

Scattered Thoughts

6-15-26. Fred Gielow.

What follows are some of the thoughts that occurred to me over a period of about two months.

- * It takes many, many years to build up the courage to face the challenges of old age.
- * When many years pass and you're on the downward slope of your life, you occasionally wish you were on the upward slope. But only occasionally. At least for me.
- * If cultural appropriation is as bad as some declare it to be, why isn't gender appropriation just as bad?
- * It seems quite ironic that some very pleasant moments in life are experienced when we're totally unconscious – in pleasant, blissful sleep.
- * There are those who say some people are too judgmental, but isn't life but a series of judgments. The point is not to be less judgmental, but to make good judgments. And by the way, aren't those who say some people are too judgmental, being a little too judgmental?
- * Why isn't the day you're born called your first birthday?
- * For maybe fifty years I've liked the word "tautology." It's a wonderful word, but I've never used it in a sentence. Until now.
- * With age comes wisdom, but sometimes, not very much. And for some, age comes alone.

- * I loved Laurel and Hardy. I thought they were wildly funny. At one point, I had a copy of all their films on VCR or DVD. I have a feeling their humor isn't very funny today to a lot of people.
- * Guilt is a strong motivator to keep one on a righteous path, but it seems many influential people are totally unfamiliar with this condition.
- * I think about my hair like the guy in an electric chair thinks about life. I'd like it to be a little longer.
- * Should you say "please" and "thank-you" when conversing with Chat/GPT or a similar on-line service? I say yes, because it's a habit that ought to be reinforced, rather than neglected.
- * Some people ought to spend less time criticizing others and more time criticizing themselves. Perhaps that applies to *all* of us.
- * When I hear the sounds of some of today's music, there's a word that comes to mind: hertz.
- * Some politicians work to make progress for the people, but many (most?), it seems, work only for their own power and prestige. And of course fortune.
- * Very often, the happiest moments of a day are when you're laughing.
- * Once, I was encouraged to do something I knew wasn't right. It wasn't illegal, but it was improper. I was told "nobody would know." Not true. *I* would know.
- * Is a horse in a horse race motivated by any sense of

competition, or just by the rider's whip?

- * My sons ruined the game of Air Hockey for me. I used to love that game, but now they keep beating me. Constantly. It's embarrassing.
- * Except for when I was very young when my tonsils were taken out, I didn't have any surgery, where I was unconscious, until a year or two ago. I remember thinking I might die from my upcoming surgery. That didn't happen.
- * Ants like sugar. I wonder if they like diet soda.
- * Scientists say time did not exist prior to the "Big Bang." How can a mind comprehend a time when there was no time? I'm confused.
- * It occurs to me that when I'm in a closet, I can see for as far as the eye can see.
- * The family is the glue that holds the entire world together.
- * Jose went to the optometrist and the optometrist sang to him, "Jose, can you see?"
- * A burp releases pent-up gas. A sneeze clears an airway. A cough removes debris from the lungs. What good is a hiccup?
- * A smile has truly magical powers.
- * A good friend is an absolute treasure.
- * Men have only one x to grind, but women have two.

- * After one of my doctor's appointments, I got in touch with a transportation company to get a ride back home. I got a text message saying I'd be picked up at 2:01. After 2:30, I called to see why I hadn't been picked up. I was told I'd have to wait another hour, maybe 90 minutes. At that point, I could have yelled and screamed and demanded faster action, but I didn't. I waited until a vehicle came. It arrived at 3:54, nearly two hours late. I wonder if I had made a big fuss if the vehicle would have come any quicker.
- * All that's needed to overturn our country is enough votes for socialism or communism, and it seems like that's where we're headed.
- * You might be surprised to find how much better life is if you look for things to be thankful for, rather than things to complain about.
- * If someone has a portion of their colon removed in surgery, would you describe what remains as a "semicolon."
- * When you're young, you wonder what the future will hold. When you're old, you wonder no more.
- * As the years slip by, a time will come when the appearance of age spots is the last thing you need to worry about.
- * Is there a two-lane road to Tulane University?
- * It is undebatable that no project can ever be completed unless it is first started. Sometimes, starting is the hardest part. But, finishing is the best part. One of the great satisfactions of life is completing a project you've worked hard on and are proud of.

