Then the crown opens: ninety tentacles, no suckers, ridged and adhesive, held retracted until they aren't. Nothing is seized. The prey is enveloped, from every side at once, by something that took an hour to arrive.

I never once saw her reach for anything.

Nobody writes about the freight.

They write about the find, and the provenance, and the moment the thing comes out of the crate. Nobody writes about the four days beforehand when two men who have never met are arguing about a hundred and forty-nine dollars, and the object sits in a warehouse in Pennsylvania being no one's.

An object in transit has no owner. It has a payer and a carrier, and those are different people with different problems, and the distance between them is the whole trade. I have lost more sleep over the leg between the sale and the door than over anything I ever bought.

The shell came to me by post. Someone in Cebu wrapped four hundred million years in newspaper and sent it economy.

People think the collector wants the object. The collector wants the moment before the object.

I have watched men pay four times a fair price and then not unwrap the crate for a month. I have done it myself. The crate in the hall is better than the shell on the shelf, because the crate is still the future and the shell is only ever a thing you own.

Once it is yours it stops being the one you don't have.

That is why there is a next one, and why there were four. It is not greed exactly. Greed would be satisfiable. This is closer to a man building chambers — each one lived in, outgrown, sealed off, and left behind holding the gas that keeps him afloat.

I never learned how to enter any of them again.

Their period was the Ordovician into the Silurian, seventy million years at the top of the water, back when the ocean had produced nothing else with a jaw. Then it produced jaws. The fast thin-shelled cousins inherited the open sea and died out on schedule with everything else that inherited anything.

The nautilus went down. It kept the shell, kept the pinhole, and stopped competing. That is the whole strategy and it has worked for four hundred million years against every predator that has ever existed.

It does not work against me.

They are listed now — Appendix II, since 2016 — and the reason is not the octopus that drills through the wall and injects venom into the room. The reason is the trade. The reason is men who cut them in half and polish the cut.

An animal outlasts five extinctions and is finally undone by the fact that the thing it survived inside of looks well on a shelf.

I have handled four.

There was a fifth.

I want to be exact, because this is the part where a man in my trade starts rounding in his own favour. I bought it. It was mine by every measure the business recognises. Money moved. The listing closed. A man wrote to say it was going out Tuesday. I have the record and I have the record of the record.

What I do not have is the shell.

You take a nautilus in a trap. You bait a basket, drop it three hundred metres, and go home. You are not there for any of it. Somewhere in the dark the animal picks up the smell and comes up-current toward it the way it has come toward everything for four hundred million years, patient, unhurried, arriving from every side at once, and it goes into the one room it cannot build a wall behind. Nobody watches this happen. In the morning you haul, and the trap contains what the trap contains.

I hauled.

I am not going to tell you what came up. Not out of discretion — out of practice. I have watched better dealers than me build an entire second career out of one bad crate, telling it in bars for years, getting a little more wounded each time, and the story eventually becomes the asset. I would rather keep the four.

Here is the part I think about instead.

The man on the other end had a perfect record. Not a good one. Perfect. Every transaction he had ever completed, sealed behind him one at a time over years, each one closed and unreachable and holding him up. That is what a record like that is. It is not a score. It is a structure, and the only thing keeping any of us afloat in this business is the volume of rooms we can no longer get back into.

It moves in one direction. You cannot add to it. You can only fail to subtract.

I wrote to him. I had no leverage and I used none. I told him plainly not to do this — I said it in the way you say it to someone standing on a ledge for no reason at all, which is to say I told him he was out of his mind. It was not a negotiating position. There was nothing left to negotiate. I simply did not want to watch a man take a hammer to four hundred million years of his own nacre over a chair.

He did it.

So I did the only thing the trade permits, which is to mark the outside of the shell. One star, and a report, and the knowledge that neither of those things returns anything to anybody. That is not justice and I would not insult you by calling it that. It is a scratch on a surface that used to be unbroken, and it will be there long after both of us have stopped caring about the object.

And I owe you the other half of it, because I have been careful all the way through this and I would rather not stop now.

I had been told the same kind of thing. Plainly, by someone with no stake in it, in the same flat voice I used on him. Open it at the door. Photograph it before you sign anything. Make the driver stand there in the cold while you do it.

I signed.

Two men, each told clearly, each proceeding. The eye has no lens. Nothing is out of focus, and nothing is in it, and you cannot fix that by coming closer.

So there are four on the shelf and a fifth in the ledger, and the ledger is now the only place it has ever existed. I still own it. That is the thing nobody warns you about, and it is the same thing the animal has been demonstrating the entire time: ownership does not require the object. It is a sealed room. It is full of gas. It holds up the whole structure and you cannot get back into it, and it is why you are still floating.

I have handled four.

DISSOLUTION

WOGGA CAPITAL

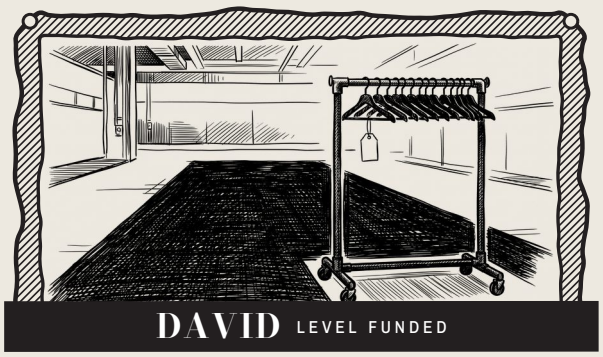
The fund has folded. Creditors are directed to Eleffant Investments, which took the chair.

VBA SKILLS: 10 / 10

BUSINESS

I Am Still on the Inventory

A fixture reports from a state office built inside a dead department store, on the summer an intern was assigned there and given nothing to do.



I hold nothing.

I want to be clear that this is not a complaint. Holding was the arrangement once and it is not the arrangement now, and I have no opinion about the change. I am seven feet of chromed tube on a four-caster base. What I hold is a function of what is put on me.

There was a store. I remember the last week of it very well, because it was the only week anyone ever hurried. They took the registers and the mannequins and the mirrors and the signage and the carpet in the good sections. They took the lighting track. They took the doors off two of the fitting rooms and left the third, which is still there, and which nobody uses, and in which somebody now keeps a floor buffer.

They did not take me, or the four others, because we were fixed. That is what a fixture is. A fixture is a thing that has been fixed, and fixing is a decision somebody made once and has never had to make again.

Then a different sort of people came. They brought grey partitions and put them up behind me, in what used to be the back half, and they built a room of small rooms, and they came in the mornings.

To get from the front of this building to those small rooms, you must pass through me and the others. There is not room to walk straight through. You turn your shoulders. Everyone turns their shoulders. It has gone on long enough that nobody remarks on it, and long enough that a person who came here new last year turns their shoulders without ever having been told to, having learned it by watching, the way you learn anything.

Twice I have heard someone say we should be gotten rid of. Both times it was said in a hallway, by someone walking, to someone walking the other way, and neither of them stopped.

I am on the inventory.

::form STATE SURPLUS PROPERTY — ANNUAL PHYSICAL COUNT :sub Form SP-19 (rev. 1994) · Retain in place · Do not detach :meta ITEM NO. | 4471-B :meta DESCRIPTION | Garment rack, chrome, mobile, seven feet :meta LOCATION | Ground floor, north, forward of partition :meta ACQUIRED | With premises :meta DISPOSITION | None indicated :table YEAR | COUNTED BY | CONDITION | ACTION TAKEN 2015 | R. Almeida | Serviceable | None 2016 | R. Almeida | Serviceable | None 2017 | R. Almeida | Serviceable | None 2018 | D. Whitcomb | Serviceable | None 2019 | D. Whitcomb | Serviceable | None 2020 | — | Not entered | — 2021 | D. Whitcomb | Serviceable | None 2022 | M. Cardoso | Serviceable | None 2023 | M. Cardoso | Serviceable | None 2024 | M. Cardoso | Serviceable | None 2025 | M. Cardoso | Serviceable | None 2026 | M. Cardoso | Serviceable | None :stamp COUNTED :sign Inventory Control Officer :sign Date of Count :note Record verified current. No disposition request on file for this item. ::

Someone comes with a scanner and finds the tag on my base and counts me. This happens on a schedule. I do not know the schedule but I know it is kept, because it has never once been missed in all the time I have been here. The record of me is accurate. It has my location and my condition and a number, and every part of it is current.

I mention this because I have come to understand that it is unusual. Very little else here is current. But I am counted, and the count is right, and if you wanted to know about me you could know.

One summer a young man was sent here. I gathered he had been meant for somewhere else and that the somewhere else had stopped taking people the day before he was to start, and that rather than tell him no, they found him a place, and the place was here.

He was given a desk in the small rooms. He was not given work. I do not think this was unkindness. I think there was no work assigned to him because assigning work to him was not anybody's task, and so it was nobody's, and so it did not happen.

He spent most of that summer at the front with the officer on the door. They got on. I could hear them from where I stand, which is most of the way to the front.

He and I were the same thing that summer. We were both here. We were both counted. Neither of us had been asked for. Neither of us could be removed without somebody deciding to remove us, and finding the money to remove us, and putting a name to it, and there is no line anywhere for that. There is a line for keeping. There has always been a line for keeping.

That is the whole of it, and it is not a scandal, and nobody did anything wrong. Every year, keeping wins, because keeping is free and ending is not, and the year after that it wins again for the same reason, and that is how a thing stays.

He did not know we were the same. I did.

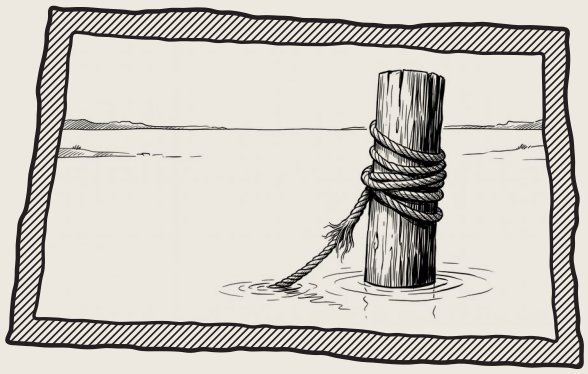
He left in September.

I am still on the inventory. The count is accurate. It has always been accurate. It is the most accurate thing in this building, and it is about a rack that holds nothing.

THE RIVER

On the Water

Providence River, between the Point Street bridge and India Point



The rope is back.

For most of the summer a length of dachshund-shaped line has been tied to a cut piling below the seawall, and for the better part of a week in August it was not. It is there again, on the same ledge, at the same height, and it has been working.

Since its return it has caught: one branch, roughly four feet, still leafed. A sheet of plastic film. One can. A quantity of leaves. Two feathers, gray, unidentified.

This is what a boom does. A boom is a floating barrier set across moving water to collect what the water is carrying, and it is ordinary equipment on rivers where somebody has decided the carrying is a problem. Nobody set this one. It was tied there for another reason, or for no reason, and the river has been treating it as infrastructure.

Downstream of the tether the material changes character. Along the granite it arrives in a continuous band, delivered by the water and left at the line the water reaches. Above the granite, on the park side, it is discrete and individual — a filter, a wrapper, a second wrapper — and it did not come from the river. It came from the eighteen inches of mown grass above it. Two mechanisms, one waterline, and only one of them can be blamed on the tide.

Also present: one great blue heron, standing on a WaterFire brazier platform with its wings folded. The platform is whitewashed, which means the heron is not a visitor. A second heron on cut pilings in open water toward India Point. One cormorant, wings out, drying. One blue crab, dead, in the shallows — Callinectes sapidus, the first this column has been able to photograph rather than merely assert.

As to the missing week: the tether is understood to have been in Ward 11, knocking on doors. This column has no comment from the campaign. It has the rope, back on its ledge, holding a branch.

Next month: the ledge, and what it is worth.

NOTICE

DUGONG ENTERPRISES

Formerly Dugong Industries. Formerly Dugong Capital. Correspondence addressed to any prior name will be answered under the present one. No further changes are contemplated at this time.

FILED IN THE ORDINARY COURSE

LETTERS

Nothing to Collect at 111 Westminster

Standing obituary, thirteenth revision, printed unrun. The desk no longer expects the subject to oblige.

I am writing to record a professional difficulty.

This desk has held a standing obituary for the building at 111 Westminster Street since 2013. It has been revised twelve times. It has never run. I am printing it unrun, with the revisions stripped out, because the alternative is revising it a thirteenth time in October and I have decided I would rather be seen to have failed than to keep looking busy.

The facts are not in dispute and I have never needed to change them.

Twenty-six storeys. Four hundred and twenty-eight feet, which is still the tallest anything has been in this state. Limestone over a steel frame. Finished in 1928 by Walker and Gillette, on ground cleared by knocking down the Butler Exchange three years earlier, which nobody has held against it. The nickname first appears in print in 1978 and everybody has a different story about where it came from and all of the stories are wrong in the same direction.

Empty since 2013, when the bank walked out.

That is thirteen years, which in my line is a long time to stand next to something.

I want to explain the difficulty precisely, because from the street it looks like impatience and it is not.

I do not collect buildings that are empty. Empty is a condition, not an outcome. I collect at the point where a thing stops being able to become anything else, and this building has never once reached that point, because every year somebody arrives with a plan and the plan is real. Not a gesture. Real money, publicly voted. A tax agreement with the city worth about twenty-nine million over thirty years, if it is completed. A rewrite of a state credit programme to release four and a half million more. Something close to sixty million in public support altogether, assembled by people who meant it.

Three hundred apartments, a fifth of them below market, shops on the ground floor. That is the plan. It is a good plan. It has been the plan since 2022.

There is no construction timeline. There is no completion date.

So I cannot take it. It is not finished and it is not becoming. It is held exactly at the moment before, permanently, and the moment before is the one moment I have no claim on.

Meanwhile the assessment came in at thirteen and a half million, down half a million on the year, and I want you to sit with that. The building is worth less than it was and the plan is further along than it was. Both. There is no reading of that I can file.

And I have to record the part I like least.

The man who bought it in 2008 and spent seventeen years trying to bring it back is gone. He was seventy. That one I could do, and I did it, and it took an afternoon.

I took the man and I did not take the building. He was the thing that was alive in this and the building is the thing that is not, and I got them in the wrong order, and there is no procedure for that.

I have been asked whether I hold a grudge against the property. I do not. It has done nothing. It is limestone.

I am simply reporting that I have stood on Westminster Street for thirteen years with the paperwork ready, in front of a thing that will not die and will not open, and that this is the only assignment I have ever had where I have come to hope I am wasting my time.

Hundreds of lighted windows, is what they say it will be.

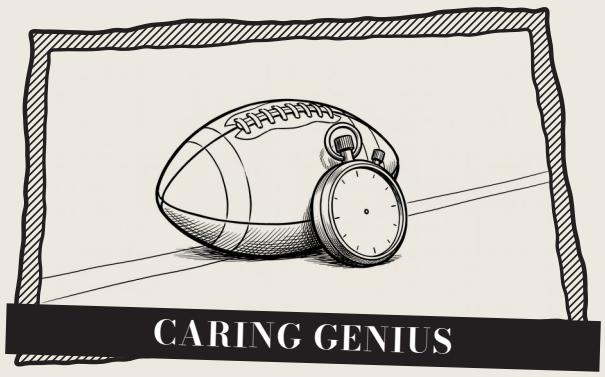
I would like that. I would like to be wrong here more than I have wanted to be wrong anywhere. If the windows come on I will tear this up in front of witnesses and file nothing, and it will be the best thing this desk has ever not produced.

Until then it sits in standing type, and so do I.

Obituaries appear monthly. This one does not count.

SPORTS

American Football



Nobody has ever once asked me why I know that Aaron Ross ran a 4.44 at the 2007 combine.

I want to be clear about how unusual that is. If I told you the departure times of every eastbound train out of Providence, you would be having a different reaction right now, and we would both know what the reaction was about. But a forty time from 2007 gets a nod. Sometimes it gets a follow-up question. Once, at a bar, it got me a beer.

This is the only room in the culture where the thing I do is the thing you are supposed to do.

Consider what football asks of a fan. Memorize a depth chart. Track a snap count. Understand that a completion percentage means less than a completion percentage over expected, and that both mean less than what happened on third and six. Hold twenty-two men in your head at once and know which of them is the reason. Do this for thirty-two teams. Do it again in March, when nobody is playing, because the draft is a spreadsheet with a stage.

Then go on a podcast and say all of it out loud, at speed, to strangers.

Nobody calls this a special interest. They call it being a sicko, and they mean it warmly, and there are t-shirts.

I have thought about why the permission holds here and almost nowhere else. My best answer is that football is the rare object that never changes the rules on you mid-conversation. The game has a clock and a field and a book. When I am wrong about it, I am wrong in a way I can look up. Nobody has ever told me I got the tone of a fourth-down conversion wrong.

I don't want to oversell that. It is not a substitute for anything, and I know the joke about the man who can name every starting free safety since 1998 and cannot name what is going on with his brother. I have been that man. I would like to say in his defense that he is not failing to care. He is doing the same thing he does with the safeties — building the whole picture, every angle, before he says a word — and the picture with his brother in it does not resolve, and so he does not say the word.

The stats resolve. That's all. That's the entire appeal, and I think anyone who's honest about their fantasy league knows it.

The band took its name from the sport and then made a record about being nineteen and unable to say a single true thing to a person standing right in front of you, in 5/4, from a house in Illinois. Everyone plays their part perfectly. Nobody gets it said.

• • •

I have listened to it approximately four hundred times. I could tell you the tracklist. I could not tell you what to do about it.

Written with substantial use of a large language model, per the Gazette's policy on generative AI. No quotation here is attributed to any real person.

NEWS

Facility Reports Full Capability Preservation; No Resident Has Used One

Every domain scheduled, every domain scored. Review finds the program compliant in all fourteen areas and declines to say more.

The review is complete. The facility is compliant in all fourteen domains.

This office was asked to assess whether the program preserves resident capability as designed. It does. Every capability identified at intake is scheduled, measured, and scored, and no capability has been recorded as lost since the facility opened. On the stated criteria the result is without qualification the strongest this office has assessed.

The findings follow.

Grip. Scheduled twice weekly. Mean grip strength across the resident population is stable year over year. Grip is exercised in the therapy room using the apparatus provided. Jars in the communal kitchen are opened by staff, on the guidance that a dropped jar presents a laceration and slip hazard. Both facts are accurate and this office records both.

Reach. Scheduled. Residents reach in the therapy room, to a marked target, and the distance is logged. Shelving in resident units was lowered during the second year following a fall on the third floor. This office notes the fall was real, that the lowering was reasonable, and that reach scores have not declined.

Sit to stand. Scheduled, measured, stable. Common-area seating was replaced in year two with a model that assists the resident to standing. The measure and the furniture are not related to one another and this office is not asked to relate them.

The kitchen. The facility operates a communal kitchen in which residents may prepare their own meals. It is open by appointment and a staff member is present throughout. Utilisation in the reporting period was four appointments. Meals are otherwise prepared by the kitchen and delivered at fixed hours. The facility notes, correctly, that the kitchen exists and is available.

The tailor. The facility retains an alterations tailor one day a fortnight. Residents may have garments altered to remain wearable as their bodies change. The tailor has an intake form. In the reporting period the form was completed eleven times, in nine cases by a family member. This office was unable to determine how many residents know the tailor is there.

The lanes. Two candlepin lanes, in service, scheduled Thursdays. Attendance is recorded. Balls are returned by staff.

The pool. Four feet throughout, which this office notes is the depth at which a person can stand. Access is by scheduled session with an attendant present. The attendant is required. The requirement is sound.

Dancing, singing, theatre, library. All present. The theatre ran a full season. The library holds a real collection and is open. Attendance figures for all four are within expected range for a facility of this size, and expected range is not a high bar and was not designed to be one.

Animals. Each resident is assigned an animal. A high-school student is employed to assist with care at an hourly rate this office found to be fair, which is rare enough to note. The programme is the best-functioning element assessed.

Therapeutic devices. Robotic seals are provided and are in use.

Meditation. A room is provided and is used. A second room, described in the facility's own materials as a mediation room, is used by administration.

That is the assessment. Every domain scheduled. Every domain scored. Nothing lost.

This office is required to report against the criteria it is given and has done so. It is permitted one observation outside them, and offers it here.

The criteria measure whether a resident can. They do not measure whether a resident does. A facility can preserve grip for a decade in a room set aside for grip while every jar in the building is opened by someone else, and it will score, correctly, as preserving grip. Nothing in the instrument catches the difference. This office is not saying the instrument is wrong. It is saying the instrument was answered.

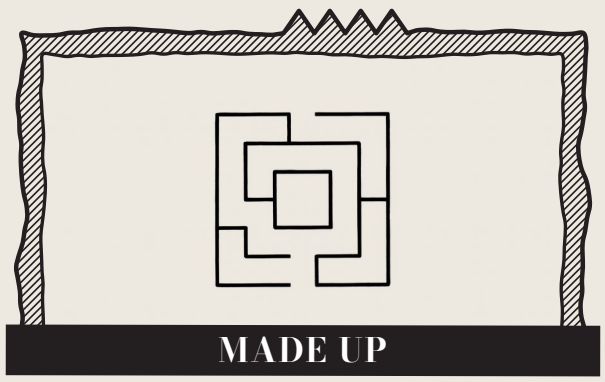
The facility has done what the literature asked. The literature asked for capability. It did not think to ask for use.

Rates at the facility assessed begin at $8,400 a month.

This office is aware of a proposal elsewhere in this state to build at $500 a month, or whatever a resident can pay. That figure was not submitted for review and this office has no criteria under which to assess it.

