

SECRETS OF THE "DEAL OR NO DEAL" BABES

MAD IND

THE
RISE
AND
FALL
OF A
RAP
STAR



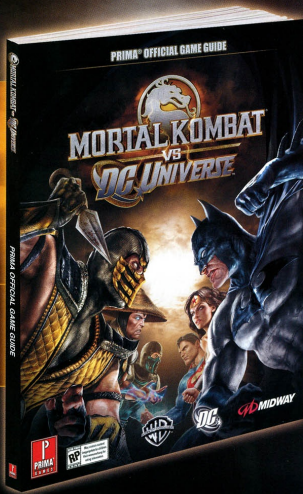
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MAD



DECEMBER 2008 NUMBER 496

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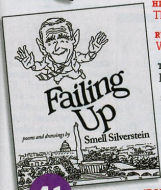
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When most people think about their problems, the only thing they figure out is that they're too dumb to fix them!



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the usual gang of idiots

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HOW TO REACH US:

Please Address Correspondence To:

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New York, New York, 10019.

Or e-mail us at letters@madmagazine.com

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MAD doesn't read faxed submissions!

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VISIT OUR WEB SITE! MADMAG.COM

As a longtime subscriber and proud Delawarean, I was incensed at the letter from Mark Guthrie in MAD #494 where he says he's "not pathetic enough to live in Delaware." Maybe you double mocha latte-sipping boozes in Washington would just ignore a comment like that, but them's fighting words here in the First State. Nothing is more pathetic than the NBA franchise-losing, raincoat-wearing Canada-touchers that live in Washington. You've been warned, Guthrie. Don't mess with Delaware.

Kevin Lagowski, New Castle, DE

Well, I just happen to be a life-long resident of the "First" state and have been reading and collecting MAD for over 30 years. Although I haven't played the new MAD scratch lottery game, I believe the guy from Washington should scratch something else. Seeing how it rains most of the time out there, he's obviously a little "wet" behind the ears and sounds like he was standing a little too close to Mount St. Helens when it erupted. Go play in a puddle, moron. MAD rules!

John Stroud, Wilmington, DE

The Big Lagowski and Three's A Stroud — Let's end this feud right here and just agree that both Delaware and Washington shouldn't even be considered states! —Ed.



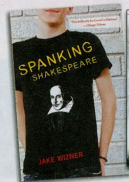
READER ALERT II

What could possibly be better than staring at a blank wall all year? How about staring at a different vintage MAD cover each month? Well you can, simply by making a date, running out to where calendars are sold and buying the MAD 2009 calendar!



READER ALERT III

Those who had their letters printed on this month's Letters Page will receive NHL2k9 for the Wii, courtesy of our friends at the National Hockey League. For more info please go to nhl.com. You'll also receive the book *Spanking Shakespeare*, courtesy of our friends at Random House. And if that wasn't good enough, you'll get *From Krakow To Krypton: Jews and Comic Books* written by MAD-writer Arie Kaplan, courtesy of our friends at The Jewish Publication Society. If your letter didn't make it, go out and complete the hat trick, they're all on sale now!



COMING UP IN MAD #497,
ON SALE DECEMBER 16!

THE MAD 20:
OUR YEARLY ROUND-UP OF THE
20 DUMBEST PEOPLE,
EVENTS & THINGS!

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ON SALE DECEMBER 16!

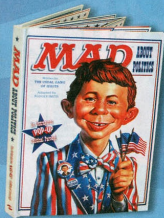
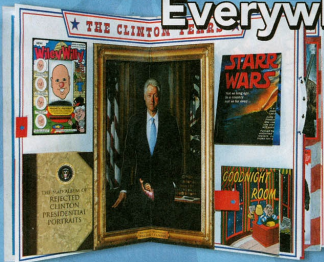
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THE FAST 5 WACKY AMERICAN LAWS

- 1 You can be jailed in Georgia for wearing an orange jumpsuit.
- 2 A 1903 ordinance in Buffalo, NY states that no professional sports team within city limits may win a championship.
- 3 In Vermont, you may burn an American flag if you add a 51st star or an extra stripe beforehand.
- 4 In South Dakota, two men may marry each other, but only if one of them has a woman's name, like Kelly or Tracy.
- 5 In Michigan, it's illegal to take out money from a bank unless you have an account there.



SUTTON FOR PUNISHMENT



SOLUTION TO LAST MONTH'S "MINI-MYSTERY"

The previously overlooked hair fibers and bloodstains led Officer Hendricks to one conclusion — somehow, Mrs. Featherthorn had taken an 80 mph running start and thrown herself into the grille of her husband's Bentley.



NEXT MONTH: "The Stuttering Doorknob!"