- * Some people seem to enjoy being miserable, and some seem to enjoy making others miserable. Pity. Everyone suffers.
- * Truth is sometimes the first thing to be pushed overboard.
- * It seems all the logic and reasoning in the world cannot overcome some people's firmly-held beliefs.
- * Do some people enjoy being evil? Or is it that they just can't help themselves?
- * Why is it that "oversee" and "overlook" have opposite meanings?
- * For me, one of the most disturbing trends is that more and more Americans seem to hate America. Some politicians give hate-America speeches in foreign countries. For some people, saying the Pledge of Allegiance is out of the question. Surveys show the younger generations have an increased fondness for socialism and communism. This country can not sustain itself if this trend continues. Sadly, I see no sign it's reversing.
- * I think you'd be surprised to find how hard it is to brush your teeth using your other hand.
- * If you're worrying that there might not be enough things to do to fill your time when you get old, worry not, because much of your time may well be filled with doctor's appointments.
- * I used to like to meet Dad at the corner of our block, where he got off the bus coming home from work. Then we'd walk home together. His pace was always a little too brisk for me, and I'd have to half-walk and half-run to keep up.

Now, my kids have grown up, and I've put on a lot of years. Now, I have to half-walk and half-run to keep up with *them*.

- * Sometimes those who are old are asked if they have any regrets. How could they not?
- * What if the women's movement wasn't about women at all, but rather about advancing socialism in America? What if the same thing was going on with the global warming scare?
- * Would you use the same fork to eat your food for days and weeks and months if the fork was never washed between meals? So, how do you explain what's going on with your toothbrush?
- * Those chants that are repeated endlessly during political demonstrations – someone says, “One, two, three, four . . .” and the crowd faithfully repeats the words whatever they are – seem to me to be utterly childish. That sort of behavior might be expected in kindergarten, but not with grownups. It's embarrassing. How can adults bring themselves to do that? Aren't they ashamed? Apparently not.
- * I do not want to have a headstone after I take an exit ramp. However, if I did, I'd want it to say “I knew this would happen.”
- * Democrats seem to be fiercely opposed to the now-under-construction Trump Ballroom. Do you suppose they'll refuse to use it when Donald Trump is no longer president and they're back in power? I suspect they'll do two things: use it a lot, and change its name.

- * Does God control volcanoes? Is He the fumarole director?
- * If you only knew how truly lucky you are, that would change everything.
- * I've come to the conclusion it's nearly impossible to tie a shoe lace with just one hand.
- * Aren't those communities that proclaim they are sanctuary communities and are interfering with ICE arrests breaking federal law? Why aren't the politicians responsible tossed in jail? Are we not a nation of laws?
- * How come nobody ever runs on fashion *runways*?
- * One of the things I really like is seeing people enjoying themselves: having fun, laughing, getting a lot out of life. Just seeing their happiness brings happiness to me.
- * I never saw Mom and Dad argue. They always seemed to be in agreement. Perhaps they talked out their differences when I wasn't around, but when the family was together, all was calm and peaceful. That was nice.
- * I used to think every family lived pretty much like my family, that we all had similar attitudes, values, and beliefs. Oh my goodness, was I naive!
- * Do you make choices to please yourself or to please others? I feel decisions I've made are definitely influenced by what others may think. Sometimes, I'll do something and feel a strong tug that it's contrary to what my friends and/or family members approve of. I suppose this is a good thing. But, it seems some make many decisions without any sense of constraint whatsoever.

- * When I was growing up, Sunday evenings were special. Mom wouldn't have to cook a meal. We, all four of us, made our own suppers. And we listened to Jack Benny and several other Sunday evening radio shows. Dad liked Liederkrantz cheese, but my mother, brother, and I wouldn't try it. We couldn't get it past our noses. And Dad also liked headcheese. (How could he?) This, too, the rest of us couldn't handle. But there seemed to be a special coming together at the Sunday evening supper table. It was the end of a week. Another seven-day chapter of our lives had reached a conclusion. Those were special moments. I remember them fondly.

- * Once, when I was still just a kid, Dad decided to put up plasterboard in the recreation room in the basement. Dad let me help, but my contribution wasn't much more than watching him do the work. Dad pounded unusually-shaped nails into the furring strips and right into the concrete block wall! I was amazed it was possible to do that.

- * When I was a kid, my family would go to a cottage on Lake Michigan every summer for two or three or four weeks. Among my favorite memories from those summers was late-at-night singing around a slowly-dying campfire. Everyone participated, and the singing wasn't very good at all, but it was wonderful. No criticism, no arguments, no friction; just our meager voices singing together old, familiar songs into the darkness. That was very special.