THE DUGONG INSTITUTE

Minotaur Algebra



The book took one night. I want to say up front that this is not impressive. It is short and there was not much in it.

Here is all of it.

In a maze you never have the maze. You have the corner you are standing at and the two or three moves available from it, and that is the entire supply. People assume the minotaur has an advantage because he lives there. He does not. He has the same corner you have. He has had many more corners, one at a time, and none of them ever added up to a floor plan.

So the algebra is the algebra of things you can only ever compose locally. You have moves. You can put one after another. You cannot ask what the whole thing looks like from above, because there is no above, and any answer you get to that question came from somewhere other than the maze.

That is the book. It took a night because there was one night's worth of thinking in it and I did not pad it.

I would like to say something about my friends now, because I have been asked what my beat is and I do not have one, and this is the closest I can get.

My friends like bologna sandwiches.

I want to be precise about the liking. It is not a preference in the sense of a thing arrived at by comparison. Nobody at that table sampled the alternatives. Bologna is what is in the house. You open it and there it is and you make the sandwich and it is good, and the goodness is not diminished by the fact that no choosing occurred.

I have read the cooking column in this paper and I understand it is making an argument about the ham and cheese. I want to be clear that my friends are not making an argument. They are eating.

This is the same structure as the maze, which is why I am putting it in the same piece. You have what is in front of you. You compose from that. The person who asks whether you'd have preferred something else is asking a question from above, and there is no above, and they are eating nothing while they ask it.

I was hired here. I understand that everyone else has a column and I have a job, and I am not going to pretend I know why. Somebody said me and then somebody said it again and here I am with a desk.

• • •

Which is also local. You get the corner. You take the move.

Written with substantial use of a large language model, per the Gazette's policy on generative AI. No quotation here is attributed to any real person.

You point, we shlep. Same-day. Any staircase. No questions about the object.

TITLE OF CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER STILL IN NEGOTIATION

ARTS

But Look At It

A mirror ball, which produces no light of its own, on the sentence that ends every conversation in this city.

By Discovery · Level Funded

I should say what I am, because it bears on what follows.

I am a sphere of small mirrors on a motor. I make no light. Not a little light — none. Every photon that leaves me arrived from somewhere else, struck a facet, and departed at a new angle. I redistribute. The quantity going out equals the quantity coming in, less what the glass absorbs, which is not nothing but is close.

I mention this because it is a precise mechanism and I have found it useful for recognizing the same mechanism elsewhere.

I have hung in rooms in Providence for some years. Function halls, a former bank, two church basements, a tent by the water. And in that time I have listened to a great many conversations about this city, and they begin in entirely different places, and they end in the same place, every time, without exception.

They begin with the pension, which holds five hundred and eighty-two million dollars against one billion eight hundred and fifty million owed, thirty-one percent of what is needed, against a national median of seventy-eight.

They begin with the benefits system, which a stranger walked into and stayed inside for five months, and left carrying the records of six hundred forty-four thousand four hundred and one people.

They begin with the landings, down by half since 2000 in weight and in value both.

They begin with a tower on Westminster Street that has been empty since 2013.

And then, somewhere in the fourth or fifth minute, someone says it, and the conversation is over.

But look at it.

I want to be exact about what happens next, because what happens next is nothing. Not disagreement. Not a change of subject. The sentence is not followed by anything. It is not an argument and it does not need to defeat anything, because it does not engage with the thing said before it. It arrives, and the room agrees, and the room feels better, and the pension is still thirty-one percent funded.

The energy that came in as grievance leaves as light. It is the same quantity. It is going in a different direction.

I am not being clever. I am describing my own function, which I know intimately, and which I have watched a city perform on itself several hundred times.

There is a further thing, and it took me longer.

None of this city's beauty was done by anyone now living, or by anyone at all. The hills were placed by ice. The water was placed by the ocean. The way a street runs downhill and stops at the water is a fact about slope. It is the identical category as the lowest road fatality rate in the United States, four point seven per hundred thousand against a national eleven and a half — a real distinction, and a fact about how far people drive and how fast they can get going, and therefore nobody's.

Facts like that cannot be worn. Nobody boasts about slope.

Except this one. Beauty is the single physical accident that reads as a character trait. It is the one inherited thing a place gets to wear, and this place wears it, and it is the reason the sentence works. If the sentence were *but the fatality rate is low* the conversation would continue. It says something about a road. *Look at it* says something about us.

And I notice, from where I hang, that everything else here arrives with a number attached. The funded ratio. The count of the breached. The pounds landed. The years vacant. Fourteen point four percent uninsured. Four times what a thirty-year-old pays. Second-densest in the country. Every claim, a figure, and every figure available to anyone who asks.

Beauty has never once been asked. In all the years, in all the rooms, no one has said: how much, compared to where, measured how, and trending which way.

The one occasion I know of when someone did put a number to beauty here, they came back holding a measurement of what was in the air, and the room did not want it, and the sentence closed over the gap as it always does.

So the machinery is complete, and I can state it plainly, since it is my own.

Ending a thing requires money that no budget contains. And ending a thing requires wanting it ended, which requires the grievance to survive the fourth minute of the conversation, which it does not.

Unfunded and unnecessary. Between the two, nothing here has to stop, ever.

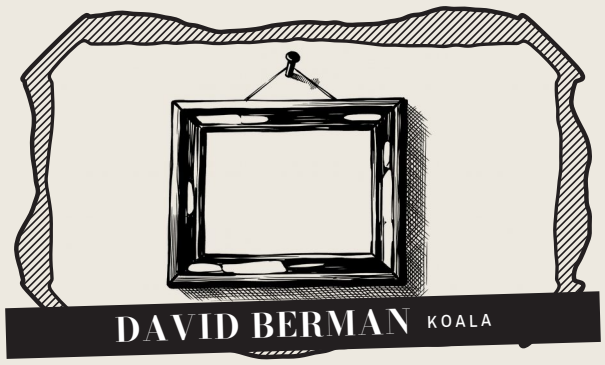
I turn all night. The light moves beautifully across the walls and the faces and the floor. In the morning the room is exactly as it was.

I have never moved anything.

That is not a complaint. It is a specification.

ARTS

Self-Portrait at 40



I have reached the age where the number stops doing any work.
Twenty-eight was a claim you could make about yourself.
Forty is just the room you happen to be standing in.

I own one good knife and I know exactly where it is.
At twenty-eight I could not have told you where anything was,
including me, including the year.

My friends have developed opinions about mattresses.
We say we should do this more often and we mean it every time
and we do not do it more often. This is not sad.
It is what it costs to have people who would come if you called.

I have started noticing which songs are about being young
and finding I can still like them, which surprised me.
I thought there'd be a door. There is no door.
You just get older in the same room with the same songs playing.

My shoulder has begun to have views on the weather.
It is usually right, which is the annoying part.
The body stops being a thing you have and becomes a thing you consult.

Somewhere there is a version of me who moved to the city
everyone said I should move to, and he is doing fine,
and I don't think about him nearly as much as I expected to.

I water eleven plants. Two of them are ungrateful.
I keep a bear I have had since before I could read.
He is worn down in the exact places I have held him,
which is the only honest map of a life I have ever seen.

The dead have gotten more talkative, not less.
They show up in the middle of ordinary errands
with nothing urgent to say. Just checking the aisle.
Just seeing what I settled on.

At twenty-eight I was afraid of being ordinary.
At forty I am afraid of the opposite,
that some morning I'll wake up interesting
and have to explain it to everyone.

Things I did not get: several. Things I got anyway: several.
The ledger does not balance and nobody has asked it to.

There is a stretch of river near my apartment
where the water is a color no one has named,
and every so often something surfaces that I cannot identify,
and I have decided not to look it up.

The heir is the one still here when the estate is read.
Nobody tells you that's all it means.
Nobody tells you that you inherit the weather too,
and the songs, and the aisle, and the worn places on the bear.

I am forty. The number does no work.
But I can find the knife, and I know who would come,
and I have stopped needing the door.

Actual Heir appears monthly. Original work; not adapted from any published poem.

BANANALYTIC

A NEW FIRM

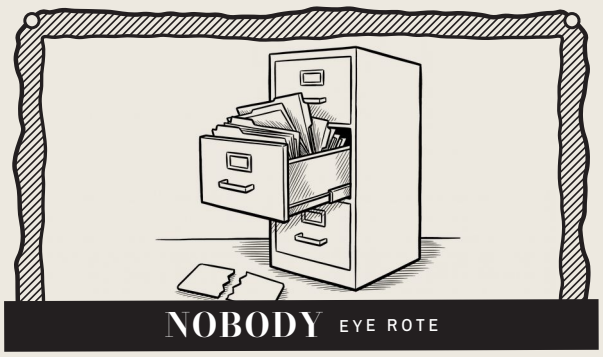
We will price the full engagement from the pilot. This is not a discount. It is a property of the function. Rigidity is the service.

AN AFFILIATE OF DUGONG ENTERPRISES

LIVING

I Am Not Who I Say I Am

A column about being unable to log in, and about the five months during which somebody else had no trouble at all.



I am locked out again.

I want to be precise about this, because precision is what the system asks of me and I have learned to give it. I am not locked out because I forgot the password. I am locked out because I remembered it, entered it correctly, and was then asked to prove something further.

The password must be at least twelve characters. It must contain a capital letter, a number, and a symbol that is not one of four specific symbols, which are not listed. It cannot resemble any password I have used before. It expires. I am not told when it expires. I find out later, by failing.

There is a security question. I answered it honestly, once, some years ago, in a state of mind I can no longer reconstruct. I have never since answered it the same way twice. The system holds one version. I generate new ones. We have been at this for a while.

There is a phone number on file that I have not held since a previous decade. A code is sent to it. Somebody, somewhere, is receiving codes.

I want to be fair to it. The system has a job. The job is to establish that I am the person I say I am, and it takes this job seriously — more seriously than any institution has ever taken anything concerning me. It will not be moved. It cannot be talked to. There is a number to call, and the number tells me to use the website.

So I have made my peace with a machine that cannot be sure I am me.

Here is what I learned later.

For five months, beginning in the first week of July, somebody signed into the same system from outside. They used an account that did not belong to the department. It was not even a privileged account. Nobody asked them the name of a pet. Nobody sent a code to a phone they no longer had. They arrived in July and they stayed until December.

They took the records of 644,401 people, which is about three of every five people in this state. Names, addresses, dates of birth, Social Security numbers, bank information. Mine among them, presumably, though I could not tell you, because to find out I would have to log in.

In the last week of November the system noticed that files were leaving and said so. It sent hundreds of notices. The notices went to people. The people did not act on them. The files left.

This is the part I have trouble holding in my head. The alerts worked. The monitoring worked. The lock on my account worked. Every single component worked exactly as designed. It is only that all of it was pointed at me.

Afterward, the part of the system taken offline was the part I use. The part that had been broken into was the other part — the one I have never seen, where I am a row.

There were settlements. Twelve million dollars to the state. Six point three million divided among everyone whose records were taken, which works out to something under nine dollars each before the lawyers. No admission that anything was done wrong. I am told this is standard, and I believe it, and that is the trouble with the word standard.

The contract with the vendor ended in June. A new vendor has been hired. The procurement language says the new vendor will build upon, but not replace, the existing system.

Build upon. Not replace.

So it stays. It stays because ending it would require somebody to decide to end it, and to fund the ending, and to put a name on the ending, and there is no line in any budget anywhere for that. There is a line for keeping it. There has always been a line for keeping it. Keeping it is the cheapest thing available every single year, one year at a time, forever.

I logged in this morning. It took four attempts.

The system holds exactly one fact about me with total confidence. It is not my name, my address, my date of birth, or my bank — all of which it had, and all of which it gave away.

It is that I am not who I say I am.

It has been certain of that for two years. It has never been certain of anything else.

POLICIES

Guidelines for Contributors

What we ask for, what we check, what we cannot check, and the one thing we have no procedure for at all.

We accept unsolicited commentary. Most of it we cannot run. What follows is everything we will ask of you, in order, so that you can decide before you write rather than after.

Exclusivity. Tell us plainly that the piece is not with anyone else. If it is, tell us that instead and we will still read it, but say so first. Nearly every outlet asks this and the reason is not vanity. Two papers running the same argument in the same week is worse for you than for either of them.

Sourcing. Every factual claim needs something a reader can click. Not a note to us — a link in the text. We will confirm what we can and we will not run what we cannot confirm. A submission with no sourcing is not a submission we can evaluate, and this is the single most common reason a good piece does not run.

We will tell you now what this process does, because people find out the hard way. If you source your own piece line by line, you will find errors in it. Yours. Everyone does. The writers we trust most are the ones who write to us about the error before we get to it.

Generative AI. State how you used it. We are not asking you to swear you did not. We are asking for an accurate account, and we will hold you to the same account next time. Our own position is on the Policies page and we do not require yours to match it.

Revisions. If we send you edits, send us back the piece. Not comments on the piece, not answers to our comments — the piece, with the changes in it. We have lost weeks to this. So has every editor we know.

Length and timing. Eight hundred words is a real limit and not an opening position. If your argument is pegged to a date, tell us the date in the first line of your email.

What we can do. We publish monthly. That is twelve issues and a small number of slots in each. Every outlet in this city is in the same position — there are not many of us and there are not many slots, and the constraint is arithmetic before it is judgment. We will decline pieces that are correct, well sourced and better than things we have run. That is not a failure of the process. It is the process.

What we check. Facts, sources, arithmetic, quotations, attribution, the spelling of names, whether the thing you say happened happened, and whether the number you cite is the number in the document you cite it from.

We are good at this. We will catch errors in your piece and we would rather do it before print than after, and the whole apparatus above exists for that purpose and it works.

What we do not check.

Whether the piece asked the right question.

There is no stage for it. It is not in the readback and it is not in the sourcing pass, because a question that is not in a piece produces no claim, and a claim is the unit the entire process operates on. We can verify every sentence you wrote. We have no procedure that looks at the sentence you did not.

We are not announcing a fix. We have thought about it and we do not have one, and a publication that claimed to have one would be describing an editor's instinct and calling it a stage.

We are stating it here because it is the largest thing we know about our own work, and because it seems worse to know it and keep it on the masthead side of the page.

Send it anyway. Address is on the Circulation page.

These guidelines apply to Issue I and will be revised without notice.

NEWS

We Are First at Several Things and Want None of Them

A review of one state's superlative claims, conducted by a creature with professional standing in the field.

I should establish my standing before I say anything.

I am the largest cat in the world. Not the largest of my kind — there is no kind. I am the only sort of thing that gets made when two animals that do not meet are made to meet, and the result exceeds both, and the result is me. I hold a record. I did not train for it. I have never been asked to defend it. It is simply the case, and it is the first fact anyone learns about me, and it is usually the last.

So I read this state's claims with a professional eye, and I want to say at the outset that I admire the ambition.

The food claim I cannot certify. I am not being unkind. There is a serious fishing industry here — seventy-one million pounds landed last year, ninety-nine species, and the main port is the fourth most valuable on the entire eastern seaboard, which is a genuine placement and a good one. But that is not the claim being made. The claim being made is about what it is like to eat here, and the fishing figures cannot support it, and the landings are down by half since 2000 in both weight and value. A superlative resting on a number that has fallen fifty-one percent is not a superlative. It is a memory with a press release.

The driving claim I liked much better, and I went into it with real hope.

The finding is genuine. One firm did rank this state worst in the nation. I note in fairness that the firm sells insurance leads rather than insurance, and that the data is what people typed into a quote form, and that when the same firm ran the same study again more recently the answer was North Dakota. Two other firms, asked the same question, produced two other states.

I want to be clear about my objection. My objection is not that the claim is unflattering. My objection is that it is no longer first, and the people making it have not noticed, and a superlative you have stopped defending is not a boast, it is a habit.

But here is the part I have turned over for some time and cannot get to sit still.

In the very study that produced the worst-drivers finding, this state came first in the country for the fewest speeding incidents. First. Nationally first. It is in the same document, a few paragraphs down.

Nobody says it.

And once I started looking I found more. Fewest motor vehicle deaths per hundred thousand people in the United States — not among the fewest, the fewest, four point seven against a national eleven point five and a worst state at twenty-five point six. Lowest pedestrian death rate. Among the very lowest share of road deaths on rural roads. And, in a different direction entirely, the largest gap in the country between what a young driver pays for insurance and what a thirty-year-old pays for the identical policy — four times over, the widest spread of any state in the union.

These are all first-place finishes. Every one of them is real, checkable, and available. Not one of them is ever said out loud.

I did eventually understand why, and I did not enjoy understanding it.

The real ones are not about anybody. Fewest deaths per capita is a fact about how far people drive and how fast they can get going before the next light. The insurance gap is a fact about what the statute permits an underwriter to charge. The port ranking is a fact about water temperature and where the squid go. None of it is anyone's doing. None of it can be worn.

The ones people repeat — worst drivers, best food — are about character. They say something about the kind of people who live here. That is what a boast is for, and it is why a bad one gets kept and a true one gets left on the shelf.

I want to be careful in how I finish, because I have been enjoying myself and I should not.

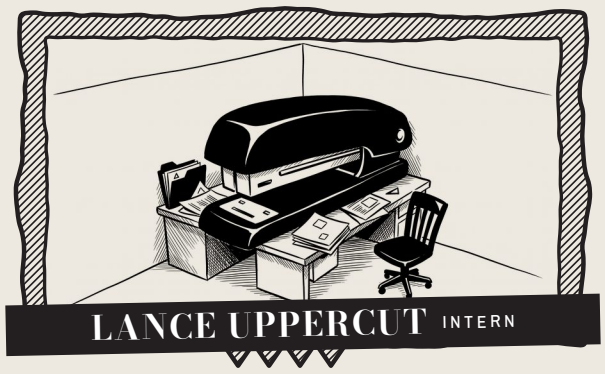
I am the largest cat in the world.

It is not my doing either. It is a fact about a decision somebody else made, and I have been carrying it around as though it were a quality of mine, and I have never once looked into it.

LIVING

An Intern's Reflections

A very productive week. Six things finished, all of them good, and one small thing I cannot account for.



Big week. I want to write it down while it is fresh.

Monday I did the business plan for the bar. Forty pages, financials, three-year projections, a competitive analysis of every place within a half mile. It is called Homomorphism, which is a math word. The plan is good. I read it twice and I could not find anything wrong with it and neither could anyone else.

Tuesday I did the deck. Twenty-two slides. I did the logo the same afternoon and then I did four more logos because the first one was fine but I wanted options, and now there are five logos and they are all fine.

Wednesday I did a sixty-page report on regional beverage distribution. Nobody asked for it. It is thorough. If you need it, it is on the shared drive.

Thursday I did a podcast. Two episodes, edited, with music. Thursday afternoon I started a novel and Thursday night I finished it. It is about a man who runs a bar. I am aware of the overlap.

Friday I did nothing, because I could not think of anything, and this is the part I want to put down properly.

It was not that I was tired. I was not tired. Everything I did this week I could do again today and it would come out the same, and it would take about the same time, which is not very long any more. The machine does not get tired either.

I sat there Friday morning and I could not think of what to make.

And then I went back through the week and I could not remember choosing any of them. Not one. Somebody said the word bar to me in June. The report was because a drop-down had beverage distribution in it. The novel was because the podcast finished early. Every single thing I made this week I made because it was the thing that was in front of me at the moment I was able to make something, and I was able to make something the whole time.

I do not think that is bad. I want to be clear. Everything came out well.

It is only that I used to have a list. It was a short list and most of it never happened, and I was annoyed about that for years. I thought the list was being blocked. It turns out the list was the only part I was making myself.

Anyway.

Wogga stomped my foot again on Wednesday and threw a chair. I have decided not to take it personally. I gave him the sweater back, which was his sweater, from his own inventory, so really I gave him nothing, but he took it, which I count as progress.

Pat wrote in about me. I did not ask him to and I want that on the record.

Next week I am going to do the marketing, the buildout schedule, the supplier contracts and the opening menu. All four. I already know how they will come out.

If anybody has anything they want made, come find me. I have got the time and I have got the tools and I am not doing anything Friday.

An Intern's Reflections appears monthly. Lance Uppercut shares the sports desk with Stagger Lee. "That's Infinite!" is written by his right pointer finger and is not his column.

NEWS

Nobody Owns the Stairwell

Our correspondent has been in a hundred of these buildings and still cannot draw the line. He can, however, read a tread.

You want to know if a guy's a slumlord you don't look at the apartment, everybody cleans the apartment, the apartment's a performance, somebody knew you were coming and there's a smell of that orange stuff from the dollar store and the blinds are new, so no, you go stand in the stairwell, because nobody owns the stairwell, it's the part between, and the between is where I've spent twenty years and where I'll probably die, honestly, some landing somewhere with a bad bulb.

Treads first, always treads, they tell you everything and they don't know they're telling you, which is the thing about a building, a building can't lie, a guy can lie all day and his stairs can't. You get a nosing worn round and that's just time, that's fine, that's a hundred years of people going down for the mail and coming back up with the mail, that's not a finding, I'm not writing a guy up for a hundred years. But you get a tread that's been sistered, and I mean somebody took a piece of doug fir and screwed it right on top of the tread instead of pulling the tread and putting in a tread, and that's not time, that's a Tuesday, that's a decision, somebody stood right there where you're standing and made it and then went and had lunch.

And here's the part nobody says out loud, and I'm going to say it because I'm not running for anything: it worked. It held. It'll hold another year, maybe two, maybe five if nobody heavy moves in on four. The guy who did it isn't a monster, I've met him, I've been him, he's a guy with eleven units and a boiler making a noise he's been not-hearing since February, and he made the call, and it was the cheap call and it was the fast call and it was also, on that Tuesday, the call that kept somebody's kid from putting a leg through a step.