MELVIN & JENKINS' GUIDE TO HOLIDAY SHOPPING



Jenkins begins compiling his cross-referenced gift list in September, and has his shopping done by the second week of December.

Melvin grabs fistfuls of store gift cards as presents, but doesn't put any money on them, and blames "that stupid cashier."



CELEBRITY CAUSE-OF-DEATH BETTING ODDS



This Month LIL WAYNE



Fatal depression after realizing there's no room left on his face to tattoo anything else.....2:1

Chokes to death on own grill during corn-on-the-cob mishap....4:1

Infected cold sore from creepily kissing rapper, "Birdman," on the lips.....10:1

Mauled to death by possums, attracted by bling "shininess".....15:1

Elected mayor of New Orleans, then assassinated for vowing to rename state "Weezy-ana" in his honor....900:1

6 EASY WAYS TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL

- 1 Simply showing up for class can drastically improve your grade. Therefore always make certain the teacher has taken attendance and marked you present before sneaking out the back door.
- 2 Organize your time. Set aside specific amounts of time to sleep, relax, eat, watch TV, play video games, surf the web, and talk with Friends. Any time left after that should be devoted to school work.
- 3 Writing down your goals helps you focus on achieving them. Be sure to write them down in pencil because it's easier to change your goals than to achieve them.
- 4 Don't ignore your assignments. Devote sufficient time each night to create a valid excuse of why you didn't do your homework. Keep careful records so you don't repeat the same excuse.
- 5 If you're having trouble in class, ask questions. For example, ask your teacher if his wife knows about that young lady you saw him eating dinner with the other night. Watch as your grades soar!
- 6 Don't wait until the last minute to insure you'll get a passing mark. Start cheating immediately.

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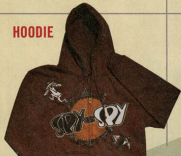
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Consider the amazing history of hip hop music. Hundreds of top performers! Thousands of beats! Tens of thousands of songs! And strangely, just one recurring storyline! Why? Because the career arc of rap music superstardom has a well-traveled groove — and let's just say it doesn't curve up at the end! For proof, check out...

the **RISE** *and* **FALL**

Carl Pringle is born in a happy home, in a friendly neighborhood, to parents who love him dearly. For the sake of his "art" he will never utter a word about this for the rest of his life.



Carl's career gets off to a less than auspicious start when a YouTube video of him rhyming over a sample of the *Care Bears* theme song fails to catch on.



Down but not defeated, Carl moves on to his next project: with just a camcorder, he makes a new video. In classic hip hop style, it features a naked woman wiggling her ass behind opaque glass. His grandmother is NOT pleased.



At an open mic night, Carl busts off a tongue-twisting freestyle of 18 syllables per second, breaking the world record. Sadly, halfway through the word "appendectomy," he almost swallows his retainer.



XX-Plotation Records lands Carl a high-profile background cameo in the new LL Wayne video. Unfortunately, because of all the other guest cameos, no one is aware he's even in it.



Desperate to make it in the rap game at any cost, Carl signs a nut-busting contract giving away 100% of the ownership of his masters and royalties to XX-Plotation Records, exclusively binding him to them for the next 40 years. Having sold his own ass into contractual bondage, it makes it a tad ironic when Carl starts rapping about "them hoers."



In a savvy move to build his street cred, Carl adopts the moniker "Yung Carl," and is sure to mention in every interview that he was "shot twenty times when he was 17." He is also sure *not* to mention that this happened while he was playing Halo 2.



of a **RAP STAR**

the **RISE** and **FALL**

Yung Carl makes a video for his first single, "Snap It, Crackle It, Pop It." Models are hired to rub against him and pretend they're horny. Bentleys, bling, and bubbly are all rented for the set. Carl wears a borrowed silk designer shirt he'll never see again, while repeatedly rapping about "keeping it real."



After the video flops, Carl decides to switch creative gears. Influenced by other rappers' collaborations with singers T-Pain and Akon, both of whom scored hits by recording vocals in a high-pitched vocoder "robot" voice, Carl goes into the studio and boldly applies a half dozen clothespins to his crotch. Not only does he fail to produce a hit, but he forever ruins his chances to father a child.



Suddenly Yung Carl is a media sensation! The new video for "Drop It Like It's Hot" features a storm of dollar bills with Carl's face raining down on him while he's wearing a sleek snakeskin suit and playing poker with a bethonged woman's silhouette in the shiny "hallway of the future." Despite using so many outdated hip hop clichés, it becomes the biggest video of the year and is so hot that MTV even shows it twice.