- * A little past 30, I joined a barbershop chorus in Poughkeepsie, New York, and soon thereafter, I joined with three others to form a barbershop quartet. Over the years, I was pleased to sing in a quartet in a number of barbershop shows. Singing was such a thrill, but most rewarding was to be able to entertain an audience. I can't describe the joy. Perhaps "exhilarating" comes closest.

- * There were times, particularly in college, when I felt terribly discouraged or frustrated or perplexed. I found that writing things down was a good way to navigate through such times. I let all my pent-up emotions flow out on a sheet of paper. I always felt better afterward.
- * According to the Internet, some animals only have one toe on each foot (horses, donkeys, mules, etc.). Some have two (deer, elk, goats, ostriches, two-toed sloths, etc.). Some have three (emus, cassowaries, tapirs, rhinoceroses, etc.). Some have four (hippopotamuses, pigs, etc.). Some have five (elephants, dogs, bats, bears, etc.). Some have a different number of toes on their front versus their back feet (<https://www.jackravenbushcraft.co.uk/number-of-toes/>). All that seems strange.
- * The Islam religion states that *all* people, not just Muslims, must pledge themselves to Islam, and all that is *not* Islam must be banned. Such a position sounds like advocating for the overthrow of the US government. Why is Islam allowed in our country? Are we permitting an influence that wishes to destroy us? So it seems.
- * If I've said it once, I've said it a million times. I hate, hate, hate people who complain a lot.
- * Why in heaven's name would I think that what I write would be of interest to anyone? That's an interesting question. I guess the answer is that if someone else wrote the same thing, I think *I* would find it of interest.
- * One of the reasons I've maintained my website for more than 25 years now is that I enjoy posting links to articles I would wish to see if I didn't find them myself. I hope others find the articles as interesting as I do.

- * Those who dine exclusively on CNN and other similarly-biased news sources, may never taste truth.
- * I wish I had thanked my mother more for her wonderful meals. I thoroughly enjoyed so much of what she cooked up for the family. I may have done a better job thanking my wife for her delicious meals, but I'm sure extra thanks would have been appreciated.
- * When I was fifty or thereabouts, I was asked to play a major role in a stage play put on by the County Players (I think that was the group) in Wappingers Falls, New York. I got the script and read it through. I wasn't sure I could remember all my lines. Days passed. What an honor to be asked, but could I do it? I didn't know. Weeks passed. I finally decided. No, I wouldn't take the part. By then, it had been assumed I *would* take the part, so I caused a problem to get a replacement. I felt embarrassed about that. This is all sort of ironic, because I had the lead role in "Stage Door," my high school's senior play. I guess at the time, I just wasn't smart enough to realize I couldn't do it.
- * There are three really bad things about growing old. One is loss of memory. And I don't remember the other two.
- * The strongest argument for homosexual marriage is that marriage shouldn't be denied two people who truly love each other. That sounds convincing. However, what if three people love each other? Should we condone polygamy? What if a thirty-year-old loves a ten-year-old? What if a father loves his son or daughter? What if someone loves his dog? What if someone loves his Corvette? Once homosexual marriage is embraced, to be consistent, all these perversions must also be embraced, and thus, marriage itself is perverted and degraded.

- * From appearances on the outside, the human body seems to be quite symmetrical. But, when I look at the veins in my arms, there appears to be no symmetry at all on the inside. I wonder why that is.
- * Could AI adjudicate court cases? Should it? Will it?
- * Do dogs love their owners as much as their owners love them? What about cats? What about canaries?
- * Do animals have emotions like humans? I mean beyond love and fear. Do they experience jealousy? Regret? Pity? Embarrassment? Guilt? Sympathy? I wonder.
- * It seems so many homeless people are on drugs. Where do they get the money to buy all the drugs?
- * Do you remember when we had fuses, and if one blew, we had to unscrew it and screw in a replacement? Circuit breakers changed all that.
- * A really good friend is an affirmation of one's worth.
- * Who is the person or what is the group or groups that conduct all the "spontaneous" protests, that of course aren't spontaneous at all? Some people are bankrolling the protests, obviously, but who is organizing them, coordinating them, soliciting people for them, supplying them with signs and fireworks and frozen water bottles? Who chooses where the protests will be and when they will be? And what, exactly, do they wish to accomplish? Do they think fires and destruction will encourage us to endorse their cause?
- * Guilt can be an immensely powerful force, particularly when it's used against you. And never doubt: it *is* being

used against you.