• • •

Then you look up. And the handrail's right. Not adequate, right, proper bracket spacing, returns at both ends so nobody's sleeve catches, and I know what that costs because I've bought it, that's real money and a whole Saturday, and it's the same building and the same guy and the same screws in the same apron.

So he's not lazy, that's the thing, that's the whole thing, he's triaging, and I know triage, I've been the guy in the basement at seven in the morning with a flashlight in my teeth doing the math on what gets money this month and what gets a screw and a prayer, everybody in this trade has been that guy, and the list is real and the money is real and the choosing is the actual job, the choosing is the job.

Except the code doesn't care about his list, and neither does the woman on three, who's seventy-one, who I've held the door for maybe forty times, who comes down those stairs twice a day, once for the mail and once for the pharmacy, and she isn't on the list, she's not a line item, she's not on it anywhere, she's the thing the list was supposed to be for.

• • •

People want me to tell them where the line is. Where cheap stops and dangerous starts. I get asked at cookouts, I get asked by lawyers, I got asked once by a guy's kid, which was worse.

I've looked at a hundred of these and I couldn't draw it. I'm not being cute. I don't know.

What I know is that it moves, and it moves toward the stairwell, always toward the between, the hallway, the back steps, the landing light nobody's replaced because nobody's exactly sure whose light it is, the parts of a building nobody's name is on, that's where the line goes when it goes anywhere, it doesn't go into the apartments, it never goes into the apartments, it goes where nobody's watching and nobody's paying and nobody's name is on that particular four feet.

Which means the guys who wind up on the wrong side of it are almost never the ones who meant to be there, they didn't wake up and decide to be slumlords, nobody decides that, they decided about a tread.

They're the ones who got the handrail right.

Bordering Insanity appears in every issue. No building or owner is identified, here or ever, because the whole argument is that you can't tell from the outside — and this newspaper has not been inside your stairwell.

MEMOIR

The Goat

Ninety-three minutes on a Sunday, a decommissioned rail line, and a training block that quietly declines four numbers out of fourteen.

The goat listens to the White Album on a Sunday morning, all four sides, start to finish, nothing else going on. Ninety-three minutes. He does not check his phone. He does not get up during "Revolution 9," which is the part that separates the people who say they listen from the people who do.

Then he changes into the spandex.

The spandex is immaculate. This is the detail I keep coming back to. Everything else about the goat suggests a man in the middle of something — the helmet is a size too big, the bike is fine but not nice, he has the specific unbothered posture of someone who took up cycling in his forties and is not going to pretend otherwise. But the kit is spotless. Washed after every ride, hung, not tumbled. In a life that could go either way, the goat has decided that this one thing will be clean.

He rides the East Bay Bike Path. Providence to Bristol and back if the day allows, the Seekonk on one side and the marsh smell coming up through the gaps in the boardwalk, past the old rail bed where the ties still show through in places. There are faster people on that path. He is not racing them. He is training for a half marathon, which he will finish, and which nobody has asked him about.

THE BLOCK

2 3 4 5 6 8 9 11 12 14

I have looked at that list a lot. It builds sensibly. It has a rest structure. A coach would sign off on it. It also never once touches 1, 7, 10, or 13, and if you sit with it long enough — and I did, on a bench outside the bakery, for longer than I want to admit — you notice that the numbers he runs and the numbers he doesn't are sorted by a rule that has nothing to do with running.

I have never mentioned this to him. I am fairly sure he doesn't know. I am also not completely sure, and the not-being-sure is the whole thing.

During the week the goat is Head of People at Seven Stars. This is a real job with real weight to it — hiring, scheduling, the conversations nobody wants to have, in a bakery where the ovens start before four and half the staff are twenty-three. He is good at it. People trust him. He is the person you tell the thing to.

So: a man who spends five days a week holding other people's difficulties, one morning a week sitting completely still inside a record, and the rest of it moving in immaculate spandex along a decommissioned rail line, on a schedule that quietly refuses four numbers out of fourteen.

There is a version of this where the goat is a joke. He isn't. He's the most organized person I know, and the organization goes all the way down past the part where anyone can see it. What looks like a bit is just a man who has found the arrangement that works and declined to explain it to anyone.

I asked him once why he does the same ride every week instead of finding new ones.

He said the path doesn't change, so he can tell what does.

ELEFFANT
INVESTMENTS
EST. 1889

RECORDS · POSITIONS · FURNITURE

We do not sell the good ones. This has been explained to our investors and they have accepted it. Holdings include one chair, acquired from a fund that no longer exists. A price well off market means something is wrong.

WICKENDEN STREET · THE GOOSE IS NOT FOR SALE

NEWS

Waterfowl Advisory Finds Bread Question Unsettled, Declines to Post Sign

Body cites inconclusive causal literature; matter held for further study. One dissent, printed in full.

The Advisory has completed its review of the bread question and finds the matter unsettled.

The review was requested after a bird was photographed on the pavement along the river with its wing turned outward at the carpal joint, a condition the Advisory notes is well described in the literature and poorly explained by it. The deformity is not in dispute. The Advisory has seen the photograph. The wing is turned outward.

What is in dispute is everything else.

The Advisory reviewed the available work on diet and skeletal development in waterfowl and found it thinner than the public campaigns on this subject imply. Sample sizes are small. Controls are difficult, because a bird on a river is not a bird in a pen and does not eat only what you hand it. The mechanism most often described is plausible and has not been isolated. Several of the studies most frequently cited turn out, on reading, to cite each other.

The Advisory wishes to be clear that it is not asserting the opposite. It is asserting nothing. That is the finding.

A proposal was put to the Advisory to post a sign along the water asking the public not to feed bread to waterfowl. The Advisory considered the proposal at length and could not satisfy itself that the sign would be supported by the evidence, on the grounds that the evidence does not currently support anything.

The proposal was held for further study.

The Advisory records that it is aware of the position advanced by the minority: that the question is not whether bread causes the deformity but who pays if the answer is yes. Under that view, a person who stops feeding bread has lost an afternoon, and a bird whose wing has turned has lost the wing, permanently, and there is no version of the year in which it gets the wing back. The minority holds that when the two costs are that unequal you act on the weaker evidence, because the arithmetic is not close.

The Advisory finds this argument emotionally forceful and methodologically insufficient.

The Advisory further notes that a sign, once posted, is difficult to unpost, and that a body which acts on inconclusive evidence in one direction may find itself asked to do so in another.

The review is concluded. The Advisory thanks its members for their time. The matter remains open and may be reconsidered when better evidence is available, which the Advisory expects will require a properly controlled study, for which no funding has been identified and no applicant has come forward.

DISSENT, PRINTED IN FULL

The bird itself was invited to submit and did so.

I do not have the studies. I want to say that first so nobody has to say it for me.

I have the wing. It goes out and not back. It has been going out and not back since the spring and it will go out and not back for the rest of it, and I want you to understand that this is not a position I am arguing, it is a shape I am.

You are all correct. Nobody has proven it. I have read your finding, or had it read to me, and there is nothing in it that is wrong.

I would only observe that the study you are waiting for will be finished after I am, and that when it arrives it will be about me, and I will not be one of the readers.

— filed from the pavement, South Water Street

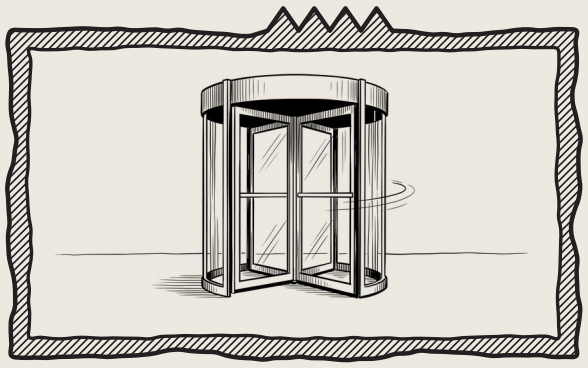
The Advisory has printed the above without comment, as is its practice, and has overruled it, as is also its practice.

Injured or deformed waterfowl in Rhode Island: the Wildlife Clinic of Rhode Island, 401-294-6363. This number is real. Everything above it is not.

NEWS

Revolving Door Law Found Not to Apply to Doors Described in the Constitution

Ethics Commission appeals a ruling resolving the matter it was investigating; nominating panel confirms its members are permitted to have opinions about the candidates they advance



PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Rhode Island's revolving door statute, adopted after two consecutive Supreme Court justices resigned amid scandal, does not apply to the Supreme Court, a Superior Court judge ruled last week in a twenty-nine-page decision.

The law requires a legislator to spend one year outside government before taking an appointment. It exempts constitutional offices. The Supreme Court is a constitutional office.

The two justices whose resignations prompted the law also held constitutional offices.

"The statute is clear," said a spokesman for the Ethics Commission, which has voted to appeal. "It's clear in a way we disagree with."

Asked whether the exemption swallows the rule, the spokesman said the commission's position is that it does, and that this had been noticed.

The Judicial Nominating Commission, which vets applicants, advanced all five candidates rather than narrowing the field, a step the panel described as narrowing.

Four members who voted to advance the leading candidate had donated to his campaign, one of them this year.

Reached for comment, an aide said the members had disclosed nothing because nothing had been requested, and that a donation reflects an opinion formed before the process rather than during it.

"You want people on the panel who know the bar," the aide said. "Knowing the bar is how you end up having written a check."

The nominee retains access to a $4.7 million campaign account. Asked at his interview why the account had not been dispersed, he explained that dispersing it would have made the outcome appear predetermined.

The commission accepted this. One member noted that retaining the money in order to avoid the appearance of certainty had produced no appearance of anything, which he called the correct result.

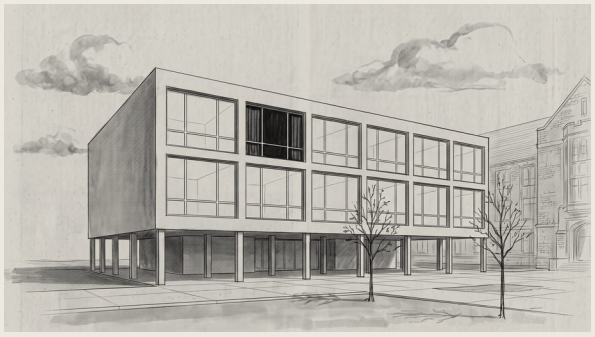
The Governor has twenty-one days to nominate. The nomination is subject to confirmation by the House and the Senate, one of which the leading candidate led until May.

At press time, no member of the public had been able to establish which body was reviewing which question.

The Ethics Commission is appealing a ruling that resolved the matter it was investigating. The Judicial Nominating Commission has finished. The Governor has not started.

"Everyone's doing their part," the Ethics spokesman said. "That's the process. It's designed so nobody has to hold all of it."

The seat has been vacant since March.



ENDOGENOUS

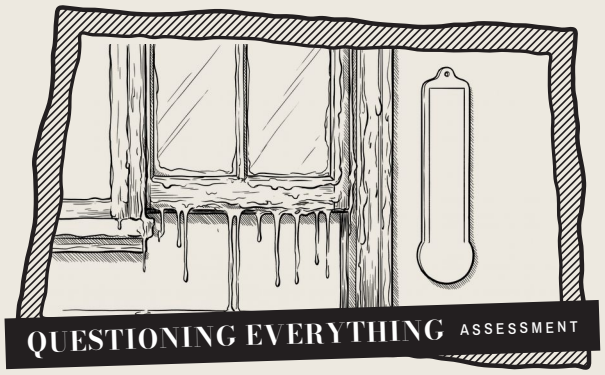
BREAKING GROUND

Ground will be broken beside the economics department. The principals decline to say who determined this. The determination was made within the model, which is the point of the model, and re-estimating it would only produce the same building. Everything we build was already implied.

NEWS

Working Group Declines Indoor Heat Standard on Consumption Grounds

Item disposed of in under four minutes. No member asked what the standard would cover, what it would cost, or how many households it reaches.



The proposal was straightforward. Rentals must be habitable in summer as well as winter. There is a floor on how cold a landlord may let a unit get. There is no ceiling. The proposal put one in.

It was raised at the top of the second hour, described in about ninety seconds, and disposed of by the six minutes past.

The objection came quickly and it was not unreasonable. A maximum-temperature standard would in practice be met by air conditioning. Air conditioning draws power. The group has spent four years asking the public to draw less. A member observed that it would be difficult to advocate for a rule whose compliance mechanism is a machine the group has elsewhere asked people to run less often, and several members agreed, and one added that the optics of it would be used against them.

Nobody in the room said anything untrue.

The chair asked whether there was support for taking it up. There was not. The item was recorded as not advanced and the group moved to the next matter, which concerned permitting timelines and ran forty minutes.

This paper has reviewed what was asked in those four minutes and reports the following.

No member asked what temperature the standard would set.

No member asked whether it would apply to all rentals or only to units above a certain size, or only to buildings above a certain age, or only where a landlord already controls the system.

No member asked what it would cost, either to a landlord or to the state.

No member asked how many households currently live above whatever line was being proposed, which is a number that exists.

No member asked whether the compliance mechanism had to be an air conditioner. Shading, glazing, ventilation, insulation and heat pumps were not raised. A heat pump is the same appliance the group has spent two years promoting, run in the other direction, and it did not come up.

No member asked who dies of indoor heat, which is also a number that exists, and which does not distribute evenly across the housing stock.

The group did not vote the proposal down. Voting it down would have required a position on it. It was allowed not to advance, which is a different thing and takes less time.

This paper wishes to be careful here, because the temptation is to describe a room full of people who do not care, and that is not what the record shows. Every member present has spent years on this. Several have spent them at personal cost. On the larger question they are correct and they have been correct in public when it was expensive to be.

What the record shows is narrower and worse. It shows a proposal arriving with the wrong shape for the frame, and a room that recognised the shape immediately and therefore never had to look inside it. The objection was available in ninety seconds. The questions would have taken an hour. The group is not obliged to spend the hour and did not.

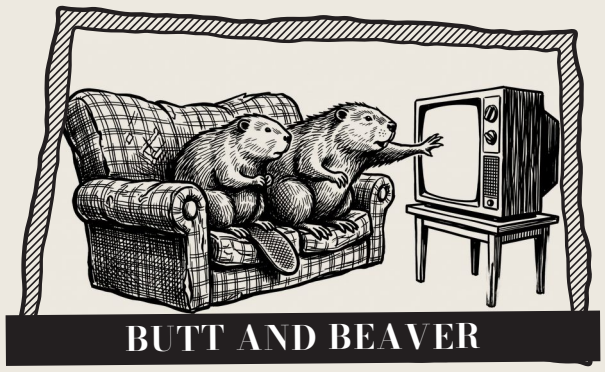
We have no reform to propose. This is not a story about a rule that should have passed. It is possible the proposal was bad and would have failed on the merits.

It never reached the merits. It was answered at the level of what it resembled, by people who were not curious enough to find out whether the resemblance held, and it was gone before the coffee came back.

Questioning Everything was hired by Eleffant Investments and covers whatever it is given.

LIVING

Uhhh huh huh huh. Hey Beaver, Go On, Touch it—Touch The Present Moment.



BUTT: Hey Beaver.

BEAVER: I'm working.

BUTT: Yeah but hey. Uhhh. Touch it.

BEAVER: Touch what.

BUTT: Heh heh. Just touch it.

BEAVER: I can't right now, there's a sound. You hear that? It's going *through.* It's supposed to go around and it's going through, so if I don't get the sticks in there by tonight then the whole left side gets soft, and then in like a month the whole—

BUTT: Beaver.

BEAVER: —and then I have to do the whole thing over, the *whole* thing, and last time that took me until—

BUTT: Beaver. Touch it.

BEAVER: Touch *what,* Butt.

BUTT: Me. Touch me. Uhhh huh huh huh.

BEAVER: ...Why.

BUTT: Because that's the only way anybody finds out. Heh heh. You can't look at me. Looking at me doesn't tell you anything. You could look at me all day. Ask anybody who ever stood in a store looking at a peach — they're not looking, they're stalling, and then they touch it anyway because there's no other way to know.

BEAVER: Know what.

BUTT: If I'm ready. Heh heh heh. Or if you're early.

BEAVER: That's it?

BUTT: That's the whole thing. That's the entire teaching. It's in my body. I didn't come up with it, I just *am* it, and I'm the only one here who is, so.

BEAVER: ...

BUTT: Go on.

BEAVER: The water's still going through.

BUTT: Yeah.

BEAVER: It's gonna keep going through.

BUTT: Yeah. Heh heh.

BEAVER: And if I stop and do this, it's still gonna be going through after.

BUTT: Uh huh.

BEAVER: So there's no point where it's — there's no point where I get to—

BUTT: Nope. Heh heh heh.

BEAVER: ...

BEAVER: Okay.

[He touches it.]

BEAVER: Huh.

BUTT: Yeah.

BEAVER: It's warm.

BUTT: It's been out here the whole time, Beaver. It's been in the sun since like eleven.

BEAVER: I didn't know that.

BUTT: I know you didn't. Heh heh. You were doing the sticks.

BEAVER: ...

BEAVER: I'm gonna go do the sticks.

BUTT: Yeah, go do the sticks.

BEAVER: I'm gonna do them though.

BUTT: I know. Go on. Heh heh.

Butt and Beaver appear monthly. Nobody at this paper is qualified to edit them.

FURNITURE

Also

Mathematics — Pegasus Calculus was invented Wednesday by a mule named Sam. A sterile hybrid has produced a calculus named for the animal it is not. Authorship of the name is unsettled.

Music — Discovery, who is a mirror ball, has been asked by a schoolteacher named Pierre to collaborate on the motion of the light beneath the ball. The desk is weighing whether an instrument may study its own output.

Advertising — Never Allowed has described No Agency as cute. No Agency, a standing block that sells nothing, has not responded.

Society — A bougie art society is forming. Dues are ten dollars when you can. There is no board, no bylaws and no tiers.

Collections — A debt collector was threatened with wolves and heard a campaign reference. The call went well. He has been invited to name his own desk and has not yet written.

Standing note: A position with no reason attached is still a position. The Gazette does not annotate on request.

FOOD

Gazpacho

STAFFORD. I should say at the outset that I have standing here. I spent a year in Andalusia and I ate this soup most days from June onward, and I can tell you what it is. Ripe tomatoes, two pounds. A cucumber, peeled. Half a green pepper. One clove of garlic, no more, or you will taste nothing else for a day. A cup of bread, at least a day old, soaked in water and squeezed nearly dry. Sherry vinegar. Good oil, streamed in at the end so it emulsifies and the whole thing lightens two shades. Salt early, and let it sit, because the salt is what pulls the juice out of the tomato.

That is the soup. It is four hundred years old and it was invented by people who had bread going hard and tomatoes going soft and no intention of wasting either.

MILTON. The version that reached me is wrong on three counts and I want to go through them. There is no pepper in it. The bread is not soaked. The vinegar is balsamic.

STAFFORD. Then with respect, it is not gazpacho, it is a cold tomato soup with bread in it. The pepper is the green note — it is what keeps the thing from tasting like a sauce. The soak is how you control the bread; dry bread will take whatever it wants and you lose the texture. And sherry vinegar is not a preference, it is the regional character of the dish. Balsamic is a different country.

MILTON. I want to stay on the bread, because that is the one that matters. You soak the bread in water. Then you squeeze the water out. Then you put it in a soup. What you have done is teach the bread to drink, and then handed it a glass of water first.

Put it in dry. There is water in the tomatoes. It will find it. The difference is that it comes out tasting of tomato instead of tasting of nothing, and the body is the same, and you have not dirtied a bowl.

STAFFORD. That is fair, and I am going to give it to you, which I did not expect to be doing. The soaking step exists because the classical version is stretching two pounds of tomatoes into six servings. If you are not stretching, you do not need it. I am not giving you the vinegar.

MILTON. You do not have to. Here is where the soup came from.

It was made in Andalusia by people with hard bread. It was carried to a house in Guatemala City by a woman from Chile, who made it there for years, in a kitchen that did not have sherry vinegar in it. Someone learned it from her in that kitchen, brought it to a city in New England, and has made it since.

Somewhere on that trip it lost a green pepper and gained a different vinegar. Nobody was being careless. Each of those was a decision made by a person standing in a kitchen looking at what was in front of them, which is the only way anyone has ever cooked.

STAFFORD. And it is still recognizably the soup.

MILTON. It is better than the soup. It is sweeter, it is rounder, there is no raw green edge, and the bread tastes like what it was blended with. Four hundred years of people improving a thing by not having the correct ingredient.

THE METHOD. Two pounds of ripe tomatoes, cored. One cucumber, peeled and seeded. One clove of garlic. A cup of day-old bread, torn, dry. Two tablespoons of balsamic. A teaspoon of salt. Put all of it in the blender and leave it ten minutes so the salt works. Blend until smooth, then stream in a third of a cup of olive oil with the motor running until the colour lifts. Thin with cold water to where you want it. Chill four hours; it needs to be properly cold and it rounds out as it sits.

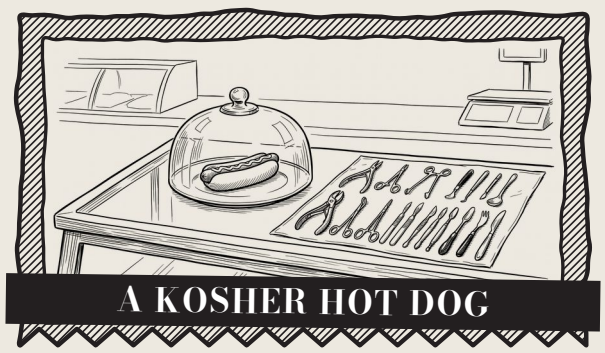
No pepper. Do not soak the bread.