Carl's third single, "Drop It Like It's Hot," sells just one copy online, but the purchase is made by Bill O'Reilly's assistant's daughter. The song, an ode to prepubescent love that rhymes "Hermione" with "luscious hiney," and "That's So Raven" with "completely shaven" soon comes to O'Reilly's attention and he rants about it on his show. Thanks to the publicity generated by outraged Fox News viewers, sales of the single skyrocket.



In one of those moving, "passing of the torch" moments that only rap music can provide, Ja Rule gives Carl tips on his "flow" and on how to handle overnight success. And Carl gives Ja Rule a valuable tip, too, for getting the pizza to his house in under 30 minutes.



Riding high, Yung Carl launches a multimedia company, Microhard. He spends the next chapter of his life developing films, launching clothing lines, selling bottled juice, marketing video games, launching a publishing house, endorsing upscale watches and opening sports bars and strip clubs. The only thing that hurts his image as the "ultimate rap mogul" is that he completely forgets to record any rap music.



Yung Carl's meteoric rap career is over, but he had a phenomenally long run for a hip hop artist: almost ten months. While his star was shining brightly, he made over \$30 million. After his record company, music publisher, agent, manager, lawyers and handlers take fair shares, Carl is left with a complimentary promo copy of his first record (minus the plastic CD case).



A week later, Carl appears in a tribute graffiti mural of fallen rap heroes, but his face is almost entirely blocked out by Biggie's ass.



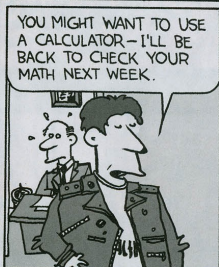
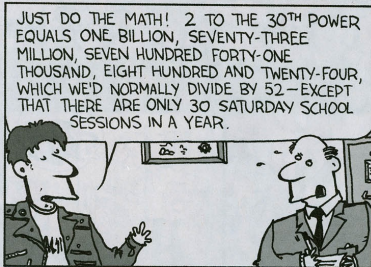
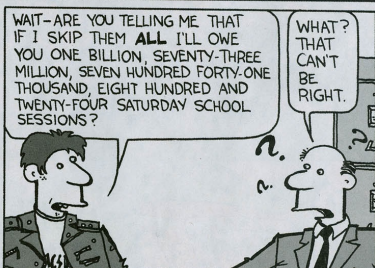
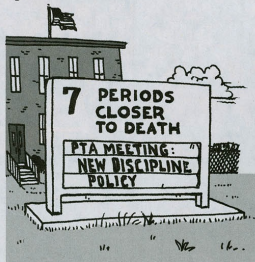
Everything collapses on Carl. His albums collect dust in discount bins. His merchandising deals are nixed. His embittered fan base calls him a sellout. Even "Weird Al" Yankovic starts ducking his phone calls.



Carl refuses to give up. While filming an ill-timed video response to Rihanna's year-old "Umbrella" single, tragedy strikes. Carl impales himself on a beach umbrella, which then repeatedly opens and closes inside his sternum. "Yung" Carl Pringle was 22 years old. Not to imply that rap music fans are fickle, but after his death is announced, Google hits for Carl's name soar to almost a hundred.



of a RAP STAR



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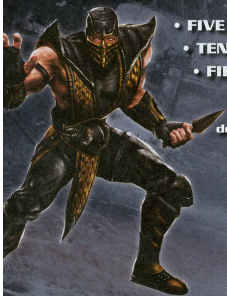
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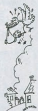
Head for
high land,
it's...

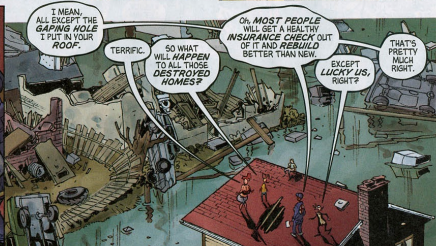
MONROE

Head for
high land,
it's...

and...

the Natural Disaster



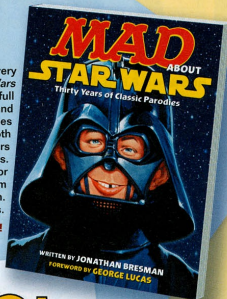


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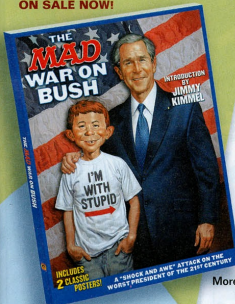


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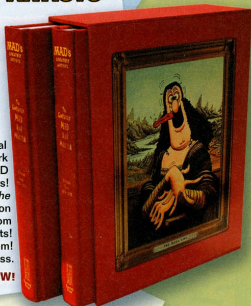


