

rants



online essays by
e. g. fabricant

RANTS



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[A Word from E. G.](#)

What you've bought into here are a series of 35 blog entries I posted to my website between the end of 2005 and just before the November 2010 election. Most of the first 32 were published weekly throughout 2006 and are organized around 13 distinct themes; the last three were random, and later. I decided to compose and post *Rants* for these reasons, from least to most important:

- All the web design sources I consulted said you're supposed to;
- As explained in the first post, I'm a big fan of the classic essay form;
- I'd pretty much finished my dozen short stories for *Matters Familiar* and wanted to mess around with something different; and

- Excepting the last two, to keep the domestic peace and my sanity during the last three years of the Bush Administration.

Obviously, some references will be dated. (You'll learn that most of them are obscure, at best, anyway.) I've updated hyperlinks where referenced information is still available online.

Enjoy.



[Autoerotic III](#)

Posted by E. G. Fabricant on Friday, August 18, 2006

Picking up from last week: *Rims* through *Toys* and a Modest Proposal.

- *Rims*. Okay, bling. I guess that, if humans can have “grilles,” cars can have the equivalent of oversized, garish jewelry. Regardless, what is the objective? Added in gross overproportion to a blockish, hulking SUV with low-profile tires, the impression is of a steroidal baby buggy. More amazing than amusing is seeing an \$800 beater with wheels worth four times that much. Who's impressed? Is anyone that dedicated to rolling flash going to put equal priority on groceries, shoes, and backpacks? “Oh, yeah; I'm

gonna marry that boy; he can hock those rims when the babies come.” Help a brother out.

- *Subwoofers*. When I was matriculating in the late Sixties and majoring in Demonstrations Against Quagmire One, rumors were rife that the Department of Defense—unsatisfied by the results state and local police were having bringing us overmedicated peacemongers to heel with conventional tear and state of the art CS gas—was developing another method of crowd control. Allegedly, it involved the use of machines that emitted ultra-low sonic pulses which would cause our lower abdomens to shudder, thereby causing us to losing control over lower bowel functions. (What the fuzz would do with us after that, I couldn’t imagine; they probably didn’t have an exit strategy then, either. Talk about your slippery slopes...) Anyway, all that may account for my preternatural fear of vehicles displaying the same characteristics. I have to believe that the only thing worse than being beside an object that registers 5.2 on the Richter scale and seems on the verge of shaking itself apart is being in it. What’s the operative stratagem? Mating magnet? If so, my informal research discloses that most of these rides are populated by only one sex—and he’s usually alone, wearing a XXXL “No Fat Chicks!” T-Shirt, without the slightest hint of irony. Don’t misunderstand; when my hormones were generally unsupervised, partial hearing loss seemed like a reasonable price for getting laid. Thing was, the

odds of intergender contact were infinitely better at, say, a Who concert, especially before Keith Moon checked out to trash that Big Hotel Suite in the Sky. (Planned Parenthood benefits were pure gold.) I'm desperate for an explanation here.

- “*Toys.*” By which I mean, anything else with marginal utility that eats petroleum and shits greenhouse gases and hydrocarbons. (Commercial trackers and guides are off the hook. RV/motor homes and boats are on the line, but I'm giving them a pass because there's at least some form of associated activity that's beneficial, like sightseeing, family bonding, and water sports. And, now, [Robin Williams](#).) We're talking snowmobiles; jet skis; all-terrain vehicles; dirt bikes; gas-powered golf carts—all the way down to skateboards and Razors with two-stroke Weed Wacker engines on them. *Pay attention to me:* Making a loud blur of your mass while sitting on your ass, or erect but immobile, *is not exercise*. If you truly want to practice the primeval huntsman skills of your forebears, Poriky, *walk*. Or *climb, hike, or wade*. Little too long range? Hire a guide, horse, or pilot. Gratuitous noise, habitat destruction, and pollution, all rolled into one, shouldn't be anybody's idea of a good time.