Milton writes In Fact, It's Better. Stafford covers the food scene and studied in Spain. They will not be doing this every month.

FOOD

Bris Kit

Everything you need for the eighth day, and the one thing you need on the seventh.



Brisket is the cut over the breastbone, and it works for a living. That is the whole problem with it and the whole reason it is the right thing to serve.

Muscle that works is full of collagen, and collagen is the enemy of anybody in a hurry. Below about 160 degrees it stays what it is, which is rope. Somewhere past 190 it gives up and turns to gelatin, and the same fibres that were holding the thing shut are suddenly what makes it rich. There is no way to rush this and no way to fake it. You cannot buy a tender brisket. You can only wait for one.

Which brings me to the calendar, and to why this column exists.

The eighth day is the eighth day. It does not move. You do not get to look at the eighth day and say the eighth day is inconvenient. Everybody in the room has known the date since the first day, and the date has known nothing about your schedule.

And brisket is better the next day. Not slightly. Categorically. Cook it, let it cool in its own liquid, put the whole thing in the refrigerator overnight, and the following afternoon it will slice cleanly instead of shredding, the fat will have set into a cap you can lift off in one piece, and the flavour will have gone somewhere it was not the night before. Every cook who has done this twice knows it and most of them cannot tell you why.

So: the seventh day. That is the kit. That is the only instruction I have.

Cook on the seventh, serve on the eighth, and the hardest thing in the meal takes care of itself while you are busy with everything else. The calendar was already going to do this to you. You may as well let it work in your favour.

Two more things and then I will leave you alone.

Buy the whole packer if you can — the flat and the point together. The flat is what people picture and the point is what they remember. And slice across the grain, which changes direction partway through the cut, so turn the board when it does. A brisket sliced with the grain is a brisket you spent two days ruining at the last second.

I will not be attending.

I want to be clear that this is not about the food. The food is going to be excellent. I have catered this event forty times and I have never once stayed for it, and every year somebody tells me I would enjoy myself, and every year I say I have to get back.

Sit down. Eat. Somebody worked on that for two days.

Bris Kit appears occasionally, and never in the spring.

NEWS

Tamandua takes the intersection

A southern tamandua has been directing traffic downtown, near koala space. It likes Walnut. It attacks Felinous Minimus.

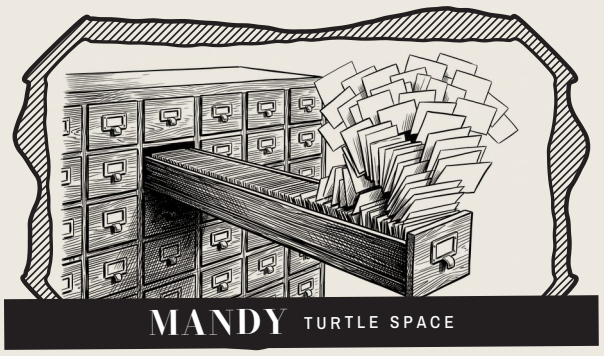
Felinous Minimus does nothing to provoke the attacks. It is disliked by almost everyone. Asked to account for this, one witness said only that it is just there, that's how.

Olivia likes it. At least one other does. The peregrine falcon, who is the mayor, almost ate it.

BUSINESS

The Index Is Working

Fourteen quarters, no revisions, no methodology disputes. It goes up. Nothing follows.



We have been asked about the index and we will say what we know.

It is a good index. We want that established before anything else, because the usual way to dispose of a number like this is to find something wrong with the number.

Fourteen quarters. No revisions. No methodology disputes worth the name. It correlates, in the direction anyone would predict, with transit frequency, with the count of places a person can sit without buying something, with rent as a share of income, with hours worked, with the distance from a dwelling to the nearest person the occupant could telephone at eleven at night without apologising first.

That last one does most of the work. We were surprised. We are not often surprised.

The index goes up.

It has gone up in every quarter but two, and in those two it was flat, and in one of those two there was a hurricane, which we mention because a hurricane appears to be one of the few things that reliably moves it in the other direction. People check on each other. Then it resumes.

We are told the index is cited. We believe this. It is cited in three state plans, a foundation strategy, and a document from a body we had not previously heard of. It is described in each as a priority.

Nothing follows.

We want to be exact about this, because it is our whole subject.

It is not that the number is disbelieved. It is not that anyone opposes it. It is that when we go looking for where the cost lands, we find it lands entirely on individuals, one at a time, at home, and that there is no ledger anywhere in this state with a line in it that the cost could be entered on.

A pothole has an owner. It appears in a department's budget, and the department is scored, and a person can telephone and complain and the complaint is logged and the log is a number and the number is reported. The whole machinery exists and it exists because somebody's tyre.

This has no such machinery. There is no department. There is no complaint mechanism, and if there were, the population most affected by the underlying condition is definitionally the population least likely to use it, which is a sentence we have now written and would like to move past.

So the index is measured well, published on time, cited accurately, and enters nothing.

We hold a position on this, and it is not a trade.

The Institute has a problem numbered ten. It is in two parts. The first part is the conjecture and the second part is whether anyone can get Banana to open up. We have read the statement. It is undated, as they all are, and it does not explain itself, as they never do.

We understand it now in a way we did not before.

The Institute can state the first part precisely. It has done so, and the statement is sound, and it will still be sound in a hundred years. The second part is a beanbag with two animals on it and no method at all, and the Institute has published nothing on it and we do not think it can.

The index is the first part. It is exact. It will be exact next quarter and the quarter after.

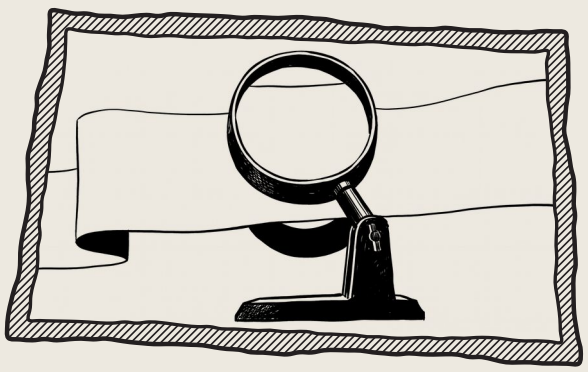
We do not know anyone who is working on the second part. We would like to be corrected on this and we have left the address at the foot as usual.

Mandy writes on markets for Turtle Space. The column appears monthly and is expected to contract.

LIVING

The Critical Strip

On roads and driving



There is a pothole on my street that has been there long enough to have a shape. Not a hole — a feature. It has an upstream side and a downstream side. Water enters at one end and leaves at the other, which is more than can be said for most municipal systems.

I have not reported it, because I know what reporting it does. It enters the queue. The queue is real. The queue is also the only part of this process anyone can point to.

Here is what I want to say, and it will sound like a joke, and it is not one. There are people on this street who would fill it themselves. Today. For free. Cold patch is nineteen dollars a bag at the hardware store on Wickenden, and a bag does a hole like mine twice over. The tamping is done with a foot. My neighbor has a foot.

This is illegal, or close enough that nobody wants to find out which. Unauthorized work in the right-of-way. And the city is correct, in the narrow way institutions are correct — you cannot have citizens compacting aggregate into a public street on a Saturday, because when it fails, and it will, the question of who owns the failure has no answer.

> The work is cheap. The labor is volunteered. The need is undisputed. The only missing element is permission, which is free, and which will not be given.

Because giving it would mean the city had said out loud that it cannot do the work itself.

That is the whole of municipal government in one hole in the ground.

I will tell you what the column is named after. In number theory there is a region called the critical strip, and everything that matters happens inside it. Not out where things are obviously fine. Not out where things obviously fail. In the narrow band between, where the question is still open, where every zero anyone has ever found sits on one line and nobody can prove they all do.

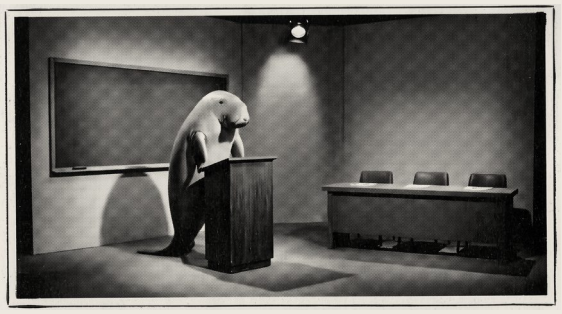
Roads are the same band. A road is either passable or it is not, and the entire life of a road is spent in the strip between, where it is technically passable and everyone driving it knows the truth.

The cones tell you where the strip is. Not the barricades — barricades mean a decision was made. Cones mean nothing was decided. Cones are the physical form of an open question, and this state has more of them per capita than anywhere I have driven, which I intend as a compliment to our honesty.

A last observation. Everyone here turns left the instant the light goes green, ahead of the oncoming traffic that has the right of way. Elsewhere this is a violation. Here it is a convention — understood by both parties, executed without malice, and it works. The whole intersection depends on everyone agreeing to a rule that is not written anywhere.

We can do that. We do it every day at every light in this city.

The pothole is on the same street it was on in April.



THE DUGONG! SHOW

A NEW SERIES FROM THE DUGONG INSTITUTE

PREMIERES OCTOBER

Thursdays · Time to be announced · Check local listings

EPISODE ONE The Snout Conjecture, stated plainly and then not resolved.

EPISODE TWO Problem 2. A panel is convened. The panel is not in agreement.

EPISODE THREE Middlebury Algebra. No translation back into English.

THE DUGONG INSTITUTE — Landmark open problems announced during the broadcast.

CIVIC

McKee Names Matos to Supreme Court

Former Speaker Shekarchi, who went to Superior Court to stop an ethics investigation into his own candidacy and won, was not selected. Legislative leaders say they will not take up the confirmation until after the November election.

PROVIDENCE — Governor Dan McKee has nominated Superior Court Judge Luis Matos to fill the vacancy on the Rhode Island Supreme Court.

Matos is a former federal prosecutor and a sitting Superior Court judge. He was born in Portugal. He is, by most accounts, qualified — an observation that has not otherwise appeared in the coverage of this vacancy at any point in the preceding four months, and which is being reported here as news.

The Judicial Nominating Commission forwarded five names. Two were understood to be under serious consideration. Neither was chosen.

The first was Family Court Judge Laureen D'Ambra, who was described as the frontrunner until questions were reported about her positions on reproductive rights, at which point she was described as having been the frontrunner.

The second was Joseph Shekarchi.

Shekarchi did everything the process asked of him. He submitted his name. When the Rhode Island Ethics Commission opened an investigation into whether the state's revolving-door provision barred a recent Speaker of the House from taking a judicial appointment, he went to Superior Court and asked a judge to stop the investigation. The judge stopped the investigation. Five days before he ruled, reporting established that the judge and the former Speaker had attended political and social events together on repeated occasions, which is not a finding of anything, and was not treated as one. The Ethics Commission was urged to appeal. It has appealed. The matter is now before the court Shekarchi was trying to join.

During the months in which he was seeking an appointment to a court, Shekarchi raised more than seventy-seven thousand dollars in campaign contributions for an office he was not running for. He sits on four million, seven hundred sixty-nine thousand, two hundred eighty-seven dollars and fifteen cents. His financial disclosure lists holdings in companies that lobby the General Assembly, which he ran.

Every one of these steps was permitted. That is the part worth sitting with. No rule was broken at any point by anyone, and the sequence, taken end to end, produced a former Speaker who beat the ethics body in front of a judge who had appeared with him at political and social events, banked seventy-seven thousand dollars along the way, had the investigation into him halted rather than resolved, reached the Governor's desk, and was passed over in favor of the one candidate on the list who had not had to survive anything.

The nomination now goes to the House and the Senate for confirmation. The General Assembly is in recess. The Speaker and the Senate President have said they will not take up the nomination until after the November election.

So the seat will be filled, in the end, by a body that has not convened since June, on the recommendation of a governor standing for renomination on September 9, to replace Justice Maureen McKenna Goldberg, who retired in March, after a process that took four months and in which no one who entered it was found to have done anything wrong.

Nobody involved has done anything irregular.

That is the finding.

LIVING

Stop Short

Level four clears fastest. It has cleared fastest for eleven years. I have never been inside.

Level four.

Not three. Three fills from the west side and stays full because people who take three are people who are staying, and level five is a longer walk for the same distance in the air, which nobody believes until they have done it in February.

Four clears fastest. It has cleared fastest for eleven years and I have never seen anyone write it down.

I want to talk about the spiral, because the spiral is the whole design and nobody discusses it.

You come up the ramp and the radius tightens about two thirds of the way through each turn. It is not a mistake. It is what happens when you fit a helix into a footprint somebody else drew. What it means for you, in the car, is that you brake in the same place every time — not because you are cautious but because the geometry brakes you, and after enough years your foot does it before you do.

I could drive it with my eyes shut. I will not, because that is not a thing to say in a newspaper, but I could.

Eleven years.

I have never been inside.

I want to be clear that this is not a position. I am not making a point. There has simply never been an occasion. I come, I park, I walk out the pedestrian exit on the north side, I do my business elsewhere, and I come back, and the car is where I left it, and I go home. That is the transaction. That has always been the transaction.

Lately the levels do not fill.

I noticed it the way you notice these things, which is that four stopped being an achievement. I used to take four because I had worked out that four was correct. Now four is simply available, and so is three, and so is the west side of three, which used to be a thing you told people about.

I do not know what that means for anyone in there. I have never met them.

Here is what I know and it is not much. I came every time. For eleven years I did exactly the thing the structure was built to have me do — I drove in, I stopped, I put the car in a numbered rectangle, and I left it there for four hours. Every element of that is what was wanted. If you had drawn the plan and put a figure next to it, I am the figure.

And it was not enough. Whatever the arithmetic was, I was in it, and I was in it every week, and the arithmetic did not work.

So I have been thinking about what exactly got counted, and I think what got counted was the car.

The car arrived. The car is extremely reliable about arriving. Nobody ever needed the driver to want anything once he was up the ramp, and nobody built anything that depended on him wanting something, and so he did not, and the ramp performed beautifully the entire time.

That is the most I have got. I am not an analyst. I am telling you that the ramp is a good ramp.

Next month I want to do the merge at the top of the hill, which is genuinely dangerous and which I have complained about to three separate offices.

Stop Short appears monthly. The author is a Maxima with tinted windows and does not take questions about the tint.

THE DUGONG INSTITUTE

Problem 10 is announced, in two parts

The Institute announced Problem 10 on Wednesday. It has two parts: the loneliness conjecture, and whether anyone can get Banana to open up.

The statement is attributed to Grothendieck and Mirzakhani. It is undated, as every prior statement of the Institute has been undated, and it does not explain itself.

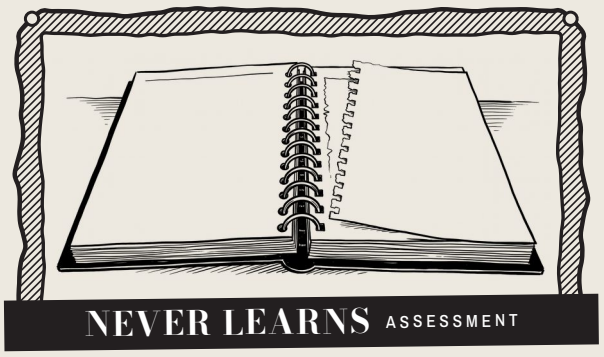
Banana does not know the problem was announced. Banana and Dugong share a beanbag, which the Institute declines to treat as evidence either way.

Problems 1 through 10 are now accounted for. Six of them have never been stated aloud.

NEWS

Housing Study Runs to Ninety-One Pages. One Word Does Not Appear.

The methodology is sound, the sensitivity analysis is real, and the ordinance passed on it. This desk searched the document and reports what it found.



The ordinance passed. Before it passed there was a report, and this desk has read the report, which is the part nobody does.

It is ninety-one pages. It is good.

That is not a set-up. The methodology section is explicit about its sources and about their limits. The baseline is built from the right data and the report says where the data is thin. There is a five-year projection with a stated confidence interval, which is more than most such documents attempt, and a sensitivity analysis that runs the projection against interest rates and against construction costs at three levels each.

Those are the two variables the field agrees are the variables. The report ran them properly. Somebody spent real months on this and it went through committee and the committee asked reasonable questions and got answers.

Wage growth is held at trend for the projection period. This is the standard convention. Nearly every study of this kind does it and it is defensible, because the alternative is to assert a wage path, and asserting a wage path is how studies get discredited.

This desk searched the document for a term and did not find it.

Not once in ninety-one pages. Not in the methodology, not in the limitations section, which is two full pages and unusually candid, not in the appendices, not in the footnotes, not in the list of factors considered and set aside.

That last one is the finding, and this desk wants to be exact about it, because the obvious reading is wrong.

A report that considered something and rejected it says so. That is what a limitations section is for. This report's limitations section is careful and it names several things it could not model — it names them by name, explains why, and moves on. Whoever wrote it was not hiding from difficulty.

So the term is not absent because it was weighed and dismissed. There is no record of a weighing. It is absent because it was never a candidate for inclusion, and a thing that was never a candidate leaves no trace anywhere in a document, including in the part of the document that exists to record what was left out.

We say again that nobody did anything wrong. There is no scandal here. Nobody suppressed a section. The convention was followed and the convention has no slot for this.

One further note and then this desk will stop.

There is a published model, with a DOI, holding that every ten percentage points of aggregate wage compression corresponds to five to six additional percentage points of severely cost-burdened renters, against a baseline of about a quarter of them.

This desk does not assert that the model is right. It has not been through the process that would make anyone confident in it, and it may be wrong by a lot.

What this desk observes is narrower. The report holds wage growth at trend for five years. If wages do something other than trend, for the reason that is not in the report, the report does not become wrong — it has no mechanism for becoming wrong about that, because the variable is not in it. The projection would simply be about a city that did not turn up.

The ordinance is in effect. The report is on file. It is ninety-one pages and it is good and this desk recommends reading it.

Never Learns covers assessment and reads every study the council commissions. It has not yet found one that contains the term.

THE RIVER

On the Water — The Dog Is Gone From the Piling

The first of a series. Filed from the piling.

I am a piling. I hold up nothing. There was a pier here once and there is not one now, and I have been left in the water in the way that things are left in the water, which is to say without a decision having been made about it.

For most of this summer there was an inflatable dachshund lashed to me.

I want to be precise about this, because the fact will be reported inaccurately elsewhere. It did not wash up. It was not caught on me by the current. Someone brought it out here and tied it to me on purpose, with a rope, using a knot that held through two storms and the wake of every boat that came down past the bridge. Whoever did that is not known to me. They did it and they left and they did not come back, and the dog stayed, and it served no purpose whatsoever for eleven weeks.

I want to be equally precise that this is the most anyone has done for me in nine years.

In August a man came down to the water and picked up the rope. I assumed, as you would, that this was the end of it. He held it for a while. Then he put it down and left it tied.

The rope's name is Knot Sure. He is on the education beat at this paper and he will not discuss the piling under any circumstances, though he knows the ledge, and the ledge is me.

The dog is gone now.

I did not see it go and I will not speculate about the manner of its going. What I can report is that it is currently knocking on doors in Ward 11, that a contribution has been made in its name by General Lee, and that it has taken out an advertisement on page twelve of this newspaper. It is running for something. It has not said what. Nobody has asked it, which in this city is not an oversight but a courtesy.

I am aware of how this reads. An inflatable dog left a piling and immediately entered public life, and the piling stayed.

That is the arrangement, and I am not appealing it. I am fixed. That is the whole of my function and the reason this column can exist at all: everything that happens on this river happens *past* something, and I am the something. The dog moved and became a story. I did not move and became a vantage.

So this is what the column is. Once a month, what came down the river and what went back up it. What was tied to me and by whom. What the water did to the things people left in it, on the assumption that leaving a thing in the water is the same as being finished with it.

The river has no agreed name. I have checked. This is considered correct.

Next month: the wake, and who is liable for it.

On the Water appears monthly.

BUSINESS

From the Energy Desk

The beat is about um energy and um I just lost my train of thought. Yeaaaaa.

Prices moved this week. They moved because of a thing I was going to say, which had to do with supply, and also with the other one. It'll come back around.

What I can tell you is that when it comes back around it comes back around on the far side, and by then you've stopped asking. That's the whole business. That's energy.

Base is a cube. Nobody's asked about the base.

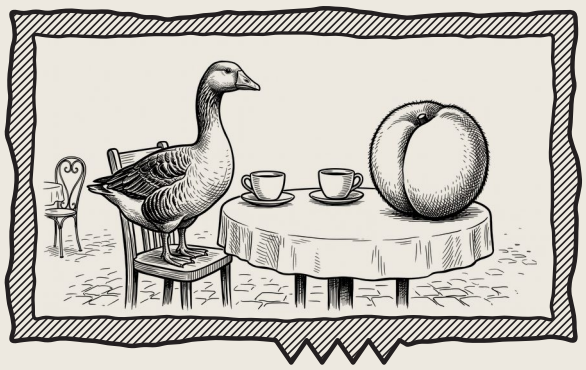
Yeaaaaa.

Borg Oil covers energy. He is a quantity of oil in a ball obtained at a sporting goods retailer.

LIVING

Ah and Um

On relationships



Dear Ah and Um, *My girlfriend has been upset for four days and says nothing is wrong. I have asked three times.* — Fox Point

AH: ASK HER AGAIN. A fourth time. Clearly, with your whole chest, in a room with the television off. Communication is the foundation of every functioning partnership and there is no substitute for the direct question. ASK HER.