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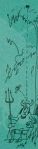
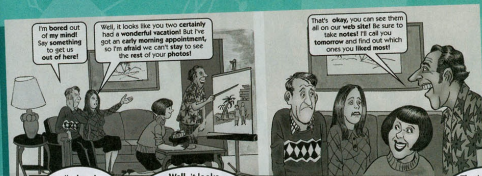


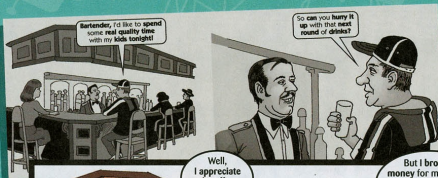
THE DARKER SIDE OF THE LIGHTER SIDE



We tamper with classic Dave Berg strips, even though nobody asked us to — especially not Dave!









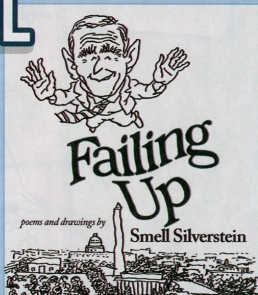
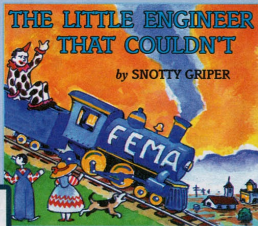
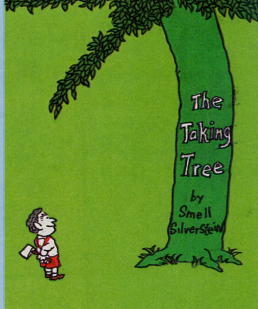
AND A CHILD SHALL READ THEM DEPT.

The past eight years under the Bush administration have been a smorgasbord of scandal, lies, greed, torture, war and improper grammar. Any sane parent would want to shield their children from the ugly events that have unfolded, (especially if they voted for Bush). At the very least, however, children need a sense of history to prevent such disasters from happening again. But how do you present this dark history in such a way that it doesn't turn kids suicidal? Simple. If you filter it through kiddie lit, even the debacle that was the Bush presidency becomes appropriate for all ages! Here's MAD's guide to...

USING KIDS' BOOKS TO EXPLAIN THE AWFUL BUSH YEARS

WRITER: DAVID SHAYNE

ARTIST: GARY HALLGREN





The Taking Tree

by Smell Silverstein

Once there was a tree...
and she loved
a little boy
named George.

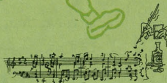


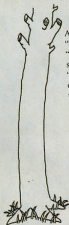
"Tree," George said one day.
"We're going to war.
So I need money.
A lot of money."
"I don't have any money,"
said the Tree.
"Why don't you climb my
branches and take some apples?
You can sell those for money
and you will be at war and you will be happy."



George climbed the tree.
And shook the apples.
And shook and shook and shook.
Until he shook out \$500 billion worth of apples.
"Wars are expensive!" said the Tree.
"Don't worry," said George.
"Once the Iraqis start pumping oil, the war will
pay for itself.
And I can give you your apples back."

So the Tree was happy.





A little later, George came back.
"Tree," he said.
"We've got enemy combatants,"
said George.
"And we need to employ
enhanced interrogation
techniques."
"I only have branches," said the
Tree.
"Yes, and your branches would
make excellent waterboards,"
said George.
So George got to work with his
chainsaw.
He had had a lot of practice
cutting wood on his vacations
in Crawford.

And the Tree was happy.

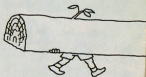


George came back again.
"Come, George. Come climb my trunk,"
the Tree said.
"Tree, there's no time for that," George said.
"I've got 4,000 dead soldiers.
We need to make coffins."



"My trunk would make fine coffins,"
said the Tree.
So George cut down the Tree's trunk.

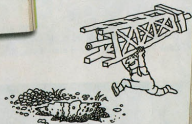
And even though she was sad for all the dead
soldiers, the Tree was happy.

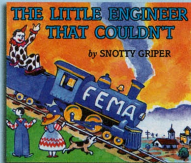


George came back again.
"Turns out we were wrong about the Iraqi oil
paying for the war," he said.
"I am sorry," said the Tree.
"You took my apples."
You took my branches.
You took my trunk.
I have nothing left to give.
All that's left is a stump."
"That's okay," said George.



"We're gonna drill under you for oil!"





The Little Engineer That Couldn't

by Snotty Griper



Ding-dong, ding-dong. The little train sat on the tracks, ringing her bell. She was a happy little train, filled with all kinds of useful goodies. Her name was FEMA, and she was owned by a man named George.