- * Efforts at the hospital to take a sample of my blood were in vein.
- * The diced potatoes were not cooking quickly enough, so I took them out of the frying pan into the fryer.
- * His scrambled eggs weren't quite done, but the monk demanded breakfast immediately, so the cook took the eggs out of the frying pan in to the friar.
- * A South American tribal chief wanted to roast an enemy tribesman he had captured, but it was taking too long, so he took him out of the frying pan into the pyre.
- * Did you ever think about all the trials and tribulations you *haven't* experienced? How thankful are you for that?
- * When I was a kid, I decided I wanted to be six feet two inches tall. I missed the mark. I didn't even make it to six feet.
- * For many years, I couldn't imagine how someone could fall down and then not easily get back up on his or her feet. Now, I understand. Quite well, as a matter of fact.
- * I like to take showers and sometimes long showers. The trouble is my water heater doesn't have a lot of capacity, so occasionally, the hot water runs out. Then, I had an idea. Now I reduce the flow by as much as half, and I don't run out of hot water any more. Why didn't I think of that a long time ago? It isn't rocket science.
- * When I was a kid, I didn't like my name (Frederick). I thought it was long, stuffy, and awkward. What I didn't

stop to think about was that it was also my father's name, and I should have understood what an honor it was to have his name.

- * The Internet says about 90 percent of people have indented belly buttons (innies). Only 10 percent have outies.
- * How many things have you done that you wouldn't have done in the absence of social pressure? And how many things have you *not* done that you *would* have done, were it not for social pressure?
- * Here's a question: Is a thumb also a finger? According to the Internet, the thumb is a digit, but *not* technically a finger.
- * As I understand it (thanks, Peter), each cell in the human body contains about 6 feet of tightly coiled DNA strands. Multiply that by the trillions of cells each person contains, and if all that DNA were uncoiled and stretched end-to-end, it would span 67 billion miles. That's hard to imagine.
- * The Internet says the human circulatory system is more than 60,000 miles long. The circumference of the Earth is only about 25,000 miles.
- * The Internet says the Earth's circumference measured around the equator is 24,901 miles, but measured through the poles is 24,860 miles. I suppose centrifugal force makes the difference.
- * Isn't it remarkable to think that everything we encounter – cars, houses, bowling balls, TV sets, telephone poles, cell phones – everything comes from the air, water, or land. Except animals, of course.

- * If a talent scout told you that without question, you have the talent to be a superstar if you just have your teeth removed and replaced with good-looking teeth, would you do it? I would not.
- * It would seem that Vatican doughnuts are both holy and holey.
- * Why isn't a grape called a grape fruit?
- * What do you suppose life on Earth will be like in 1000 years?
- * On January 5, 1967, Ronald Reagan said, "Freedom is a fragile thing and it's never more than one generation away from extinction." He said that about three generations ago.
- * It occurs to me that kids need love and purpose and meaning in their lives. In the past, religion played a major role in satisfying those needs. In recent years, as the influence of religion has waned, we're seeing the consequences. We're also now seeing a resurgence of interest in religion by our country's youth.
- * I wonder what the Pope does with his sexual desires.
- * If there are complaints about a dictator's government, people can blame the government. But, if there are complaints about an elected government, people can only blame themselves.
- * Does everybody hang up their towels and wash rags so the tags doesn't show, or am I the only one who does that?
- * There are jobs where the main objective is to add things; like a chef, a bricklayer, an anesthetist, or a painter. There

are jobs where the main objective is to take away things; like a barber, a stone sculpturer, a fisherman, or a bank robber. Then, there are jobs where the main objective is simply to move things around; like a truck driver, airplane pilot, dog walker, snake charmer, jockey, golfer, or chess player. Finally, there are jobs where the main objective, it seems, is to do not much of anything; like a politician.

- * How come there seems to be little to no difference between writing something down and writing it up, but there's a big difference between cutting a tree down and cutting it up?
- * What do you think of when you think of Jesus and grapes? Devine.
- * There's a movement that has force-fed kids endless fears, saying that we will all die because of nuclear power and global warming; that Republicans are Nazis and they're destroying our democracy; that families should be destroyed (espoused by Karl Marx); that men are worthless ("A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle" – attributed to Gloria Steinem); that on a whim, men can change into women, and vice versa; that our country is unworthy ("Our country is founded on a sham." – Janeane Garofalo), and that the US is evil ("God damn America." – Reverend Jeremiah Wright). Then we wonder why the younger generation is frustrated, confused, and terrified, and feels there's no hope.
- * As the years slip by, it's sad to see my Christmas card mailing list get shorter and shorter.