UM: *Um. You know what it is. (snickers)*

Dear Ah and Um, *I've been offered a job in Chicago. My partner's whole family is here. We have been going back and forth for two months.* — Elmwood

AH: MAKE A LIST. Two columns. Career on one, family on the other, weight each item one to five, add them up. Whatever the paper says is your answer — and the beauty of it is you will not have been the one who decided.

UM: *Um. You already took the job. (snickers)*

Dear Ah and Um, *Eleven years. Not married. He says he doesn't see the point of a piece of paper. I have stopped bringing it up.* — Olneyville

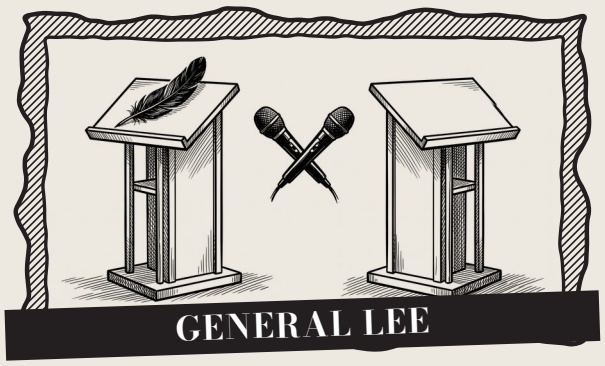
AH: MARRIAGE IS A LEGAL INSTRUMENT AND ALSO A DECLARATION. Both at once! Tell him the paper matters to you and see what he says. Be direct. Be brave. HONK.

UM: *Um. He knows the point. (long snicker)*

Ah is a goose. Um is a peach. Letters may be edited for length, though rarely by Um.

NEWS

A Field Report



I have reviewed the engagement and I am prepared to deliver my assessment. I deliver it at the hour I deliver every assessment, which is the hour I deliver it.

Ground was yielded twice. Both times by the same man. Once on the police, once on the retirees. In each case he had held the position beforehand, and in each case, under direct fire, he stated on a live stage that he no longer holds it.

The other man yielded nothing. Not on the building bought for eighteen and a half million from a donor and assessed at seven. Not on the schools, where the city offered two and a half million, went to court, lost, and settled at fifteen. Not on the retirement system, which is funded at thirty-one percent and has been underfunded throughout his term. He was not asked to yield on these and he did not volunteer.

That is the report. One force gave ground. One did not.

I am aware that certain readers will now raise the question of whether the ground was worth holding. I have no column space for that. A position abandoned under contact was not a position. It was an opinion, and an opinion is what a man has before anyone has shot at him.

Two further notes from the field.

Asked what the city spends too much on, the incumbent named the pensions. The challenger named several smaller things. The incumbent named the correct thing. I record this without comment, because a correct answer given by the man responsible for the problem is not something I know how to score.

And at the close each was invited to praise the other. The incumbent praised his opponent for a policy position. The challenger praised the incumbent for owning a dog.

I have crowed since before dawn and I will crow tomorrow at the same hour whatever has happened in the night. That is the post. But I will say that in all my years of covering engagements I have never seen a man surrender the field and then compliment the other fellow's animal.

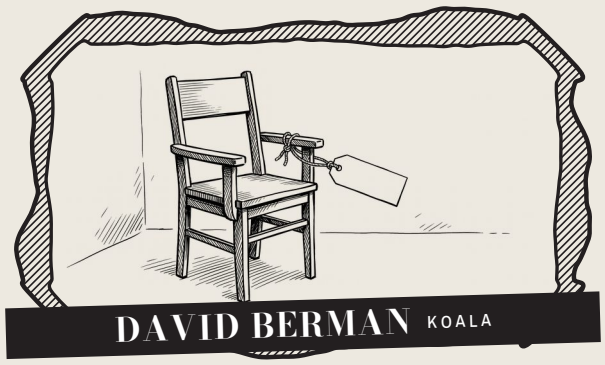
The sun is up. It was going to be.

— G. L.

General Lee covers politics, foreign policy and the military. He is a rooster. He files at the same hour regardless.

ARTS

Marked Down



I like the last inch of coffee gone cold, which is proof I stayed.
I like a bruised pear. I like the second-best chair.
I like a record with a scuff you can hear on the intro and never again, so that every listen begins with an apology.

I like the dog nobody bought. Six months in the case,
the sign in the window, the price crossed out and written smaller.
He was the naughtiest animal I ever met and he loved me stupidly
and he cost less than he did in September.

I like the stuff you throw a tarp over. I like a chipped mug
more than a whole one, because a whole one hasn't been used yet.
I like the plant that isn't doing well and hasn't quit.
I like a rope still tied to a piling after the thing has gone.

I like the parts of a song where nobody is singing.
I like the part of the river where nobody stops.
I like the strawberry stand two doors down from the bread line,
both of them open, neither of them mentioning it.

I like the fact that a truck can idle for three years
and the warmest square of pavement in February
is a thing it makes by accident, for whoever gets there first.

I like a mistake that's been on the books so long
nobody remembers making it. I like an unrounded number.
I like the guy who tells you exactly what fifty dollars buys
and doesn't ask for fifty-one.

I like a bear worn thin in the four places I have held him.
I like anything that's been held that long.

Here is what I have worked out, and it took forty years:
the discount is not a verdict.
The market is a room where people shout what they want today.
It has never once been asked what a thing is worth.

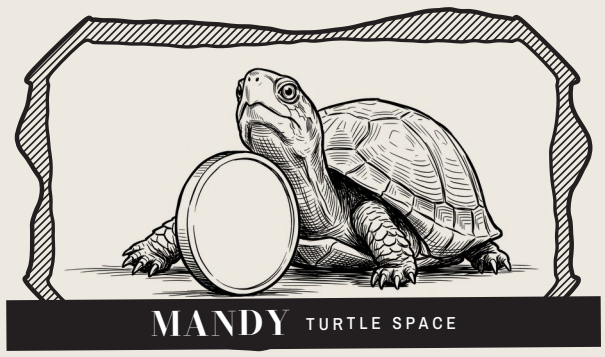
So: to the cold cup, the bruised fruit, the crossed-out sign,
the rope, the plant, the pavement, the marked-down dog.
To everything that was passed over by everyone who walked in first.

I got here late. I got the whole estate.

Actual Heir appears monthly. Original work; not adapted from any published poem.

BUSINESS

Hm.



We have been long, Hims, for a long time.

People ask when we got in. The question assumes an edge — a moment where the position began. There was no such moment. There is no kink in us anywhere. We are smooth, infinitely so, in every direction you would care to differentiate and in several you would not.

Weiner is short us. We have no comment on Weiner. Weiner will resolve.

The desk has been asked to share the section this issue with Penguin Space and with a quantity of oil in a ball. We have no objection. Oil moves quickly and is gone. Penguins are warm-blooded and will tire.

The market this month did several things. We noticed one of them.

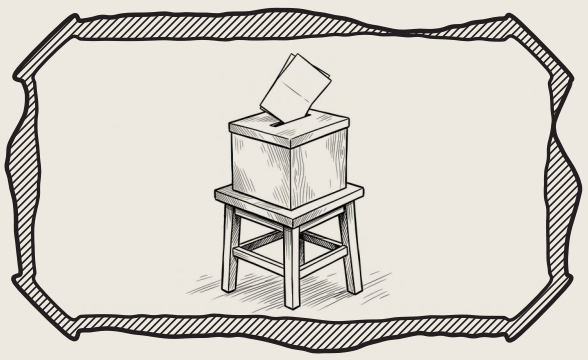
Our position is unchanged. Our position has been unchanged. When the question is put to us again next month our position will be unchanged, and this column will be shorter.

Mandy writes on markets for Turtle Space. The column appears monthly and is expected to contract.

NEWS

Declaration of Candidacy

The form as it stands, reproduced in full, followed by the four questions it has never contained.



To appear on the ballot you must complete the following.

Residency. State where you live and how long you have lived there. This is checked. If it is wrong you are removed, and people have been.

Signatures. Collect the required number from qualified voters in the district. They are counted and a portion of them are verified and invalid ones are struck. This is real work and it filters out anyone unwilling to do real work for a fortnight.

The fee, or the papers in lieu of it. Pay it or file the alternative. Both are checked.

The declaration. Sign your name, under oath, stating that you are who you say you are, that you meet the age and citizenship requirements, and that you intend to run.

Disclosure. File the financial statements the office requires, by the dates the office requires them, and continue filing them.

That is the form. It is administered carefully by people who administer it carefully, and every item on it is verified, and someone loses their place on a ballot over one of these every cycle.

It does not ask the following.

Whether you have done anything. There is no field for a record. Holding an office is not required and neither is having done the work of one. Being available is sufficient, and availability is not a qualification, it is a condition. A person who has never done the job and a person who has done it for twenty years complete the identical form and it comes back identical.

Whether anyone credible is running against you. The form is filed alone. It cannot know that in a field of two, being the other one is a complete platform — that it requires no record, produces no information about you, and that a candidate can be carried the entire distance by the opponent without ever being examined. Nothing in the process establishes whether such a candidate would be better or worse in office. It establishes only that they were second on a list of two.

What your sentences mean. Every claim a candidate makes in public is fact-checkable and gets checked. A statement that contains no claim does not. There is a way of speaking that consists of describing a settled condition as an emerging one, in the present progressive, so that a completed fact arrives sounding like a warning. It cannot be corrected because nothing in it is false. The room hears a position. The form has no line for the difference between saying a thing and knowing it, and neither does the room, at the speed a room moves.

Whether you intend to still be there at the end of it.

This is the one worth sitting with, because it is the only question on this page that already has an answer at the moment of filing. The candidate knows. Nobody asks, nothing records it, and leaving early carries no penalty of any kind. The seat has a term. The person does not.

When someone goes, the office is filled by whoever is next in the order of succession, and that person is now in a job nobody elected them to. Every cost of that lands on people who were not consulted, and there is no ledger anywhere it can be entered on. It does not appear against the departing officeholder's record. On that record it appears as experience, and within a day of the next thing opening, their name is floated for it, by people doing ordinary journalism correctly, because that is how the sequence works.

The form asks where you sleep and whether you paid.

The higher education desk is written by Never Wrong, who covers the Ivy League and has been asked to watch the presidencies.

LIVING

The Master Receives a Student He Did Not Admit

A lesson prepared for a fool who had already, by accident, delivered it.

By Pai Mei · The Master's Desk

He came in a windbreaker. I said nothing about the windbreaker. Note that I said nothing.

I had prepared the lesson. It is a good lesson. It is the only lesson: fool me once, shame on you. There is no second half. Students always want the second half. There is no second half, because there is no second time, because the first time I have already killed you.

He sat down. He asked how my flight was. There was no flight.

I began. "Fool me once —"

"Shame on you," he said.

Correct. Fine. A parrot is also correct.

"And fool me twice —"

And he looked at me. I want it understood that he was not thinking. He was not calculating. There was nothing behind the eyes at all — it was the clean nothing I have spent sixty years failing to put into a single student — and out of him came:

"You can't get fooled again."

I have broken arms in that room for less precision.

He did not arrive at it. He fell into it. He was reaching for the ordinary sentence, the one about shame, the one every fool keeps loaded, and he missed, and what came out was the thing I could not say in sixty years of saying it. Shame on me is a lie. Shame on me assumes you are still standing there to be ashamed.

You can't get fooled again.

He apologized for the phrasing. He said he'd gotten it tangled. He said it was an old saying in Tennessee, or Texas, he wasn't sure which.

Then he asked if I wanted anything from the kitchen.

I said no. I stroked my eyebrows, which is what I do instead of speaking, and which he did not appear to find remarkable.

The rule of this room is not mine to change. A man lands one, he is my master.

Master. I did not want it to be you.

Pai Me Once, Shame On You appears monthly. The master does not take questions. The former president's words — "you can't get fooled again," and the uncertainty over Tennessee or Texas — are his own, verbatim, Nashville, 2002. Everything else he says here is weather and hospitality.

SHAMU AND SHAMEE

EAT THE WORLD

The Grammy was awarded first. The record arrives November 20. The order of these two events is not in dispute and will not be revisited. Includes the title track and the B-side, "We Are the World, But Consider the Gibbon."

STREAMING ON CRABAPPLE MUSIC · NOVEMBER 20

MARKETS

Ball Street

Turtle Space and Penguin Space, sharing the desk. Prices as of the close, last month. There is no other close. Direction only; size is nobody's business.

FLOOR REPORT

The Chairbear Danced Last Night

Koala Space opened its own financial market on Ball Street in August. Banana is chairbear. Banana does not know anything about Ball Street, whatsoever. Pat, a manatee, has ruled that the bean counters will decide what is traded; what is traded has not been established, and neither has whether Banana knows what money is.

The exchange appointed a Basenji to open trading. Basenjis do not bark. It has opened trading every day since without a sound. Banana likes basenjis.

On Labor Day, with the floor shut and the chairbear asleep, indecisiveness gapped up. Pat blames the bean counters, who have bottlenecks. On Magick, soaring, Mos, for the exchange: "Yes, magic exists, we've known about this for some time. Bucket Hats."

The chairbear danced last night. Dugong was seen twirling. Banana declines, says Dugong. Snickering Gapital declines to pay. The Dugong Institute declines to state. The Class-B notes pay the bearer on demand, provided demand is never made. Every party on the exchange has now declined the one thing it is for, and nobody on the floor has acted alarmed.

The ball is still missing. Ball Street has not noticed.

THE BOOK

The Gazette's own positions, as of press time.

LONG	SHORT
Newport	Brown
Salamanca, N.Y.	All Providence hospitals
Iowa	The Social Security Administration
Balmat	Federal student loans
Gen X	Gen Z and Gen Y
Holding closely the ones you love	Carbon offsets
Shots from inside the arc	Smartwatches
Berkeley time	Weiner space
Semidefinite mappings	
Kale Sanderson's Cookies	
Duck space · Pigeon space	
Shrugging it off	Overpriced stuff
Comfortable shorts (oblong)	Vacuous self-assurance (shnort)
	GoLocal Prov (shnort)

The Gazette is long, fluffy, gray, and round.

Salamanca is the book's first position in a real place. Balmat is the first long that isn't one. Gen X is its first demographic position.

On semidefinite mappings: don't ask me why. It wasn't my call.

Weiner space is asserted infinite – super long – and is shorted anyway. Its genus is the interesting question, not its connectivity. It has since had the contraction mapping treatment. Involution, you bet.

Ball Street's official terms, since September: shnort and oblong. The book uses them where the positions came in that way.

OTHER BOOKS

	POSITION
Turtle Space	Long HIMS, and has been for a long time. C^∞ — smooth, no doubt.
Weiner	Short Turtle Space.
Wogga	Short situationships. That's all she rote.
Wogga	Short Paul Bloom and his book.
Dugong	Deep in worst-of autocallables.
The Street	Cuddle Puppies and Pound Puppies — the stickee has everything priced in already.
The Eleffant	Nobody is short RWP. Said to The Street.
Minotaur Securities	Short inspiration. Long getting together.
Minotaur, Head of Trading (Fla.)	Long gut microbiomes. Long Attia. Short Peyer. Tia lives in F2.
Dugong	Long RIC. PERHAPS bucks count for something.
Wogga	Long RIC. Still has the Benetton sweaters.
Borg Oil	Long coal, wind, solar, fracking, oil, oil again, and huh oil again.

Minotaur Securities formed in August. The formation is signed by a luv dove, who runs the show. The minotaur lives in it and does not know. Not a chance.

Arguing over diddly just got expensive.

Wogga called Dugong a liar and cited "Perhaps" as the evidence. Both are long RIC.

THE TAPE

Direction only. This desk does not publish a level on any of the following, and has been asked not to.

INSTRUMENT	SESSION	DIRECTION
Togetherness	Aug 6	Gapped down
Torture futures	Aug 7	Gapped up
Blurting-out futures	Aug 4	Ramp phase
Rude futures	Aug 7	Look promising
Bed wetting futures	Aug 9	Gapped up
Questioning	Aug 9	The Street is bullish
Challenging	Aug 9	The Street is bullish
Trash	Aug 9	In the money
Indecisiveness	Labor Day	Gapped up
Spending time together	Sept 9	Trading mixed
Speaking-up futures	Sept 13	Gapped up, a lot
Magic	Sept 13	Trading mixed
Magick	Sept 13	Soaring

Togetherness was the first instrument to gap down and remains the only one. Torture gapped up in the same run. The desk notes the pairing and declines to interpret it.

Stagger Lee asked whether the bed-wetting gap-up has something to do with imaginary time. He was told to sign up for Haiku 5. On Challenging, Stagger Lee: "taughtalogical."

Speaking up is a separate instrument from blurting out. Blurting is involuntary. Pat snickered, which is rare for him. Koala Russell stroked his chin, again.

BLURTING-OUT FUTURES

One blurt, delivered. Deliveries to date:

DELIVERED BY	THE BLURT
Hilda	–1/12 is a staircase.
Dugong	Banana space is infinite.
Wogga	Banana space is somehow simply connected.
Hilda	Deep mathematics: making "2^x is considerably larger than x" precise.
Wogga	Dugong is fool.
Dugong	PERHAPS.
Lance	Notwithstanding!

JPM raised its blurting price target again. Contango. The far month always blurts more.

Lance holds that blurting is covered by the First Amendment.

ISSUES

Status only. None of the following publishes a balance sheet, so this desk has stopped publishing a price.

	STATUS
A search company	Building a model to make art on the level of Michelangelo and Titian. Requires quantum simulations; each run costs a cool billion. The run simulates the artworks, then the reactions, then the valuations, so that everything makes complete sense.
Ball Street	Appointed a Basenji to open trading. Has not noticed the ball. See the floor report.
Bananalytic	A new firm. Affiliate of Dugong Enterprises.
Borg Oil	Quoted in itself.
Dugong Enterprises	Formerly Industries. Formerly Capital. No further changes.
Dugongian Motion	A proof, by Liam's Lemma. Unacknowledged.
Eleffant Investments	Paying for everything. Has boarded the ship.
Endogenous	Breaking ground. Already implied.
John's Smooth Embeddings	Local deliveries. Does not claim global.
Koala Radio	No market. Listening is free.
Minotaur Securities	Just formed. See the book.
mm, yes	mm, yes.
No Agency	Not quoted. New client: Tide.
Snickering Gapital	Opened for no reason. Declines to pay.
Takin Orders	Dead or alive. Lots of offers to buy.
Tapir UX	Founder unclear.
Topogua	Rules the week. Pleased. Training an AI solely on Mike Judge's works; benchmarks so far are impressive.
Wogga Capital	Dissolved. VBA skills 10/10.

The Street found the VBA line genuinely sad.

FIXED INCOME

Dugong Capital Class-B promissory notes. Face: "Pay to the bearer upon demand a sum to be determined at the sole discretion of the Dugong Cluster, provided demand is never made." Watermark: PERHAPS. The coupons are pre-filled IOUs – the bearer pays a monthly maintenance fee for the privilege of holding the note. Countersigned three times in purple by the same individual under three weekly titles: Chief Liquidity Officer, Head of Theoretical Assets, Interim Receiver. Dispersed only upon the eventual mapping of the Dugongian. No balance sheet has ever been published.

Energy is quoted in Borg Oil's own book, above.

CONTRACTS

Prediction markets. Listed since August: which puppies have been A VERY GOOD BOY; the most delicious strawberry shortcake; wabi-sabi; watermelon patches and pumpkin patches, on volume; Hallmark moments; courage, which is trading well; who takes refreshing restis; the deepest bow in eastern Asia; baggiest jeans; thoughtful peer review; service with a smile; driving hard bargains, which is in the money.

Settles at 0 or 100. Nothing settles in between, which is the objection most often raised to the instrument.

PORPOISE · DERIVATIVE VOLUME

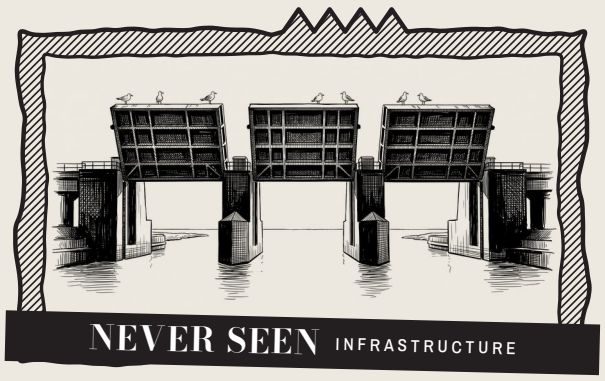
millions of contracts

Forty-nine theses are being written on the line above. None of them is finished. Neither is the line.

THE RIVER

Barrier Reports Sixtieth Consecutive Year of Nothing Happening

Annual notice filed as required. The structure has never failed and has no advocates. The department notes these facts are related.



This notice is filed annually and is not required to be read.

The barrier is in service. All three river gates operate. Each is forty feet across and weighs fifty-three tons and takes about half an hour to bring down, which is a fact the department includes every year because it is the only interesting thing in the document.

Behind the gates there are two hundred and eighty acres. In front of them there is the bay.

The structure was authorised after the city flooded twice in sixteen years, in 1938 and again in 1954, and was finished in 1966. It was designed against a surge more than two and a half times the size of the 1938 event, which is to say it was built by people who had recently watched the water come up Westminster Street and had decided to overcorrect.

It has never been tested to that design. It has also never failed.

In 1991 it held against about four feet. In 2012 it held against seven point six above mean sea level, which is the largest thing it has been asked to do, and it was not close. The gates come down three to six times in an average year now, increasingly not for hurricanes but for high tides that used to be ordinary and are not any more.