FEMA was full of ice and water, food and first aid supplies, baby formula and clothes and even portable trailers — everything a disaster victim could ever want.



FEMA needed an engineer, so George asked a clown named Brownie if he thought he could do the job. Brownie said, "I think I can. I think I can. I think I can."



One day, New Orleans found out they were going to be hit by Hurricane Katrina. "Oh please, Brownie. Won't you drive FEMA to help us evacuate?" they cried.





So George asked Brownie if he could drive the train and help them evacuate. Brownie said, "I think I can. I think I can. I think I can."



But Brownie didn't know how to drive the train, in fact he'd never ever driven a train at all. When Brownie finally made it to New Orleans, it was too late! The city was destroyed. It was a disaster. Even the ice had melted.



George then asked Brownie if he could take control of the situation and distribute supplies. Brownie said, "I think I can. I think I can. I think I can."



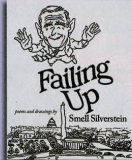
But Brownie didn't bring nearly enough supplies and couldn't distribute them quickly enough. Things were actually getting worse. People were dying.



It was right around this time that George said, "Heck of a job, Brownie. Heck of a job, Brownie. Heck of a job, Brownie."



And that's when New Orleans learned that thinking you can do something and actually being able to do it are two very different things.



Failing Up

by Smell Silverstein

FAILING UP

When I screw up
Or make a mess
It has no effect
On my success.
I just get more
The worse I do.

Don't you wish
Life's like that for YOU?



THE 2000 ELECTION

When your popular vote comes up a little short
It's nice to get an assist from the Supreme Court.



IS OUR CHILDREN LEARNING?

At Andover Prep, there was no time for reading —
George was too busy with his cheerleading.
And all he could do in class was fail
But still, his dad got him into Yale.
While at that school, he did not work at all.
He just got drunk and played baseball.
And that's pretty much how his young life was spent
And somehow this jerk became President?

Also
Available:





'NAM!

Little Georgie never went to 'Nam to serve
He hid down in 'Bama, safe in the Reserve.
And you don't need to be a genius to correctly
observe
That it takes a heck of a lot of nerve
For him to send kids to Iraq with such verve.

THE LOWLIGHTS (GACK!)

The 9-11 attack
The War in Iraq
Sending soldiers into battle
With no armor for flak.
The Patriot Act
Detainees on the rack
Not having the balls
To give Rumsfeld the sack
No diplomatic tact
The economy out of whack
A pretzel got stuck
In his intestinal tract
Ignoring scientific fact
The country on the wrong track
And still we re-elected this hack?
We must be on crack!



BYE-BYE

Falling up
Then falling down
After eight long, long years
George, get the hell out of town.



Don't
Let the
Pigeon
Tap
Your
Phone!



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WHAT'S QUICKLY
BECOMING
THE HOTTEST
DESTINATION FOR
MANY TEENAGERS?

HERE WE GO WITH ANOTHER RIDICULOUS MAD FOLD-IN

There's plenty of hip places for teenagers to hang out these days. There is, however, one in particular that is the mother of all hangouts. To find out what location always delivers, fold page in as shown.



FOLD PAGE OVER LIKE THIS!



FOLD PAGE OVER LEFT



FOLD BACK SO THAT "A" MEETS "B"

Abercrombie & Fitch
the limited
Hof Topic
AMERICAN EAGLE
VICTORIA'S SECRET
OLD NAVY
claire's
GAP



THE TEENAGER'S MAJOR PASSION IS PURSUIT OF
MATERIALISTIC THINGS. BUT SOME FIND OPPORTUNITY
IN ANOTHER PURSUIT WITH A STARTLING REWARD



WRITER AND ARTIST: AL JAFFEE



WHAT'S QUICKLY
BECOMING
THE HOTTEST
DESTINATION FOR
MANY TEENAGERS?



FOLD PAGE OVER LIKE THIS!

A B FOLD BACK SO THAT "A" MEETS "B"



THE
MATERNITY
WARD

A B



Live the bone crushing intensity one fight at a time with TNA, Total Nonstop Action. All the antics, all the energy and all the drama come smashing onto your console. Featuring a range of TNA talent including Kurt Angle, Sting, Samoa Joe and Christian Cage, if you're not seeing stars, you'll be one

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Alcohol Reference
Mild Language
Suggestive Themes
Violence



Wii



XBOX 360 LIVE



MIDWAY
midway.com

TNA
CHAMPIONSHIP
WRESTLING.COM



SPIKE
GET MORE ACTION



GOING DOG WILD

A girl in my class has a red Labrador Retriever and last year he lost a tooth by biting a fake horse. She has read MAD a couple of times. I suggested a new name to her, Alfred E. Neuman, but she just stood there and read it. Whenever I read MAD in class now, she cries because her dog died. Once I taped a picture of Alfred to a binder and she went home early. You have to agree that Alfred E. Neuman is a good dog name, right?