Having no illusions that rational confrontation will even get close to undoing decades of commercial media brainwashing, I have a modest piece of social engineering that I believe might help. It's the

concept of reverse incentives, applied to personal transportation consumption. Here's how it works: You could still make choices totally devoid of benefit that actually cause harm or inconvenience, but a price would be exacted. I'm still playing with a complete schedule, but here are some working examples:

FOR HIM:

Feature:

Price:

| | |
|--|--|
| Active drive axles, >1 | One (1) Testicle |
| After-market illumination equipment | Loss of sight in one (1) Eye |
| After-market performance equipment (miscellaneous) | One (1) Vasectomy |
| Cylinders >4, per pair | One (1) Testicle |
| Gross Vehicle Weight over 3,000 lbs. | One (1) Testicle |
| Hummer/HumVee (lease or purchase) | Death by firing squad |
| Larger (non-stock) Tires and/or Rims | Scalp Hair enhancement/replacement (lifetime forfeiture) |
| Net fuel mileage, <30 MPG | One (1) Groin Kick/5 MPG, each refuel |
| "Naked Chick" chrome bumper/mudflap medallion | Penis Enhancement/Enlargement (herbal/surgical – lifetime forfeiture) |
| Non-functional cosmetic enhancements | One (1) Facial Scar (large) |
| "Playboy" or "No Fat Chicks" decal/sticker | One (1) Bitch-slap ea. (moderate to severe, depending on size and color) |
| "Recreational" transportation (non-essential) | Loss of one (1) limb (choice) |
| Unmuffled/illegal exhaust pipe | One (1) punctured Eardrum/pipe |

FOR HER :

Feature:

Price:

| | |
|--|--|
| Active drive axles, >1 | Liposuction (lifetime forfeiture) |
| After-market illumination equipment | Lens/Surgical Vision correction (lifetime forfeiture) |
| After-market performance equipment (miscellaneous) | Manicures/Pedicures (lifetime forfeiture) |
| Applying makeup while vehicle in motion | One (1) application, Foreign-language Tattoo, visible location/violation |
| Cylinders above 4, per pair | Breast augmentation procedures (lifetime forfeiture) |
| Gross Vehicle Weight over 3,000 lbs. | One (1) Tummy Tuck |
| Net Fuel Mileage, <30 MPG | One (1) Facial, Makeover or Spa Visit/5 MPG, Each Refuel |
| Non-functional cosmetic enhancements | One (1) Pair Shoes, forfeiture /each (Min. value >\$200/pr.) |
| Pickup or Light Truck (lease or purchase) | One (1) Hysterectomy (<i>subject to Cowgirl Exception</i>) |
| Use of Cell Phone in Operation | One (1) Punctured Eardrum/Incident |

You get the idea: Poor personal choices, immediate, tangible, intensely personal consequences. Hormonally-driven decision = hormonally-based result. Consider the side benefits. Any eligible bachelor could determine

instantly whether a candidate has invested more in her wheels' appearance than hers. On the other hand, a husband hunter would be comfortable knowing that an average-looking dude behind the wheel of a Prius is physically qualified to produce offspring, whereas one who had made more than one marginal automotive choice presents no risk of reproduction. A non-cowgirl pickup owner and an after-market performance freak could have all the unprotected sex they could stand and—no adverse social consequences! Everybody wins! It's a work in progress, but I think I'm on the right track here. Call or write your friendly neighborhood legislator today.

One more thing. The automotive choices I've described here aren't cheap. Have you priced a full set of 22s lately? I can't help noticing that a lot of these rides have children inside—g lued to their DVD screens and plugged into their headphone jacks to keep them from interrupting Mommy's and Daddy's important personal telephone calls. Are these cumulative purchases a life sentence in the hospitality and landscaping industries for the little nippers? *Suggestion:* Roll some of that take-home pay into a college fund for Tod and Tifani; down the road you may not have to live in your rusted-out, internal combustion hulk of a condo, eating dry noodles and cat food. Sweet rims, though. *Dude.*

Next Week: *Crazy Wheels—driving/riding/walking stupid.*



Sick of Politics?

*Posted by E. G. Fabricant on Wednesday,
October 27, 2010*

Even with one week to go—had enough of the infinite but intensifying demolition derby of cash-infused calumny that our electoral campaigns have become?



It's our fault, you know. We, the voters—more specifically, we who exercised the franchise long before 2008.

