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FEATURES

No. 26

Beer:  
 Interview with North Brewery's Zach Pedley..... 3

Paul Juser:  
 Vampire of Doom City (Part 5)..... 3

Local Festival:  
 Big Splash Sustainability Fair..... 4

Sports:  
 2013 Mount Wilson Trail Race..... 4, 10  
 Briggs Seekins Local Fight Coverage..... 8  
 Binghamton Tiger Cats Make Playoffs..... 9  
 Xcite Heavyweight Championship..... 9

Remembering: Angelo Zuccolo..... 8

Cartoons: The "Censored Eleven"..... 9

Cinema: *The House on Ghost Hill Road*..... 9

DEPARTMENTS

Correspondence..... 2

Eccentric Tantrums (opinion):  
 High-School Dropout Rate..... 2

Music Pages:  
 Band Notes..... 6  
 Fred Hotchkiss of *That Sunday Show*..... 7  
 Ozone in the AM with *The Local Scene*..... 7  
 Mindful Music by Dave Rice..... 7

Girls on the *Police Gazette*: "So White"..... 9

From the Morgue (classic articles):  
 Mount Wilson Trail Race..... 10

Dotcomix: The Adventures of Kim Dotcom..... 11

Dr. Caprio's Sex Clinic: What Is Vaginismus?..... 14

New World Records: Biggest Wave Surfed..... 14

Limerick of the Month..... 14

Horoscope for May..... 14

Region's Best Event Listings..... 15

TANTRUM

(continued from left column)

in the real world that can be used to build problem-solving skills that are not touched with a ten-foot pole in public education. One fairly glaring example is the law.

This is a country where every resident is governed by and required to follow laws from the time they're born until the time they die. The law is the single most pervasive controlling presence for every man, woman, and child in America. But out of the 12,000 hours a child will spend in classrooms from kindergarten through 12th grade, maybe 200 will be devoted to the workings of the law—not even two percent of the total. Ask any law-school student if studying the law helps one develop problem-solving skills and prepare for the real world and they will slap you for asking such a stupid question. Students know the difference between rote memorization of mostly useless facts and something that synergizes their potential with real-world application, that develops their analytical thinking skills rather than sets up a battle of wills between themselves and school officials who are interested mainly in them regurgitating back pointless bits of memorized information. More students should vote with their feet and refuse to take part in the farce known as American public education. Perhaps a graduation rate of 5% instead of the current 50% would be enough to prompt the necessary reforms.

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CORRESPONDENCE  
Letters from the Vault:  
July 1967

BASEBALL PREDICTION

I disagree with the prediction made in the *Police Gazette* (April issue) that the Boston Red Sox will finish last in the American League. Nothing could be further from the truth.

They will finish no less than third according to my astrological analysis. By looking up the birthdays of all the Red Sox players, coaches and front office personnel, I have determined that they have a better than eighty-three percent chance to close quickly in the latter part of September and beat out the Los Angeles Angels for the pennant.

The Red Sox will then go on to seek revenge on the St. Louis Cardinals for what happened in 1946, by beating them four straight in the World Series. The Red Sox will then dominate baseball for 14 years. The stars don't lie.

—Theodore N. Loudon, Farmingham, MA

*Current analysis: For once, the Police Gazette was incorrect. At the time we made that prediction the Red Sox had finished next to last the previous two years. Mr. Loudon's prediction, however, was remarkably close. The Red Sox indeed won the pennant in 1967, after a strong second half, and faced the Cardinals in the World Series—though they lost in seven games. And for 13 years the Sox never finished out of the top half of their league. The 14th year they slipped to fifth out of seven teams. Conclusion: Astrology works! See our horoscope on page 14.*

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ECCENTRIC TANTRUMS  
Police Gazette Applauds Rising High School Drop-Out Rate

The television program "Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader" was an example of American business at its best. The show's producers took the obvious debacle that is our American public education system and figured out how to make money off it. The show's premise alone illustrates what is wrong with the system better than the longest editorial or research report ever could. The premise assumes that no normal American adult can remember even a majority of what our elementary school students have been taught in their school careers up through the 5th grade. The clear inference to be drawn is that a majority of what our children learn while they are away for hours every day at school is, in the end, worthless. As a result, American schools are not so much institutions designed to prepare children for productive lives as adult citizens as they are government-mandated daycare centers designed mainly to teach compliance to authority figures, their curriculums in place to provide the make-work chores needed to test the level of that compliance.

This monotonous tedium of compliance and rote memorization continues through high school until students either bend to the will of their superiors or drop out after apprehending how miniscule has been the school's contribution to the pool of useful knowledge and wisdom they will need to thrive in the real world. Our high schools graduate legions of people over-qualified to be trivia-show contestants, but without the skills to determine if they are being lied to by the government, businesses, salespeople, religious leaders, or their bosses. The uselessness of much of this curriculum is often pointed out by students and even a few parents, and the teacher or school administrator will usually refer to the need to cover basic foundations in all areas in order to give kids a head start later when they begin specializing in their careers or higher education. When pinned down on what use could trigonometry, for example, possibly have for the 95% of students who will never think of it again—let alone use it—for the rest of their lives, school officials will say the specific subject is less important than the fact that it helps the student with general problem-solving skills. This shaggy dog of an explanation holds about as much water as a colander with a crack in it. There are hundreds of endeavors (continued in next column)