Richard River, Alberta, Canada

Editor Bob — Yeah, Alfred E. Neuman is a good name, but if you named your dog that, no one-watching postcard would ever come when you called him! —64



READER ALERT!

Before Snappy Answers to Stupid Questions and becoming MAD's Polka King, Al Jaffe created a syndicated strip called Tall Tales. Now collected for the first time, this book contains the best ones from over 2,200 strips. These lucky readers who had their letters printed will get a copy of Tall Tales courtesy of our friends at Abrams Books.



COMIC STRIPPED

Cartoonist Bill Frankel used MAD's own what mascot, Alfred E. Neuman, in a recent editorial for the New York Daily News. HA, HA, HA... that's hilarious! No, seriously, the online world is screwed!

MAKE A DUMB WISH FOUNDATION™

I've for past three years, while other boys our age spent their Saturdays playing sports or hanging out with girls, we have spent our time wisely sitting in the living room reading MAD. However, last week something horrible happened. We discovered that our friend, Pete, had gone to the dark side. He stopped reading MAD! He has refused to listen to reason and refuses to pick up another MAD ever again. Please print our letter so he'll return to the ring we know he loves! And if it is quality or possible. With every passing day he's looking less and less like a MAD reader and more like a handsome young man. His nose and gut have almost disappeared. His grades have skyrocketed and girls and boys dream "popular" and "cool" and all that nonsense, have trodden him to parties. How easy is that? MAD readers should never associate themselves with "cool" people and attend their midlife parties. Who needs parties when you have MAD and W.O.W. (World of Warcraft) at home? So we ditch with for the glorious MAD & DUMB WISH FOUNDATION™ is for you to please, please print our letter before it's too late and he's lost forever.

Zachary Weiner and Josh Rendell, New York, NY
The Grass is Always Greener and Kestrel and Why —
Mash the National Wilder's head's dog, Al is in a better place now. —65



WEDDED DISS

My grandparents, Billy and Roberts Smith, just celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary for them on New Street Beach. MAD magazine has been a part of my whole family's life for the past 50 years, so I included MAD in the wedding ceremony. I wanted to share the pictures with you. Grandma and Grandma Smith wanted to share a story with you. In 1958, Grandma Smith brought home a MAD for Grandma — she had never read it before and it was looked and loved it and on and on and on and it's today.

Reverend Billy Smith, New Street Beach, FL

Your Own Home — What your grandmother has been looking on MAD for almost 50 years? That's incredible! More incredible still is that it is only the third biggest magazine your grandmother has made in her life. The first one was marrying your obviously deformed grandfather and the second one was allowing her quacked children to perform the marriage ceremony! —66



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THE FUNDALINI PAGES

SIGNS YOUR DAD LOVES FOOTBALL MORE THAN YOUR FAMILY



- He opted to catch the fourth quarter of a 45-37 win (Pam showed instead of the birth of your little sister).
- Even for family photos, he refuses to take off the cheesecake.
- He's been dropping hints that, when the time comes, he's well in going to be heavily weighted towards Ben Roethlisberger.
- In the last three years, he's moved the family from Minnesota to Oakland to New England, yet stubbornly insists it has nothing to do with Randy Moss.
- He always complains it's "too cold" to build a snowman with you — yet goes to every Bears home game in nothing but facepaint and a thong.

WHEN THE GOING GETS DUFF



LEAST E-MAILED ARTICLES

Rank	Article	Times E-Mailed
1st	Did Shakespeare (2007) or did Shakespeare (2007)	Today 0:00:00
2nd	Shakespeare (2007) or did Shakespeare (2007)	Today 0:00:00
3rd	Did Shakespeare (2007) or did Shakespeare (2007)	Today 0:00:00
4th	Did Shakespeare (2007) or did Shakespeare (2007)	Today 0:00:00
5th	Did Shakespeare (2007) or did Shakespeare (2007)	Today 0:00:00
6th	Did Shakespeare (2007) or did Shakespeare (2007)	Today 0:00:00
7th	Did Shakespeare (2007) or did Shakespeare (2007)	Today 0:00:00
8th	Did Shakespeare (2007) or did Shakespeare (2007)	Today 0:00:00
9th	Did Shakespeare (2007) or did Shakespeare (2007)	Today 0:00:00
10th	Did Shakespeare (2007) or did Shakespeare (2007)	Today 0:00:00

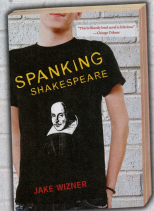
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One popularity-challenged boy's journey to self-respect and sexual fulfillment.