By mid-July 1968, I was 20 years old—which meant, at the time, that I couldn't yet vote in any election. (The 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution wasn't ratified until three years later.) Oh, I wanted to—desperately. The war in Vietnam raged on, after compelling President Johnson to decide not to seek a second full term. Dr. Martin Luther King, who galvanized my generation around the issues of racial and social justice, had been murdered in Memphis in the spring. Sen. Robert

Kennedy, another champion for the young, was struck down by an assassin's bullet in Los Angeles the night of his primary victory in California and on the cusp of his summer surge to win the Democratic nomination in Chicago in late August. Our country was literally and figuratively on fire, and fear and frustration were found everywhere.

That left Hubert Horatio Humphrey, Minnesota's "Happy Warrior" and former Democrat Farm Labor Party Senator who had been Johnson's Vice President, to become the party's standard bearer in the fall. His Republican opponent was Richard Nixon. Sen. Eugene McCarthy ran as the independent "Peace" candidate, and George Wallace, the pro-segregation former Governor of Alabama, actively campaigned in the South and Rust Belt for the American Independent Party.

Nixon won the election, beating Humphrey by a half-million votes out of 73 million cast—00.007%. His margin in the Electoral College was comfortable, 301-191. Wallace got a little more than nine million votes and carried five southern states with 46 electoral votes. McCarthy didn't move the needle. Nixon's campaign theme was "restoring law and order" and was entirely reactionary, built on those fears and frustrations—a toxic brew of the continuing Vietnam War, civil unrest, and white, working class antipathy toward civil rights gains.

I'd already been active in politics for almost five years by then and understood its basic proposition: Winner takes all. To my consternation, too many of

my slightly-older peers, who weren't otherwise racist and who'd made some kind of personal commitment to peace, justice, and social transformation, didn't seem to get that. (I'm bound to confess here that in the '60s "true believers" varied wildly by degrees. For too many of us, especially those unburdened by cradle-Catholic baggage, antiwar or pro-civil rights demonstrations were the most attractive and highest-percentage opportunities to get laid. Add to that the burden of recreational chemicals. I never understood exactly how sitting in a corner, toking and listening to "Revolver," was going to bring the Revolution, Man. These are the types who in no particular order later publicly renounced their Hippie/Yippieness, were born again, and voted for Reagan.)

Here's the point: If more of us had been mature enough to vote for Humphrey instead of indulging our hubristic "meaningful protests" by writing in "Clean Gene," the Yippies' "Pigasus," or other mythical creatures, he might have won the election. And—

- The Vietnam War would have ended much sooner—if only because McNamara and Ellsberg would have had a sympathetic, inside audience.
- There would have been no Watergate and no impeachment proceedings.
- The GOP's vaunted "Southern strategy" would have failed, at least for the first time.

- The entire realm of public discourse would have been different—more progressive than reactionary.

The rest, as they say, is history. For men and women of a certain age, we're staring back at a 40-year legacy of political nihilism. The ardor for public service created in Camelot and made manifest by LBJ's personal courage and parliamentary skill was pronounced dead in 1980, replaced by self-interest and opportunism. We profess disgust at negative campaigning and profligate, manipulative polling; nonetheless, those of us who continue to vote appear to be influenced by it. Our elections, which are supposed to be job interviews, have become cage matches, staged by proxy through advertising and in the media, between candidates whose highest apparent qualifications and ambitions are to govern least, if at all.

Which is why we owe special props to the 20 million young adults—your kids, my kids, and their younger cousins—who breached those torrents in 2008 and gave inspiration and hope a chance. If my own are any indication, they're more grounded and knowledgeable than we ever were, anyway. (Look at the mess we're leaving them!) We owe it to them to do better or just stay home, clinging to our shopworn anxieties.

What to do? Here's my three-point plan for November 2:

- (1) Quit whining about what hasn't happened and think about what might happen if, for whatever reason, you default on your franchise.
- (2) If you have access to any of the 15% who voted for the first time two years ago, please encourage them to do it again. By whatever means necessary.
- (3) Please consider having the good sense to do what our parents and grandparents did for Franklin Delano Roosevelt: sustain President Obama's working majority in both houses of the Congress. The years after FDR's first mid-term election, 1934-1936, marked the "Second New Deal," which included passage of the Wagner Act, promoting labor organization; Social Security; and the Works Progress Administration.

Two years ago, I told my sons that that election was likely the most important of their lifetimes. Now, I'm telling them it's in second place.





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