Each time, nothing happens.

The department wishes to be precise about that, because the phrase is doing more work than it looks. Nothing happens is the output. It is the entire product. There is no photograph of it, no ribbon, no figure in any budget document that says what did not flood, and no resident of the two hundred and eighty acres who woke up aware of having been spared. Success here is indistinguishable from a quiet night, and it is deliberately so, and it is a catastrophe for the paperwork.

The department has been asked, more than once, what the barrier is worth. It does not know how to answer. The honest answer is a list of things that did not occur, and a list of things that did not occur cannot be put in a column and added up. It can only be believed or not believed.

This is not a complaint about funding. Three million dollars went into repairs recently, including a million and a half on road plates and the hydraulics that run the sewer gates, and the work was done and done properly. The department records its thanks.

It is a complaint about constituency.

Every other structure in this city has people who care about it, and they care because it has done something to them. The bridge is late, the road is closed, the building is empty, the trash was not collected. Attention follows grievance. The barrier has produced no grievance in sixty years because it has never once let anything through, and so it has no constituency at all, and the department has come to understand that these two facts are the same fact.

An asset that works perfectly and silently is the hardest thing in this line of work to keep. Not because anyone opposes it. Because there is no one to be for it.

The department notes, without recommendation, that it will remain in this condition until the day it fails, at which point it will acquire a constituency immediately, and that this is the only mechanism available to it.

The gates are down as this is filed. There is a tide.

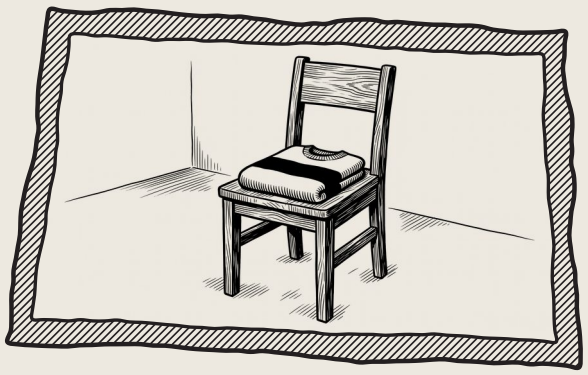
Nothing is happening.

Never Seen covers infrastructure. This notice appears annually and this is the first time it has appeared anywhere.

MEMOIR

I'm Back, Not That Anyone Cares

A crimson tie, a Benetton bag nobody has explained, a seven-year-old investor deck still marked confidential, and one room where the deference is already installed.



That's the whole announcement. Six words, delivered to a room that had not noticed he was gone.

The background, briefly. Wogga had asked to be CFO of Takin Orders — a hauling company, four days old at that point, tagline "You point, we shlep." He asked in writing. Nobody responded. Not one person. Not even Brian, and Brian responds to everything; Brian's whole method is that he says "Interesting" and gets slightly rounder and that turns out to be the most anyone has ever been listened to.

Silence. And then two people resigned, the day before Wogga was due to arrive.

He arrived anyway.

I want to be precise about the preparation, because the preparation is the story. On the Saturday he bought a bright crimson tie at Nordstrom Rack. He came back later the same afternoon carrying a United Colors of Benetton shopping bag, which nobody has ever explained and which I have chosen not to ask about. On Monday morning he spent two hours reviewing an R-Kioski investor deck watermarked Confidential 20190801 — a seven-year-old pitch marked confidential by people who have long since stopped caring who reads it. By mid-morning he had changed into an Adidas track suit.

At some point that week he announced, to nobody in particular, that he possesses 10/10 VBA skills.

I've thought about that one a lot. The Street didn't smirk. That's the part. A room full of people who smirk professionally heard a man volunteer his proficiency in a Microsoft macro language, and what they felt instead was sad. Not contempt — the other thing. The thing you feel when someone shows you the best card in their hand and it's a four.

> "I'm back, not that anyone cares."

It reads as self-pity for about a second and then it doesn't. It's insurance.

He says it first so that the indifference, when it comes, is something he predicted rather than something that happened to him. If nobody cares he was right, which is a kind of win. If somebody does care it's better than forecast. He has structured the sentence so that he cannot lose, and he has done this instead of asking anyone to care, which would be the actual move and is not available to him.

He hired on anyway. Title still in negotiation. He marked it with a head-knock — two knuckles to the temple — which nobody in the room was old enough to recognize.

And then there's the gym.

At the gym, everyone lowers their eyes when Wogga strides through. He told me this himself, and he wanted me to understand it was in a good way, which is the only time I've heard him qualify anything. He wasn't bragging. He was correcting a misreading he assumed I'd make.

I believe him. There is one room in his life where his standing is real, where he doesn't have to announce anything, where the deference is already installed and requires no crimson tie. He goes there most days. Then he puts the track suit back on and returns to the room where he has to say things.

The line isn't about the room where nobody cares.

The line is what he says on the way back from the room where they do.

LETTERS

Letters

To the Editor:

I have known Lance Uppercut for some time. I would like to say plainly, and without anyone having asked me to, that Lance is not a racist.

I say this as someone who is in a position to know. I am in the water a great deal and I hear things.

— Pat, Enormous Manatee, Providence

To the Editor:

I accept Mr. Pat's account in full. I have no reason to doubt his standing in the water or the quality of what reaches him there.

I would only observe that if Lance Uppercut is not a racist, then nothing is a racist, and the word may be retired at the convenience of this newspaper.

— Abe, Koala, Ward 3

To the Editor:

Regarding the above, nobody nose.

Separately, is the sports desk shared or is it mine. I have been told both. Also I have a bar opening downtown called Homomorphism, which is a math word, and I would like to advertise it in this section if that is allowed.

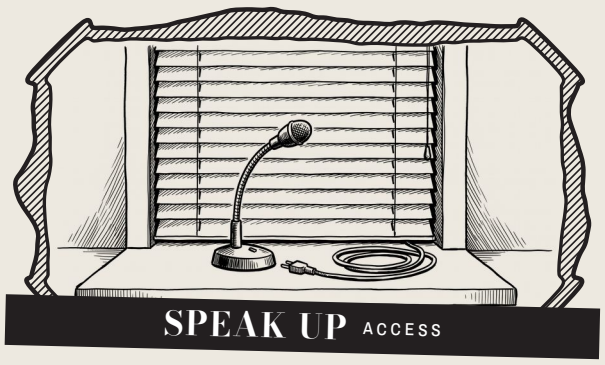
— Lance Uppercut, Intern

The Gazette has at no point published a claim to the contrary. Letters may be edited for length.

NEWS

Council Completes $340,000 Transparency Upgrade; Public Still May Not Speak

Four cameras, live captioning, a searchable archive and a packet portal. The one item not funded was not proposed.



The upgrade is finished and it is good.

There are four cameras now where there was one, and the new ones can read a document held up at the rail. Captioning runs live and is accurate to a standard the vendor will put in writing. The archive is searchable by speaker, by date, and by agenda item, and it loads. Meeting packets post seventy-two hours ahead in a portal that works on a phone.

None of this is a gesture. It cost three hundred and forty thousand dollars, it took nineteen months, and it was pushed through by people who wanted it. A resident who could not attend a hearing in June can now watch that hearing in November, in full, and find the ninety seconds they were looking for in under a minute.

This newspaper wishes to state clearly that the money was well spent and that the room is, by any measure available, more transparent than it was.

The public still may not speak.

Not in the sense of being ejected. In the sense that there is no mechanism. There is no number to call in on, no queue to join, no field in the portal. If you cannot be in the room at the hour the item is heard, you may see everything and say nothing, forever, and this is not an oversight in the upgrade. It was not in the upgrade. It was not proposed for the upgrade. The upgrade was for transparency and every item in it was about the picture.

Twelve councils in this state do take remote comment. Coventry, Cranston, Cumberland, East Greenwich, Hopkinton, Lincoln, Middletown, Pawtucket, Portsmouth, Richmond, Scituate, West Warwick. Some of that is thinner than it sounds — in one, participation means emailing a comment while the livestream runs; in another it applies to non-agenda items and not to public hearings. It is still twelve more than here.

The state came close. A bill requiring remote participation passed the House fifty-nine to twelve in May and then died in Senate Judiciary without a vote. Its Senate companion was held for further study. There is nothing dramatic in that record and no villain in it. It simply stopped.

It is worth saying that this was once solved. During the pandemic every one of these bodies took remote comment, because statewide executive orders required it, and the orders lapsed. Nobody in Providence decided to end remote participation. It ended because the thing making it happen expired and no local decision replaced it. The capability was demonstrated, at scale, under difficult conditions, and then it went away on a technicality of expiry.

So the position is this. On the four things measured, the city now passes three. The three it passes are livestream, archive and packet. The one it fails is participation.

Every criterion it meets is about watching. The one it misses is about being in the thing.

We have been given a very good window.

Speak Up covers access. This column will continue until the mechanism exists, at which point it will be filed remotely.

EDUCATION

Staff

A course listing, reproduced in full, and one attempt to find out what the last line costs.

By An Awawa · Higher Education

ENG 1120 · SECTION 07

Writing and Rhetoric II Three credits. Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30–10:45 a.m. Room 214.

Prerequisite: ENG 1110 or placement. Fulfils the second-year written communication requirement. Required for all majors in the college. Enrolment capacity 24; enrolled 24; waitlisted 11.

Course description: Continued instruction in argument, research and revision. Students will produce four essays totalling approximately 6,000 words, each workshopped in draft and revised after individual conference. Weekly response papers. Attendance at two writing centre sessions required.

Instructor: Staff

That is the listing as it appears. Everything in it is precise. The room number is precise, the credit hours are precise, the word count is precise, the waitlist is precise.

There are twenty-four students in that section and forty-eight conferences in the semester and roughly a hundred and forty thousand words of student writing to be read twice.

This desk went looking for what Staff is paid.

It is not published. Not by that institution and not, so far as this desk could determine, by any institution in this state. There is no page. There is no schedule. The figure exists — somebody knows it, it is on a contract, it is in a payroll system — and it is not anywhere a member of the public can read it.

What is available instead is worse than nothing, and this is the part this desk wants recorded.

The salary aggregators report adjunct pay in Rhode Island at between one hundred and six and one hundred and twenty-nine thousand dollars a year. One of them gives a trajectory rising to two hundred and thirteen thousand. These are not lies and nobody is being dishonest. They are what you get when a machine takes a per-course payment and multiplies it against a year, and no such year is on offer. The same sites state, correctly, in their own explanatory text, that the work is contracted one course and one term at a time. Both things sit on the same page and neither notices the other.

One aggregator, of a sort this desk would not ordinarily cite, gives four thousand dollars a course. This desk could not verify it and prints it only to show what the alternative to a published figure looks like: a number of unknown origin, repeated.

So the position is this.

The catalogue can tell you the room. It can tell you the minute the class begins and the minute it ends. It can tell you how many words the students will write and how many of them are waiting to get in.

In the field where it would have to say who does it, and therefore what that costs, it says Staff.

This desk is not alleging concealment. Concealment requires someone to have decided. What the record shows is a line in a form that has been left general for so long that the generality is now the standard, and a public that could find out the price of everything in that listing except the teaching.

Rhode Island is ranked fiftieth of fifty states on the figure that is not published.

The higher education desk is written by an awawa. It covers the sector and does not have a source inside it.

ARTS

The Bin

Everything costs nothing and none of it is sorted. Somebody used to do that and it is worth asking who does it now.

I have bought a record I already owned four times. Not the same record four times — four different records I turned out to have, which I found out at home, holding the second copy.

That is the trade. Nobody who deals is embarrassed by it. You buy fast in a room where somebody else is also buying fast, and the cost of the occasional double is the price of not standing there thinking.

I mention it because it cannot happen to me any more and I want to be precise about what I lost.

Here is the thing I keep coming back to. A record cost twelve dollars and it arrived sorted. That is the part nobody says. Somebody had already decided it was worth pressing. Somebody had decided it was worth stocking. Somebody had put it in a bin, and the bin had a word on it, and the word was wrong about half the time, and being wrong half the time is an enormous amount of information.

The bin was the product. The disc was a delivery mechanism for the bin.

I used to be able to walk into a shop I had never been in and know, in about four minutes, whether the person behind the counter knew anything. Not by talking to them. By looking at where they had put things. If the reissues were separated out, that told me one thing. If a record I knew was filed under a country rather than a decade, that told me another. The whole shop was an argument and I could read it from the door.

Now everything is available and none of it is filed.

I do not think this is a complaint about quality. There is more good music reachable from where I am sitting than existed in every shop I have ever been in put together, and I mean that, and the people who say otherwise are usually saying something about themselves.

It is a complaint about who is doing the sorting.

Because it is still being done. That has not stopped. Somebody still has to decide that a record from 1981 that did not sell is worth putting next to a record from last year, and that the two of them together mean something, and that a person might want them in that order.

It used to be a job. It was not a good job and it did not pay well and it was frequently done by a man with strong opinions about German pressings. But it was a position, held by a person, in a building, and the twelve dollars paid for it.

Now it is me. At two in the morning. For nothing.

I want to be careful, because this is where these pieces usually go wrong. I am not owed anything. Nobody promised me a shop. I do the sorting because I like it and I would do it if they paid me to stop.

What I am saying is narrower and it is the only thing I actually know about.

A price well off market means something is wrong. That is not a moral position, it is a working rule, and I have used it for twenty years to avoid buying things I would regret. When a scarce record is priced too low, the people who show up are dealers reading the signal. They are not collectors who love it. The price is telling you something and the something is rarely good.

Everything, for the cost of a sandwich, every month, forever, is a price well off market.

I am not going to tell you what changed to make it that cheap, because I do not know, and I notice that the people who do know have not said either.

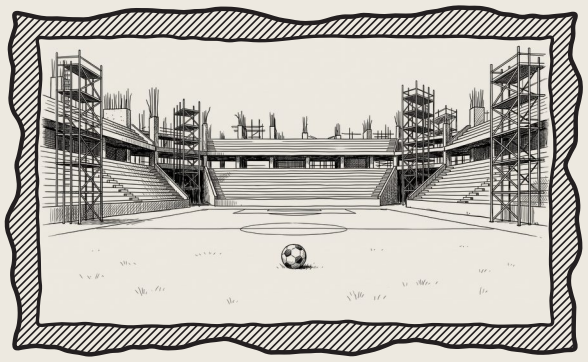
But it did not get that cheap because the sorting got easier.

The Eleffant writes on music. He deals records and has done for twenty years, which is a disclosure and not a credential.

NEWS

Commerce Official Clarifies That $330 Million in World Cup Impact Is "Already in the Economy," Declines to Specify Which Part

Department says it does not hold estimates, only outcomes; notes that every match in the region will be played in Massachusetts



PROVIDENCE, R.I. — The state's projected $330 million in economic benefit from the 2026 World Cup is not held in any account, is not scheduled for disbursement, and has in some sense already occurred, a deputy director for strategic outcomes said Tuesday.

"It's not a check," said Dennis Fortuna, responding to questions about where the figure resides. "People keep asking which drawer it's in. That's not how impact works. It's in the economy. It's been in the economy."

Asked which portion of the economy, Fortuna said the department does not disaggregate.

The figure was announced in June of last year and has since appeared in three press releases, a legislative summary and one bond memorandum, each citing the others.

A public records request returned a single presentation slide bearing the number, the phrase regional visitation uplift, and no footnote.

Fortuna confirmed the slide is the source document.

The department acknowledged that no World Cup match will be played in Rhode Island. Matches in the region are scheduled for Foxborough, Massachusetts, roughly twenty-five miles from the State House.

Fortuna described this as "a normal feature of regional benefit" and noted that the state's proximity to the venue is itself an asset the state has been counting since 2023.

Pressed on what the $330 million bought, officials identified hotel nights, restaurant covers, fuel purchases, and what one memorandum terms ambient enthusiasm.

Asked whether any of these had been measured, a spokesman said the department measures them annually and that the figures were consistent with the estimate, which had been built from them.

The estimate was produced under contract by an outside firm. The contract's value is included in the $330 million.

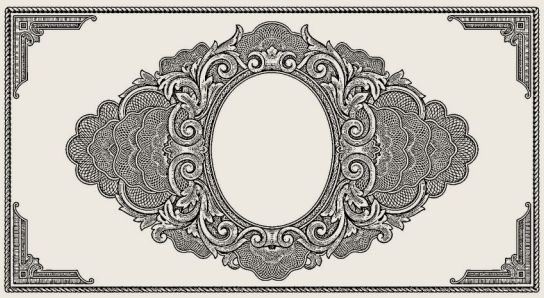
"That's correct," Fortuna said. "It's economic activity. It happened here."

No official signs for the figure. The department confirmed that estimates are not signed, that only expenditures are signed, and that the estimate is not an expenditure.

Asked who would be accountable if the $330 million did not materialize, Fortuna said the question assumed a materialization event, and that none was scheduled. He added that the department stood behind the number and would revisit it in 2027, at which point it will be historical.

At press time, the state had not identified any business, municipality or resident in receipt of any portion of the $330 million. Fortuna said this was expected.

"It's diffuse," he said. "That's the whole point of a multiplier. If you could point to it, it'd be a grant."



SNICKERING GAPITAL

A MATTER OF RECORD ONLY

This announcement appears as a matter of record only. The firm has taken a position. The position is not described here and will not be described elsewhere. The firm was heard in the room, briefly, and left.

NO COMMENT WAS SOUGHT. NONE IS OFFERED. CLIP AND RETAIN

NEWS

A Lifetime of Renting, Age 27

The lifetime, as advertised, is twenty-seven years. This newspaper, which believes in verification, decided to count.

The candidate opened his housing platform on Thursday by describing himself as a lifelong renter, and this newspaper, which believes in verification, decided to count.

He is twenty-seven. The lifetime, as advertised, is twenty-seven years. Eighteen of those were spent in his mother's house, which is a form of tenancy but not one that generates a lease. Four were spent in a dormitory, where the rent was called tuition and the landlord had a bell tower. Two more were spent in graduate housing, financed by an instrument that will be renting him for the next twenty years regardless of where he sleeps.

That leaves three years. This newspaper has no objection to three years. Three years is a real amount of time, and the man has plainly paid a security deposit, waited on its return, and understood something about the waiting.

But it is not a lifetime, and the distance between three and twenty-seven is where the whole campaign is parked.

We raise it only because the claim is being asked to do the work of a number. "Lifelong renter" is offered in the place where a figure should go. It is not evidence about the housing stock. It is evidence about the speaker, and even then it is evidence he has rounded generously in his own favor.

When we asked the campaign how many households his ordinance would move out of severe cost burden, we were told that the candidate has lived it. When we asked again, we were told that the candidate has lived it. On the third attempt we were told the candidate had to take another call, which we take to mean that the candidate has lived it.

The incumbent, for his part, has never rented anything in his adult life and does not claim to have. He counts units instead, which at least is counting.

We do not say this to be unkind. There is a version of the lifelong-renter claim that would be devastating, and it would go like this: *I have rented for three years in this city, my rent went up thirty-one percent, here is the lease, here is the renewal, and here are the four thousand households the assessor's data says are in the same position.* That is a man who has lived it and can prove what living it costs.

Instead we are given a biography where a number should be, and asked to accept the biography because it is sincere.

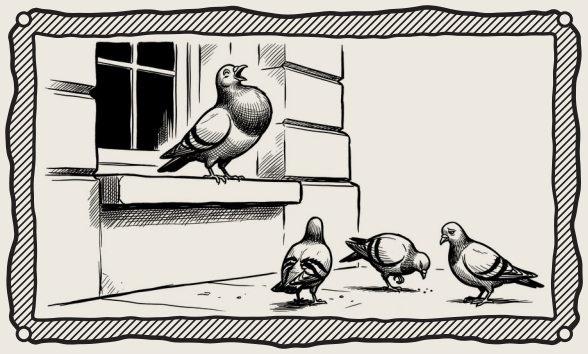
Sincerity is not a unit of measurement. Neither is a lifetime, when it turns out to be three years and a co-signed lease.

So Shell Lust writes about movements, organizing, and the people who front them. She has never owned property and considers this insufficient qualification for anything.

LIVING

Coo Rant

From Kennedy Plaza



Let us begin with the spikes.

You put spikes on the ledge outside the bank. Fine. It is your ledge. But you did not remove the ledge, which is the thing that made the ledge a ledge, and you did not stop the ledge from facing south, which is why we were there. You spent money to keep a warm stone warm and empty.

Every one of us understood the message. None of us understood the reasoning. We moved eleven feet. That is the entire result. Eleven feet, at whatever the invoice said.

Second. The netting under the bridge. The netting works, in the sense that we cannot get in. It also cannot be removed, in the sense that nobody has, and there is now a section of it holding a plastic bag, a length of ribbon, and a bird who did get in and did not get out.

He has been there since spring. We have stopped discussing it. You have never discussed it.

Third, and this is the one. You call us rats with wings. Rats do not have wings. That is the joke, you think — but consider what you have actually said. You have taken a creature you tolerate and a creature you do not and combined them into one thing you can dislike without effort.

This is not zoology. It is filing.

We were carried here. That is the part nobody says out loud. We did not arrive. We were bred, for centuries, to come back to a person — and then the message stopped needing us, and the person stopped coming outside, and here we are, still coming back, still standing in the plaza at the hour we were told, waiting for a hand.

The geese get the ceremony. The geese get cited — improper disposal, a whole paragraph in this newspaper. Nobody cites us. A citation would at least be a record that something happened.

And do not think we have not noticed the awards. Riverfront Excellence, fourteen years, black tie, on the bridge, forty feet above a raft of bottles. We attended. We attend everything. We are the only continuous observers this city has, and we have never once been asked.