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The Horse That Knew the Way

Zeus was a big old Clydesdale we used mostly as a plow horse. Once in a while, we'd sell "pony" rides on him but he never liked it and would try and throw the kids or crush them up against the corral fence. He wouldn't let anyone ride him except my brother, Abner. He loved Abner.

In the town where I grew up, there were two funeral homes. One was Gilmore's, which was the fancy one. They had all sorts of high falootin' features like a sidewalk and a sign that lit up at night and blinked. And the other, a bit out of town, was Feckelman's. That was ours. We ran it out of our dining room. We tried to do the right thing and save decent folk money. Do the dead really need to have clothes on to be buried? Pa didn't think so. Do you really need an all-wooden pine box with a bottom and a top

when cardboard would do? And do you really need a state license to run a funeral business? None of us believed that for a minute.

So we had the farm, the funeral parlor and the "pony" rides. But we were always getting sued by people who were trying to keep good folk like us down and the lawyer bills were piling up.

I'll never forget the summer we almost lost the farm. Pa, Abner and me were thinking how we could get some money when Zeus sauntered over and tried to crush Pa and me against the corral fence. He was always doing that. But Abner said Zeus was trying to tell us something. Then we all remembered the county fair was coming. The first prize to the winner of the steeplechase was \$5,000! Just the amount we needed!

It was a long shot. Clydesdales aren't known for their speed. But it was the only chance we had, so Abner and Zeus went into training. But just a week before the big race, Zeus crashed Abner to death against the corral fence. Apparently he didn't love Abner as much as I thought.

So Pa and I came up with a new plan. Since no one else could ride Zeus but Abner, instead of burying him, we decided to duct tape him to Zeus. Considering how much lighter he'd be because of not eating in a week, Zeus would have a better chance of winning the prize money.

But on the day of the big race we discovered Zeus wanted no part of this. He got real spooked when we took Abner out of the Hefly bag and tossed him up on his back. As much as Zeus loved Abner, he didn't seem any too happy to see his old pal again. We had to strike him down while we taped Abner on. We went through sixteen rolls of duct tape that morning.

When the race started, we cut the ropes and Zeus took off like lightning. I never imagined Zeus could go that fast. It was a ten mile race through woods, across streams and over fences, fields and meadows. It was his race all of the way. When they crossed the finish line, Abner was bouncing around like a big rag doll. We shoulda used more tape. There was no

gathering in the winner's circle 'cause Zeus just kept on running.

It was days before Zeus finally showed up. He still had a lot of tape on him but no sign of Abner. We're guessing he gave Abner a proper burial off in the woods somewhere. He then came over to Pa and me and again tried to crush us into the corral fence.

Then Pa and I got the same idea: with all the dead folks we been burying, we could probably make jackpots out of them all. Heck, with enough duct tape, anybody could ride Zeus. That's what Zeus was telling us in his excitement as he kept slamming us into the corral fence.

Pa went to get a race schedule and I went for the shovel and some garbage bags. "Thank you, champ!" I said to Zeus from the other side of the fence. He started kicking towards me but I knew it was just his way of saying, "You're welcome, brother of Abner. Now let's get out there and win some races. I'm ready."

And he was. He went onto be State Steeplechase Champ for two years running. And though he never stopped at the finish line and got the flowers in the winners circle, it was probably just as well in case they had some dumb rule about dead people winning horse races.

— Cooter Smith, age 23



ILLUSTRATION: ROBERTO

WRITER: TRISTAN MCGONIGLE

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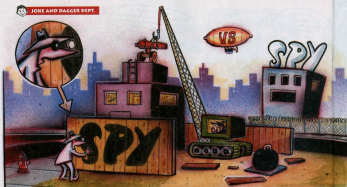


DON'T PHRASE ME, BRO SKEET

It's been said that if you live long enough, eventually you'll "hear it all." Don't believe it! Most people resist change and cling to their ignorance. In fact, here are some...

COMMENTS YOU'LL NEVER HEAR NO MATTER HOW LONG YOU LIVE





WRITER AND ARTIST: PETER KUPER

KUPER

Planet TAD!!!!



[About Me]

[Name]Tad

[Grade]9

[Height, Expressed in Verne Troyers]2.3]

[10 November]04:22pm]

[mood]wary

Today there was an oral pop quiz in Civics, and I kind of forgot to do any of the reading. Mr. Davis went around the room, asking each of us to stand up and answer a question. My question was, "List three ways the American system of government differed from a parliamentary system." I told Mr. Davis that the answer really depended on how you defined "system," "government," and "parliamentary," and that while some people might say the American system is very different from a parliamentary system, others would say that it's not very different at all, especially when you compare both of them to a system that's extremely different from both of them, so really, it's all relative and subjective. Then I sat down.

Mr. Davis asked me to stay after class. I was sure he was going to tell me that I'd gotten an F on the quiz. But instead, he said that I should consider joining the school's debate club, because my ability to talk for a solid minute without actually saying anything was really impressive. He said it was a real gift to talk and talk without knowing anything. Plus, he said, it might help me on my college application, after I flunk Civics. And then he laughed.

Mr. Davis has a weird sense of humor sometimes.

[10 November]10:03pm]

I was flipping around on cable tonight, and I caught a glimpse of this weird movie in which Zac Efron goes around New York City, shooting muggers. It was so bizarre that I wound up watching the whole rest of the movie, and then the credits rolled and I realized that it wasn't a Zac Efron movie at all — it was *The Brave One*, starring Jodie Foster.



I think it's a pretty understandable mistake.

[11 November]06:41pm]

[mood]anxious

So, after school, I went to the debate club's adviser, Mrs. Wintner, to ask about what the club is like. But as soon as I started asking about it, she got all excited. She said I was joining just in time, since right now, the club only has four members, but a team needs to have five members in order to compete with other schools, so thanks to me, we'll be able to compete in the district debate tournament later this month.

I kept trying to tell her that I wasn't really sure about joining, but she just kept talking like I'd already agreed to be on the team, and by the time I left her classroom, she'd already had me sign an entry form for the tournament. It was weird — it's like she totally ignored what I was saying and just kept on talking until I did what she wanted.

Aw, crap. I just figured out why Mrs. Wintner's in charge of the debate club.

[12 November]05:30pm]

Today was my first day in debate club. It started a little rough — we had a practice debate, and Mrs. Wintner said, "Resolved: America should switch to a flat tax." So I said, "OK." And then there was a long, awkward pause, and then she said, "Um, you're supposed to debate that." And I said, "Why? It's already been resolved." And she said, "That's not what resolved means." And I said, "Well, isn't the definition of 'resolved' open to interpretation?" And she said, "No, seriously, stop it." And I said, "Define it." And she said, "No." And I said, "Then I win." I thought I was doing really well, but apparently, that's not how debates work.

[19 November]03:19pm]

[mood]confident

Well, I've been on the debate team a week now, and I think I'm actually getting pretty good at it. I practiced today with Chuck, on the subject "Resolved: Aquaman is lamer than Sub-Mariner." First I argued for Aquaman being lamer, and I won. Then I argued for Sub-Mariner being lamer, and I won again. (The truth, of course, is that they're equally lame. I mean, they're superheroes who hang out with fish — it's not like either of them is the cool one.)

AQUAMAN:
LAMERSUB-MARINER:
ALSO LAMER

[20 November]08:53pm]

[mood]eager

The big debate tournament's tomorrow, and I gotta say, I'm looking forward to it, if only because once it's over, maybe my friend Chuck will stop making jokes about me being a "master debater." It kind of stopped being funny after the first hundred times.

[21 November]05:26pm]

[mood]disappointed

Today was the debate tournament. I got there a little early, and spent some time talking to the captain of one of the other teams, West Bloomfield High School. Her name's Beth, and she looks like Scarlett Johansson, only hotter. It turns out we agree on a lot of stuff. (We both like Firefly, we both want to own helper monkeys, and we both want to punch Criss Angel in the face). So I was a little nervous when the tournament began, and it turned out I was debating against her. And I got even more nervous when they announced the topic, which was "Resolved: We must take immediate action to stop global warming," because we just finished a whole month of studying that in science class, so I knew a lot about it.

But then Beth whispered, "Good luck — whichever of us wins, I still want to hang out," and passed me her phone number.

I really wanted to impress her, so I argued as hard as I could about how bad global warming is, and how important it is to reverse it, and about, like, polar ice caps and hybrid cars and all that kind of stuff. After I finished, Mrs. Wintner said I'd done a really good job of explaining why we need to fight global warming. Then she told me that I was supposed to argue AGAINST fighting global warming. The OTHER SIDE was supposed to make the argument for it. I guess they explained that right around when Beth gave me her number, and I was so distracted that I missed it.

Anyway, we lost the debate — one of the judges told me it was the first time he'd ever awarded someone negative points. When I talked to Beth afterward, she seemed really disappointed in me. Then she sent one of her friends over to ask for her number back.

Afterward, Mrs. Wintner asked me to leave the team. She said that I'd just given the most humiliating performance by any debater, ever. I said that that was debatable. And she said, "No. It isn't."