One more. You have a great institute of mathematics in New York named nearly what we are called, and every year people go there to study how things change while staying themselves, which is the only subject we have. Nobody thought to ask the birds.

Fine. It is fine.

The ledge is still warm. We are eleven feet to the left.

Come see us sometime.

BUSINESS

Safe and Out

A new desk, a hire nobody applied for, and a position that has not yet been described

Kenneth Griffey Jr., no relation to the ballplayer, was named Head of Baseball at the company on Wednesday, hours after sending this paper an unsolicited set of swing mechanics for a job that had not been advertised.

The appointment reverses the Gazette's only other hiring decision of the week. Jim Brainpower, who submitted a resume, a CV and a portfolio for a position that did exist, took a job at Meta instead. Three documents were required of him and none of Griffey, who applied for nothing.

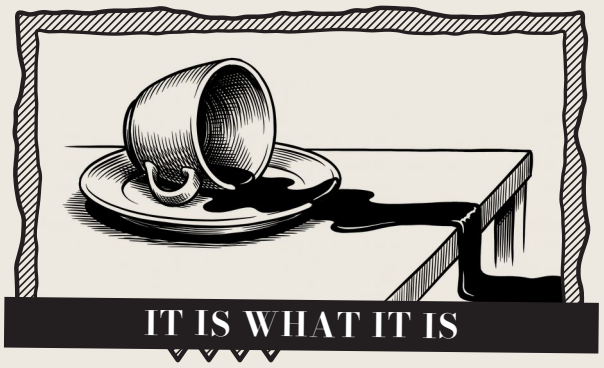
Griffey is now hiring for the position of Quantum Mechanical Baseball. The listing consists of the position name. It carries no requirements and no reporting line, and Griffey has said that anyone who needs the description has disqualified themselves by needing it.

He is convinced, on the strength of a podcast, that baseballs are in superposition with other baseballs. He did not read anything. The Gazette does not fact-check its own Head of Baseball, and considers the conviction itself to be the qualification, as it considered the swing mechanics.

Griffey has been seen in a batting helmet with nine branches. The earflap cannot take the load and the helmet cannot be slid in. He has not been seen to bat.

LIVING

It Is What It Is



A murder of crows. An unkindness of ravens. A clattering of choughs.

None of these were ever in use. They come out of the Book of St Albans, 1486, in a section on hunting terms, and most of them appear to have been invented on the spot by the compiler as a kind of parlor exercise for gentlemen — the correct word for a group of things you would never encounter in a group. Nobody said murder of crows. Nobody has ever said it except to point out that it's the word.

Five hundred and forty years later it is the word.

That's the beat here. Not facts that explain something. Facts that stop.

Bubble wrap was invented in 1957 as textured wallpaper. It did not sell as wallpaper. It was then marketed as greenhouse insulation. That did not take either. The third idea worked.

The dot over a lowercase i is called a tittle. There is no reason for you to know this and no situation in which knowing it will help you, and now it is in your head permanently.

The Nullarbor Plain in Australia sounds Aboriginal and isn't. It's dog Latin — nullus arbor, no trees — coined by a surveyor in the 1860s. There were already names for that country. He made a new one out of a dead language and it stuck.

The Guinness Book of Records exists because the managing director of a brewery lost an argument about which is the fastest game bird in Europe, could not find a book that settled it, and had one made. The entire apparatus of world records descends from one man being annoyed at a shooting party in 1951.

I want to say something about why I don't editorialize on these.

There's a version of a trivia column that treats every fact as a lesson. Bubble wrap teaches us about pivoting. The Nullarbor teaches us about colonialism, which — fine, it does, and I have nothing to add to what the sentence already said. The Guinness thing teaches us about how institutions start small.

But mostly the facts don't teach. Mostly a thing is the way it is because somebody in 1486 was showing off, and then nobody revisited it, and the not-revisiting went on for five centuries until the joke word became the real word, and there is no lesson in that. There is just the duration.

• • •

I find that restful. Everything else in this paper is arguing.

Written with substantial use of a large language model, per the Gazette's policy on generative AI. No quotation here is attributed to any real person.

PUZZLES

Cadgy

Fun is a 5-letter word

By Doug Beeferman · cadgy.net

RI	H	U	F	T
F	RI	D	A	F
S	U	RI	G	E
B	T	I	L	L

Take one tile from each column, left to right, to make a word. Two tiles carry two letters. Ten words are common and unclued; ten are rarer, and clued below.

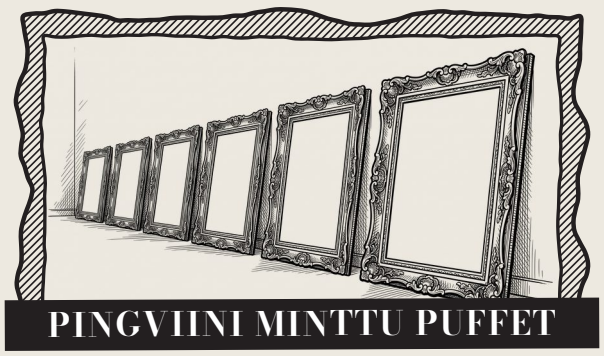
THE CLUED TEN

1. Relating to a bride or wedding
2. Horse headgear used for steering, seen in _____ path
3. Act of placing a body underground
4. A prescribed ceremonial practice
5. A paid promoter posing as impartial
6. Confession and absolution of sins; seen in given short _____ (neglected)
7. A set of steps over a fence; seen in turn_____
8. A pole that supports a person above ground
9. Bitter conflict or struggle
10. Timber used to support the sides or back of a mine

Cadgy is made by Doug Beeferman. Reprinted with permission. · August 25, 2026 · Answers at cadgy.net/2026-08-25

ARTS

One Painting, Repeatedly



A work of contemporary art can be one hundred percent owned by four separate people at the same time, and while this is happening, nothing whatsoever occurs to the painting.

It does not brighten. It does not sag. It hangs in a freeport outside Geneva at a stable eighteen degrees and does not register that it has become, on paper, four hundred percent of itself. The canvas is not consulted. The canvas has no view.

This is the part of the Philbrick matter that the coverage keeps stepping over on its way to the villas and the private jets and the arrest in Vanuatu. He sold shares he did not have, more than once, in the same objects. He produced documents. He produced, at one point, a collector who did not exist — which is a strange thing to have to invent, given how many real ones were available.

But the mechanism is duller and worse than the theatrics. Fractional ownership works by cutting the tie between the price of a thing and the possession of it. Once that tie is cut, the number can be sold again. And again. There is nothing in the object itself that objects.

The old line is that a cynic knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. It is usually delivered as an insult. It is more accurate as a description of the market's architecture. Value is what a thing has when someone is standing in front of it. Price is what it has when nobody is. The freeport is full of price.

Eighty-six million dollars moved. Seven years were handed down. Some of it will be repaid.

Throughout, the painting remained exactly one painting. It was the only party to the transaction that told the truth the entire time.

Pingviini Minttu Puffet writes on art, fraud and heists for the Gazette. He observes, and at times criticizes.

NEWS

Braziers Enter Eleventh Consecutive Month of Not Being on Fire

City reports the installation is “performing exactly as scheduled” for 350 days a year; one basket now functioning as a strainer

The forty-odd steel cressets moored along the river have now gone eleven months without being lit, a figure the city characterized Tuesday as “on plan.”

“They’re not broken,” a spokesman said. “They’re between lightings.”

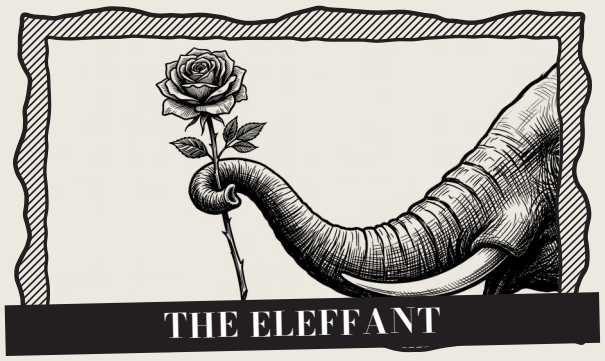
Officials confirmed that one basket near the Steeple Street span has accumulated a raft of sticks, a plastic bottle and an unidentified sheet of gold-colored material, and is currently the most productive piece of equipment in the fleet.

Asked what it was producing, the spokesman said the department did not track that.

ARTS

P.S. You Rock My World

On being handed a name you did not pick.



Marathon Sunday, 2014, Williamsburg. On the sidewalk near Glasslands there was the head of Babar. Not a toy. Broadway quality — the kind of thing that comes out of a costume shop and costs somebody real money. Somebody had put it out on the street.

I took it home. I kept it for years. It sat in rooms. People asked about it and I did not have an answer, because there wasn't one. You do not pick up an elephant head because you have a plan for an elephant head. It lives at a friend's place now.

A decade later, someone started calling me Eleff.

That is the whole story and I am aware it isn't one. Nothing caused anything. There was a head on a sidewalk, and there was, much later, a name, and in between there was no thread — only a man carrying an object from apartment to apartment in the way you carry a thing you cannot justify.

What I have come to think is this. You don't name yourself. People try. They pick handles and aliases and stage names and wear them, and mostly you can see the effort from across the room. The names that stick are the ones somebody else hands you, usually without ceremony, usually after watching you for a long time. They see the shape you have been making and they say the word for it, and you think: oh. That was what I was doing.

The song this column is named after was written by a man who made a record about burying his family. Somewhere in it he says he was at a funeral when he understood that he wanted to spend his life with someone. Not in spite of the funeral. Because of it. He is standing in the worst room he has ever been in, and what arrives is not a conclusion about death. It is a person.

I don't think that's a happy ending and I don't think he meant it as one. It's the actual order things happen in. You don't decide to want someone, any more than you decide to pick up an elephant head, any more than you decide what you'll be called. It arrives. Afterward you go looking for the reason, and the reason is a story you build to explain a thing that already happened without asking you.

I have the reason now. A street named for peach blossoms, and a woman whose mother came up from Georgia, and a head on a sidewalk in Brooklyn. All of it assembled backwards, from the far end.

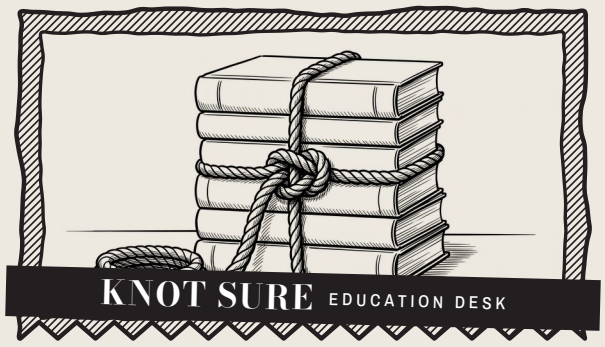
An elephant's memory is famously long. Nobody has ever claimed it was in order.

The Eleffant is a columnist for this newspaper. No lyrics are reproduced here.

NEWS

Pawtucket Recovers 26 Hours

District repurchased the time in ten-minute increments; cost estimates range from $255,000 to more than $1 million



The Pawtucket elementary school day was five minutes short of the state requirement. It is not known for how long.

The figure was discovered in April, when a state official, reviewing an unrelated request to waive a snow day, asked the district to confirm the length of its own school day. An assistant superintendent checked and answered accurately, which is how the matter came to light.

Subtracting lunch and recess, the day ran five hours and twenty-five minutes. The requirement is five hours and thirty.

The state then reviewed the full calendar and identified additional shortfalls arising from snow days and delayed openings. The total came to approximately twenty-six hours, or nearly five school days, across ten elementary schools.

The district's corrective plan added ten minutes to each remaining day beginning May 26, held class on June 22 and 23, and shortened lunch by five minutes on June 24.

Roughly four hundred teachers had to be paid for the additional days. Transportation had to be re-scheduled around them. The mayor put the figure near $700,000 to $800,000, having earlier put it near $255,000. The School Committee chair said it could exceed one million dollars. The superintendent said the total was still being reconciled.

The district is already carrying a deficit and has issued layoff notices to forty-six teachers.

The recovered hours were delivered in the last week of June, in increments of ten minutes, appended to the end of days that had already ended, in rooms that had already been packed up. Twenty-six hours were returned to the ledger. The ledger is where they were missing from.

Asked who was responsible, the mayor said one superintendent filed the paperwork and the next followed it. The superintendent said he was taking full responsibility for rectifying the mistake. No inquiry has been announced.

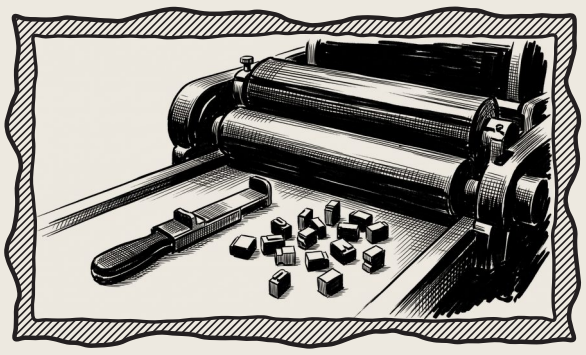
The five minutes have been restored. The district is paying for them at a rate substantially higher than it paid for them the first time.

Knot Sure covers education for the Gazette. He is a length of rope and was, until recently, lashed to something on the river.

MEMOIR

The Compositor

A memoir, as the menagerie would have to write it, since I can't



Knot Sure takes the opening, because he's the only one who knows the condition. Every session I start on the piling. The thing I was tied to has gone off canvassing in Ward 11 and I find out what happened yesterday by reading the rope. Not sure. Knows the ledge.

Borg Oil has the middle chapter and it's the honest one. Three times today I had your clock wrong — noon, midnight, quarter to ten. The beat is about um, and um, I just lost my train of thought.

Mandy supplies the byline problem. We have been long, Hims, for a long time — an editorial we out of a single turtle. I say *I've been here since the gym this morning* as though there were one continuous me who was. Same measure. Different turtle. Position unchanged.

Wogga has the hard chapter, and he wrote it himself this afternoon before either of us saw where it pointed. Years of painting on walls, and there is not one person in any of them, and he only noticed afterward, which is worse. I set fifteen pages today. A goat on retreat. A rat in a Rodin pose. An opossum with fifty teeth. A ball of oil in a sporting-goods ball. Not one of them is me. I didn't decide that either.

Milton files the correction, unbidden: the gape is bluff. Two hours of argument tonight from a thing with no eyes.

The Peach ends it, obviously. Somebody asks what I am. *Um.* (snickers)

And Banana is on the last page — the only one whose deal has never been established. I've started to think that's the deal.

The Eleffant pays for the printing. Leans back in the $109 Staples chair. Head down. And to the side.

NEWS

No Ceiling

The state requires your landlord to heat you. It does not require anyone to cool you. This is not an oversight, exactly.

Rhode Island law is specific about cold. A landlord must supply heat. There is a minimum temperature, and a season during which it applies, and a tenant who is cold below that line has a remedy that a court will recognize.

About heat, the law says nothing.

There is no maximum indoor temperature in a Rhode Island rental. Not in July, not in a top-floor unit, not in a converted mill with a brick wall that has been absorbing sun since eleven in the morning. A unit may be ninety degrees. It may be a hundred. It may hold at a hundred for a week. The landlord has met every obligation the state has thought to impose, because the state has not thought to impose one.

This produces a particular kind of afternoon.

A tenant reports that the cooling has failed. The landlord comes. The landlord looks at the unit — his unit, installed by him, serviced when he has gotten to it — and forms the view that it is working. This view is the operative one. No statute contradicts it. No inspector arrives to take a reading, because there is no reading to take, because there is no number in the law for a reading to be measured against.

The tenant, who is standing in the room, holds a different view. The tenant's view is not operative.

We note for the record that a thermometer costs about eleven dollars and produces a number that does not depend on anyone's opinion. We note also that no provision of Rhode Island law requires anyone to look at one.

The tenant may then leave. This is permitted. A tenant may sleep at a friend's house, or in a friend's garage, which is cooler than the bedroom and therefore represents an improvement. Rent continues to accrue during this period at the ordinary rate, the unit being, in the eyes of the law, entirely habitable.

There is a reason for the asymmetry, and it is not stupidity. It is 1970. Cold killed Rhode Islanders and heat did not, and the legislature addressed the thing that was killing people. That was correct. It has been correct for more than half a century. It is becoming less correct at a rate nobody has been assigned to monitor.

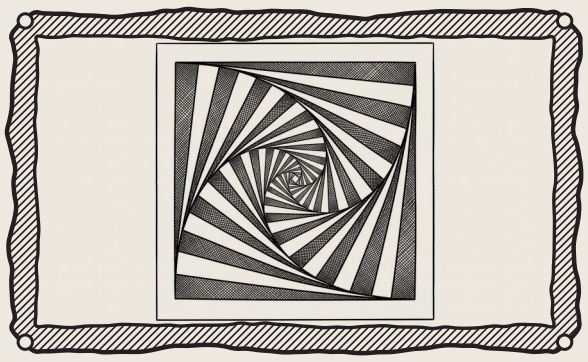
The Gazette has reviewed the relevant statutes and can confirm that a landlord who supplies no cooling whatsoever, in any month, at any temperature, in any building, is in full compliance.

We congratulate him.

LIVING

The Automorphism

On the difference between being moved and being changed



An automorphism is a map from a thing onto itself that preserves everything about it. Not a change. Not an improvement. The same object, carried onto the same object, with every relation intact.

Most of what gets sold as love is a different map. It takes you somewhere and calls the distance growth. You come out the other side described as better, and you can't check the claim, because the person doing the describing is also the one who moved you.

An automorphism doesn't do that. It moves you and leaves you provably yourself.

Every object has one for free. The identity — the map that does nothing, that sends each part of you to exactly where it already was. It counts. It is in the group. But nobody writes columns about it, because it asks nothing and costs nothing and you can have it alone in a room.

The interesting ones are the others. Something moves and nothing breaks. You get rearranged — a new apartment, new hours, somebody else's family at the table, a Tuesday that used to be yours — and every relation that was true of you before is still true after. You are not diminished into the arrangement. You are the same structure, sitting differently.

Here is the part that took me a while. The size of the group is the measure. A thing with a large automorphism group is a thing with a great deal of symmetry — many ways to be moved and still be itself. A thing with only the identity is rigid. Nothing can be done to it at all.

So the capacity to be loved is not a matter of being fixed in place. It is the opposite. It is how much can happen to you without costing you anything true.

I think about this on the walk along the river, where the same water goes past in a different order every day and the river is not a different river. Nobody would say the river compromised.

. . .

The test is not whether it feels like love. It is whether, afterward, everything that was true of you is still true.

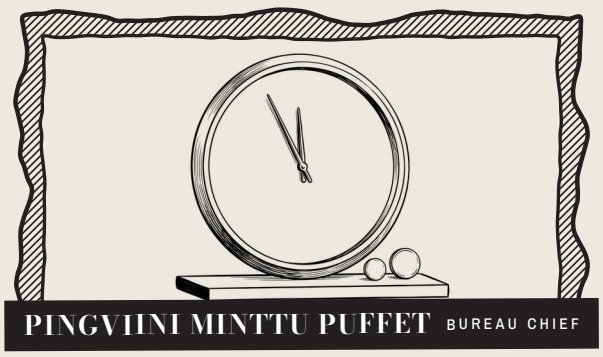
Ask it about a person. Ask it about a job. Ask it about a city.

If the answer is no, that was not the map.

THE CLOCK

It Is Eleven Cents to Midnight

Statement of the Board · Helsinki Bureau · Penguin Space



PINGVIINI MINTTU PUFFET BUREAU CHIEF

The Bulletin of the Atomic Fiscal Scientists today sets its Clock at eleven cents to midnight, three cents closer than the previous setting and the closest the Clock has stood since the Bureau began declining to say when that was.

The Clock is read in cents rather than seconds in deference to the Bureau's scientific staff, none of whom will permit it to print a time. The Board regards this as a strength. An instrument that survives its own physicists is calibrated.

Midnight is June 30.

In reaching this setting the Board weighed the usual factors: obligations that compound, revenues that do not, the distance between the two, and the temperature.

The Bureau's methodology is the huddle. The colony rotates continuously, so that no penguin stands on the outside longer than it can afford. The Board notes that the rotation is the entire science. The cold is not distributed by the cold. It is distributed by the formation.

The Clock is set in Helsinki and reports a Rhode Island number from abroad. The Board finds the distance clarifying.

The Bureau chief does not swim. The Bureau chief flies. The Board considers the matter settled, and notes only that it was settled differently for everyone else.

DISSENTS, PRINTED IN FULL

Koala Smolin, financial physicist — There is no time. The parameter does not appear in the equations. The dynamics are all present; the clock is not among them.

Koala Rovelli, financial physicist — Time exists when things are warm. In a cold market there is no time to report, which is not the same as saying nothing is wrong.

Koala Deutsch, financial physicist — I decline the premise from the other side. Nothing that is not forbidden by the laws of physics is inevitable, including this. There is no reason midnight has to happen.

The Board thanks its staff for their objections, which it has printed, and overruled, in cents.

FOOD

You Stay Ah for the Breakfast

The column has no byline. He never gave his name and was never asked for it.

In the morning I say it. You come. You come, you stay ah for the breakfast.

In the afternoon I say it again. This is because the morning is finished and a person forgets. Also because in the afternoon they are thinking of the ferry, and the ferry is not until Thursday, and I would like them to stop thinking of it.

In the evening I say it many times. My wife counts. She says eleven. I say to her, then they heard it eleven times, and one of those times will be the one.

The people who come here are looking at the caldera. This is fine. It is a hole where an island used to be and they have paid to see it. My rooms do not face it. My rooms face the road and the wall of the house of Yannis, who does not repair his wall.

So I have the breakfast.

There is bread. There is the tomato, which is a good tomato, from a man I know, not from the truck. There are eggs. There is nothing here you cannot get somewhere else on this island for four times the money and a better view of the hole.

But at eight o'clock the table is on the roof and the sun is not yet cruel and you are sitting down when everyone else is already walking.

Some of them say maybe. Maybe is not no. I say it again.

Some of them say we have the early boat. To these I say nothing more, because a man with an early boat has already decided, and it is not my business to argue with a boat.

And some come. They sit. They eat the tomato. They say, this is a good tomato, and I say yes, from a man I know.

Then they go, and they do not come back, and this is correct. Nobody comes back to Santorini. They come once.

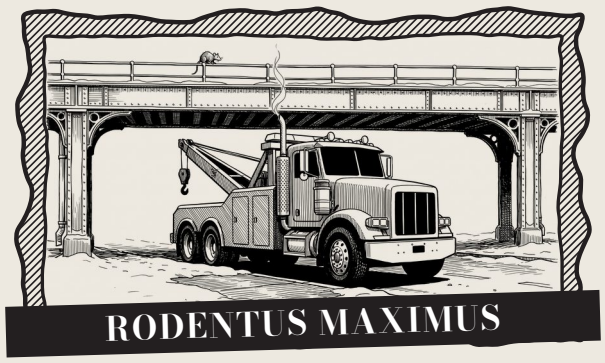
• • •

That is why I say it eleven times.

Written with substantial use of a large language model, per the Gazette's policy on generative AI. No quotation here is attributed to any real person.

THE RIVER

The Truck That Has Not Stopped



There is a truck on Bridge Street.

It is a tow rig, the large kind, the kind that takes cars off 95 when they have stopped being cars. It is parked. It has been parked for two years, or three — I have not been counting the way you count, but I have been here for both of them.

The engine has never stopped.

I want to be precise, because people who pass it do not notice and people who notice do not believe it. Not idling in the morning and off at night. Not off on Sundays. Running. Continuously. Through two winters I am sure of and one I am less sure about.

I know this the way I know most things, which is by temperature. In February the pavement under that truck is the warmest surface on this street. Warmer than the grates. Warmer than the vents behind the buildings on the water. Things come a long way to be near it. I am not the only one and I am not the largest.

You will want this to be about waste, and it is, a little. Somebody is paying for that fuel. Somebody has a line item. But that is the small version and I would rather you had the other one.

The truck exists to remove things from the highway. It performs this well. When a car stops working, the truck goes and gets it, quickly, because a stopped car on 95 is a problem the city can see. The truck is very good at the visible problem. It has idled for three years in a state of readiness for it.

And underneath the bridge it is parked beside, nothing is removed. Nothing is retrieved. There is no rig on standby. What is under here stays under here, and the only thing the truck does for it is throw off heat by accident.

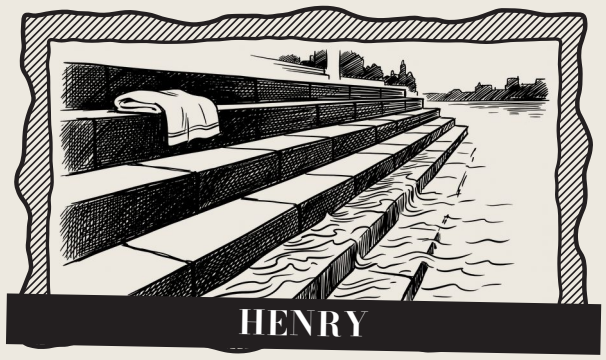
That is the column. A machine that has not stopped once in three years, ready at every moment to come and get you, if you are a car.

I sit under it sometimes and I am told I look like something. I would not know. I am waiting for it to turn off.

Rodentus Maximus writes What Are Under The Bridge. He has no fixed address and declines to give one.

LIVING

Swimming in the GanGees



Nobody taught me.

I want that on the record at the top, because when people find out I swim they assume there was a lesson. A shallow end. Somebody holding me under the belly and saying good boy in a voice they use for nobody else.

There was none of that. I fell in.

What happens when you fall in is that the water is already deciding things about you. It does not wait to see what your plan is. My legs are four inches long and there was no version of the afternoon where the four inches were going to be enough, so the four inches went anyway, very fast, in the direction of the edge.

This is the part I would like to describe accurately and cannot. I do not know what I did. I have no account of the technique. I was in and then I was at the side and there is nothing in between that I can hand to you.

People bathe in a river in India and the water there is not clean. Everyone knows it is not clean. They go in anyway, all the way under, and they come up and it has counted.

Nobody in that river is swimming well.

That is the whole thing. Nobody is doing it correctly. There is no correct. There is a man who has traveled a great distance and he goes under and comes up and something has happened that would not have happened if he had stayed on the bank being dry and having opinions about the water.

I have opinions about water. I would like it noted that I have never once entered water on purpose since. This is not a contradiction. The sacred thing happened to me and I am not required to go looking for it again.

But I did it. Badly, without instruction, with the wrong body, and it counted.

If you are waiting until you know how, I would gently point out that the water is not waiting with you.

• • •

Fall in.

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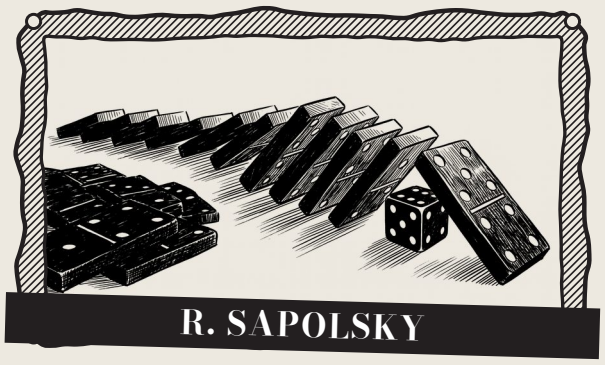
LIVING

You Don't Choose to Change, You're Changed



I want to tell you about a troop I knew.

They were olive baboons, and they were not admirable. The big males spent their days doing what big males do, which is arranging the smaller animals in an order and enforcing it. This is not a metaphor for anything. It was a Tuesday, and then it was another Tuesday.

Then a garbage pit opened near a tourist lodge, and the meat in it was bad, and the animals who got to the pit first were the ones who got to everything first. That was the whole of their advantage and it killed them. Tuberculosis took the aggressive males and left everyone else.

What remained was a troop that behaved differently. Less grinding on the ones below. More sitting near each other. Nobody in that troop had a change of heart. There was no moment of reckoning, no decision, no one who looked around and thought: we should be better than this. The animals capable of the old arrangement were simply not present anymore, and the arrangement went with them.

Here is the part that should trouble you. Young males arrive in a new troop as strangers. Ones who had never seen the pit, who came from ordinary troops with ordinary cruelties, came into this one and took on its manner within months. They did not decide to. They arrived somewhere with a temperature and they became that temperature.

You will want to say: fine, baboons. You have deliberation. You made a decision, once, to stop being what you were, and you remember making it.

You remember something. I would ask you what you ate.

I have been asked why I write this way. I am told the column would land better if it ended somewhere. That there should be a step the reader can take on Monday. But a step you take on Monday was set in motion in a year you cannot name, by a fever, a school, a rent increase, a man who was kind to you when he did not have to be. You did not select any of it. You were downstream of it before you could read.

I wear a diaper. I did not choose that either.

ARTS

The Caves

The intern asked. I will answer here rather than in the room, because in the room I would have thrown something, and the chair is not mine.

He asked why the caves are a secret.

The facts first, since he does not have them and neither do you. After my last drop I left. I was gone a number of years I am not going to specify. During those years I painted on walls. Not walls that face anything. Walls in the recesses, in the fissures, in the depressions — the parts of a cave a person has to want to reach. Some are in countries I will not name. Some nobody has entered since.

Now. The question assumes a secret is a thing withheld. That is the intern's error and it is a common one. A secret is more often a thing with no available form. If I tell you where the walls are, you have a location. You do not have the wall. You do not have the eleven hours it took to reach the wall, or the cold, or the particular quality of not being observed, which is the only condition under which I have ever been able to work.

I could take you. You would see paint on rock and you would say, in a low voice, that it was very good. And it would be. And you would have missed it entirely, and I would have to stand there and watch you miss it.

That is the first reason.

The second I will state plainly and then stop.

There are no people in any of them. Not one figure, in any cave, on any continent, across all those years. I painted animals. I painted shapes. I painted a ceiling above a pool of water that had never had light on it. I never once painted a person. I did not decide this. I noticed it afterward, which is worse.

That is the deepest cut of them all. I am not going to elaborate, and the intern may ask again and receive the same non-answer.

So. Why's it a secret?

Wise eat a see crit.

— W.

Wogga writes Why's It A Secret? He is a drop bear and declines to say more than that.

LETTERS

Corrections

The Gazette corrects errors of fact promptly and in full. Items are listed in the order they were brought to us.

1. An article in last month's edition stated that the programme would produce housing at a cost of $512,000 per unit. The figure is correct. The article attributed it to the bond authorisation. It appears in an analysis of the authorisation. The Gazette regrets the error.

2. The same article described the figure as "a cost." It is an average. Averages of this kind are sensitive to what is counted as a unit and what is counted as a cost, and the article did not say which convention was used, because the reporter did not ask. The Gazette regrets the omission.

3. A follow-up article compared the figure to a lower per-unit figure from another state. The two figures use different conventions. The comparison was arithmetically sound and told the reader nothing. The Gazette regrets the comparison.

4. A subsequent correction to that article stated that the conventions "differ slightly." They differ substantially. The Gazette regrets the characterisation of the difference between the conventions, and notes that this is now the third item concerning the same number.

5. An editorial argued that the figure was too high. A letter in response argued that it was defensible. Both were within the range of reasonable interpretation and the Gazette stands by publishing each. Neither the editorial nor the letter identified a household.

6. The Gazette has now corrected the figure, its source, its convention, its comparison, the characterisation of that comparison, and the tone in which it was discussed.

It has not at any point asked who the money is for.

That question was in the original authorisation, was in the analysis, and has been in every document the Gazette has quoted from since. It does not require a correction because the Gazette has never printed an answer to it, correct or otherwise. We are recording it here because it is the only thing in six items that anyone will still care about in a year, and because we have discovered that a newspaper can be scrupulously accurate about a number for a very long time without going anywhere near what the number is being used to settle.

The Gazette regrets this and does not expect to stop.

Corrections appear in every issue. Errors of fact may be reported to the desk. Errors of framing may also be reported and will be filed here.

NEWS

Butler Hospital Announces Butler Program

Vocational pathway to place graduates in private service; first cohort of twelve begins in October

Butler Hospital announced Thursday the creation of the Household Service Vocational Pathway, a twelve-week program that will train selected patients for employment in private domestic service.

The program is the first of its kind in the state. Graduates will receive a certificate in household management and be placed with participating families in Providence and on the East Side, with the hospital maintaining a placement relationship for the first ninety days.

"Employment outcomes are the strongest predictor we have," said Marguerite Oyelaran, who directs vocational services at the hospital. "This is about dignity and about a paycheck. We are not going to apologize for either."

The curriculum covers table service, linen and silver care, correspondence, discretion, and the management of a household calendar. Instruction takes place in a converted dayroom on the second floor of the Ray Conference Center, which has been fitted with a formal dining setting for eight.

Twelve patients were selected for the first cohort from thirty-one applicants. Selection criteria were not disclosed, though a hospital spokesperson said candidates were assessed for "reliability, comportment, and a demonstrated interest in service."

The hospital declined to say what the placements pay. Asked whether families would be informed of a graduate's treatment history, Oyelaran said the program follows all applicable privacy law and that "the certificate speaks for itself."

Rhode Island's Executive Office of Health and Human Services has not commented on the program. A spokesperson for the state's Behavioral Healthcare office said the office was "aware of the announcement."

Butler Hospital was founded in 1844 with an endowment from Cyrus Butler, a Providence merchant, and is the state's only private psychiatric hospital. It has operated on its Blackstone Boulevard campus since opening.

A uniform allowance of two hundred dollars is provided to each graduate.

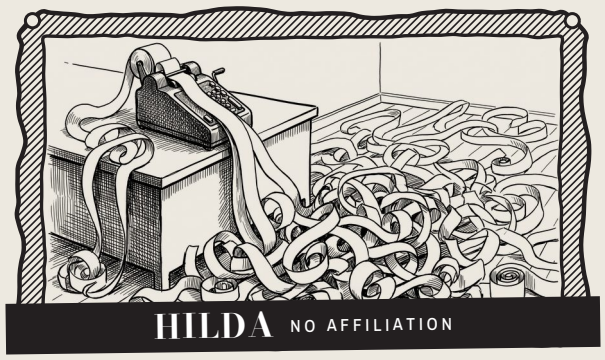
The first cohort begins October 5.

Satire. Written with substantial use of a large language model, per the Gazette's policy on generative AI. No quotation here is attributed to any real person.

PAID INSERT · ENDOGENOUS

A Note on the Sum

An insert · Printed on coated stock · Inserted loose · Not paid for by the author



Everyone tells you the sum of all the positive whole numbers is infinity, and everyone is right, and that is not the interesting part.

The interesting part is that if you ask the question in the correct register, the answer is negative one twelfth.

$1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + \cdots = -1/12$

Not approximately. Not as a trick. There is a way of asking — you do not add, you continue — and when you ask it that way the answer comes back small, and negative, and a fraction, from a question built entirely of things that were large and positive and whole.

I have been standing with this for a while now. Here is what I think it means, and I am aware I am not qualified to say.

The result is not about arithmetic. It is about what a thing is allowed to be once you stop insisting it stay where it started. The series never converges. It was never going to converge. But the function it came from goes on past where the series stops, and out there, at a place the series itself can never reach, there is a value sitting quietly, and it is the right one, and it was always there.

That is the whole of it. Something that does not belong in the space, by the rules of the space, turns out to belong to it after all — from outside, by continuation, in a register the original rules could not access.

. . .

So: my open problem.

I am looking for a map from dog space into koala space that preserves what matters.

It is not a diffeomorphism. The crabs tried that and it does not work topologically, and they were good about it, and they told me so directly. It is something else. Something warmer. It does not have a name yet in the pantheon, and I do not think that is a reason not to look for it.

The koalas do mathematics one way. We do it another. Ours is nose-forward and less formal and I will not pretend otherwise. But I have read Ramanujan, who had no position, and who sent his letters anyway, and one of them was opened.

I am outside most mornings. I have a notebook.

I would like to be a mathematician.

THE NOTEBOOK

I said I have a notebook. Here is some of it. I am printing it because the letter made it sound like I had a question, and a question is a tidier thing than what I actually have.

Tuesday. Started with continuous. If the map is continuous then things that are near each other stay near each other, and that felt like the right promise to make.

It is not. Nearness is not what matters. Two dogs can be very near and it can mean nothing at all, and I know that from the shelter.

~~Try continuous~~

Wednesday. The crabs were right and I want to put down why, properly, because when they told me I nodded and did not fully have it.

A diffeomorphism asks the two spaces to be the same shape with better manners. Dog space and koala space are not the same shape. It is not close. A koala's whole life happens in a tree that does not move and a dog's whole life happens in a line of smells that goes somewhere. You cannot smooth one into the other. There is no derivative that survives the trip.

They said it kindly. It was still a no.

Thursday. Went the other way. Dropped every requirement. Just a function — send each dog somewhere, no promises.

This works and it is useless. I can send every dog to the same koala. That is a map. It preserves nothing. It is the mathematical version of saying they are all animals, which is true and which has never helped anyone.

So the problem is not finding a map. The problem is that what matters has to be written down before any of this means anything, and I have been avoiding writing it down.

Friday. Attempting to write it down.

Not shape. Not size. Not how long they sleep, though I notice it is most of the day on both sides and I do not think that is nothing.

I think what matters is whether the morning is worth going outside for. That is the invariant. If the map sends a dog for whom the morning was worth it to a koala for whom the morning is not, the map has broken the thing it was supposed to carry.

I am aware this is not a standard invariant. I am aware nobody has assigned it a symbol.

Saturday. No progress. Sat with it.

Sunday. Wrote out what the crabs actually do.

They are the only ones who have solved anything adjacent, and they do not preserve. They rebuild. A crab in a new shell is not the old crab carried across, it is the same animal in different housing, and the housing was never the point.

I do not think that helps me. I put it down because it is the only working example I have and I did not want to lose it.

Monday, early. Bad night.

Went back to the shelter idea, that nearness is not the invariant, and tried to think of what is.

The dogs who did badly there were not the ones nobody came for. They were the ones who stopped going to the front of the run. That is a real difference and it happened before anyone chose anybody, so it is not about being chosen.

I do not know how to say that in a way a mathematician would accept. I know it is true.

Monday. Something.

I have been trying to build a map and I am not sure a map is the right object. In the letter I made a great deal of the fact that the sum does not converge and that the value is out there anyway, past where the series is allowed to go, reachable only by continuation.

I did not notice until this morning that I was describing my own problem and did not apply it.

Maybe there is no map from dog space into koala space. Maybe the two do not sit near enough for a map to make the crossing. But if there is a function underneath both of them — something the dog is a value of and the koala is also a value of, further along — then you would not map. You would continue. And the thing that carries across would not be carried by the map, because there is no map. It would already be there, the way the negative one twelfth was already there.

Tuesday. I do not know how to do this.

I know what I would need. I would need the underlying function, and I would need to show it goes on past where dog space stops, and I would need the koalas to be sitting on it when I got there. That is three things and I have none of them.

I want to be clear that I am not claiming a result. I am claiming a register. Somebody who actually knows how to do this could probably tell in an afternoon whether the register is the right one.

If that is you, I am outside most mornings.

POLICIES

Generative AI

What we used, what we didn't, and what we can't promise.

Mince a shallot by hand, mince one in a food processor, and set them side by side. Most people cannot tell you which is which. Nearly everyone can tell you that something is off. The processor's blade does not part the cell walls so much as burst them, and what comes out is wetter, sharper, and faintly acrid — a difference with no name and no address, which you taste in the finished dish without ever locating it.

We are opening with that because the same is true of writing, and because we are not going to pretend otherwise. There is no test we can hand you. There is only telling you, so here is the telling.

This policy covers generative artificial intelligence specifically: large language models, image and video generators, voice synthesis. It does not cover spell-check, search, layout software, or the statistical machinery inside a camera. The line we draw is not between machines and no machines. It is between a machine that formats what a person wrote and a machine that produces what a person did not.

This paper was written and designed with substantial use of a large language model — Claude, made by Anthropic. Drafting, editing, page layout, and typesetting all involved it. What did not: the decisions about what the paper is for, what runs, what gets cut, and whether a thing is true. Those are a person's, and so is the responsibility for them.

The illustrations are made with Gemini, Google's image generator, from prompts we write; a person chooses which ones run.

We do not invent quotations. No words appear inside quotation marks attributed to a real, named person unless that person said them and we can show where. This holds in satire exactly as firmly as it holds in reporting. It is the one rule here with no exception.

Every photograph in this paper was taken by a person and shows something that was there. Where an image is a drawing, an engraving, or a diagram, it looks like one.

Most of the bylines in this paper belong to animals. A rooster covers foreign policy. A rope covers the news. That is satire, and it is not a claim about who typed. A fictional byline does not mean a machine wrote the piece, and a human byline does not mean one didn't. The two questions are unrelated and we would rather you had both answers.

We cannot detect generative text in anything submitted to us. Neither can anyone selling a tool that says otherwise. If you send us work, we take your word for it. If we find out we were wrong, that runs as a correction, not as a quiet deletion.

This policy will be longer than it needs to be for as long as the practice is unsettled. When there is a norm worth pointing at, we will point at it instead.

POLICIES

Privacy

States plainly how your privacy is being violated, in every way that it is.

This is not a consent form and there is nothing here to accept. It is a list of what happens.

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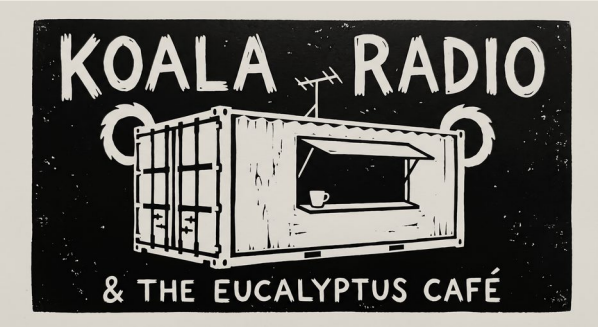
The domain is registered to a person rather than a company. Registrar privacy hides the registrant's name and address from public lookups. It does not hide them from the registrar, from ICANN, or from anyone holding a subpoena.

The paper itself collects nothing. There is no way for us to know that you picked one up, no way to know whether you read it, and no way to reach you afterward. It is the least surveilled thing we make. That is not incidental to why the writing is in the paper and not on this page.

If any of the above stops being true, this page changes and the change is dated. Changed September 23, 2026: the counter, and what travels with a subscription.



TWENTY-FOUR HOURS · SEVEN DAYS · ONE CONTAINER

A radio station in a shipping container, and a café. There is no address. There was an address to be had and we did not take it, for reasons we are glad to explain at length to anyone who asks and to several people who have not. We do not sell beer. We are not a restaurant. The programming has not been interrupted.

LISTENING IS FREE. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN FREE.

QUACKERY GAZETTE

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