

# BREAKING the RULES

*by Miles Mathis*

*First published January 28, 2024*

This is for those who have requested more stories from my past. Surprisingly, my Turning 60 paper ended up being the most popular one of last year. I never would have predicted that. Just so you know, it doesn't get my own vote. I would say the WWII papers are the most important—Long Knives and Kristallnacht; followed by the Oppenheimer and Heisenberg papers, which continue my destruction of mainstream physics. Then the Arnold paper, which was admittedly fun.

This paper is also for those who need more encouragement to break the rules and live outside the box, since more and more of that is going to be required in the near future, as the governors continue to invent new idiotic rules. For starters, I think you can expect round two of the fake pandemic to arrive soon, with more vaccines pushes. So brace yourself now for the pushback.

First I want to get this out of the way: some will stop me before I get started, saying I am not an Anarchist, so I am in a false position here from the start with that title. No, I am not an anarchist. I have no problem with sensible rules and laws, or their enforcement. In fact, I think sensible laws and rules should be enforced MORE than they are now. In many ways, society is already too anarchical, especially regarding what the rich can get away with. It is a free-for-all and feeding frenzy for those people, and they need to be brought to justice. Justice requires good laws and their strict enforcement. But society is upside down: sensible rules and laws are being ignored while an ever-increasing raft of new idiotic rules and laws are being pressed on us to keep us diverted and powerless. None of this is by accident, either. It is all part of the culture war: the class war being waged unilaterally so far by the rich against the poor and middle-class. The media—owned by the rich—of course reports this upside-down as well, trying to make us think the rich are in danger. But it is just the opposite. It is the poor that lose every battle. Anarchy would only make that worse, because the first line of justice and sensible laws is protecting the poor from the rich. For that reason, I believe that anarchists are either dupes, or—far more likely—plants from the upper class. They tell you laws are made by the upper class and benefit only them, so best do away with laws. But though partially true, that argument is flawed. It is true the wealthy make laws to benefit themselves, and *those laws* should be dismantled. But other laws have existed and still do exist that protect average people from the powerful, and we need more of those. Again, it isn't a question of laws or no laws, it is a question of bad laws or good laws.

This paper is about walking around bad laws or rules, from someone who has done a lot of both. I will tell you some stories with commentary, then finish with a longish summation.

If you are a longtime reader of mine, you already know about my [Bad Boy of the Latin Club](#) stories and my "[arrested on European vacation](#)" stories. But if you don't know them or hate digging through links, I will quickly summarize: four arrests, one for illegal stair access in the Sears Chicago Tower, 1979, age 15. One for pulling a fire alarm, University of Tennessee campus, 1980, age 16. One for climbing a fence at Windsor castle to photograph the Queen's horses, 1990, age 26. One for refusing to remove a wool cap at Vienna Cathedral, Christmas mass 1999. Highlight of the Windsor Castle story

is that I had a paperback copy of Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* in my backpack when it was checked by Park Police. Hard to believe, I know, but true. A great coincidence, but the police were not amused. I got off with just a scolding each time, though the Windsor police said that if I had done that at the White House in DC, I would have been shot on sight. I just laughed, but I have to admit I never tested that theory.

As you are about to see, these incidents were not isolated. They were part of a long pattern, one that hasn't changed much from childhood to now. I was always like that, and never learned anything from it, except what I am telling you here. One of my junior high teachers, who had an innate dislike of me from the get-go, once put it this way: "Mathis, for such a smart guy you sure do some dumb things". But that was because he thought breaking the rules was always dumb. While I thought, and still think, that sometimes it is the smartest thing you can do.

I got on this guy's bad side early. Or he got on mine. Mr. Mize. It was 7<sup>th</sup> grade, my first month in junior high. He was teaching Texas history, and one of the first assignments was an art assignment. We were all to make a map of Texas, using colored pencils. He attached a long list of rules for drawing this map, including the instruction that all coloring was to be done vertically, with straight up-and-down strokes. I was already known by my classmates as the artist—or at least by those who had come from the same grade school as I had. I had been the go-to guy for all art projects for years. On the day we were all to turn in our maps, everyone was looking at everyone else's maps, and everyone was oohing over my map, saying it was the best. I saw Mize watching us, but had no idea why he looked kinda weird. I found out the next day when we came in and he had tacked all the maps to the wall, with the grades on them. I got an F. He told the class why, first thing. Because I had colored horizontally. Yes, very neatly and evenly, but I had ignored his rule.

Did I do it on purpose, to make a point? No. Or, I did it on purpose, because I *thought it looked better that way*. I didn't intend to be insubordinate, I just did what I needed to do as an artist, to make it look the best. Which was probably worse in his eyes than insubordination. I hadn't done it to spite him or make a point, and he knew that. I had done it because his rules naturally meant nothing to me. What bugged him even more is that I didn't care about the F, either. I thought it was unfair and stupid, but I didn't take it to the principal or get my parents involved. I just moved on ahead. I still made an A in the class, but it wasn't achieved by grovelling before him. It was achieved because I was the best student in the class and he didn't have the guts to give me a B.

A similar thing had happened the year before, in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. There was a city-wide art contest, and three or four from my school entered. All my classmates thought I was sure to win based on my entry, but when the winners were announced, I hadn't even placed. My entry wasn't even returned to me. When my teacher inquired, she was told my entry wasn't on the right paper, and had been thrown away. One of the rules was that the drawing had to be done on poster board, but I had done mine on paper. Why? Because I couldn't get the effect I wanted on the sort of crappy poster board that was available to us. It was too slick. The colored chalks I was using (like cheap pastels) wouldn't stick to it. But they looked pretty good on large sheets of paper available to us. The least they could have done is return the work to me.

The next year I started out in the art class in junior high, but the teacher wanted us to draw eggs in the first week and I had no interest in that. If she was going to treat us all as beginners I would switch to choir. And I did. So the best artist in the school wasn't even in the art class. **I didn't take any art for the next six years!** You will say it is because I was coddled in the first six grades, given preferential treatment, and now that I was being treated like everyone else I couldn't handle it. Yes, precisely. I

*wasn't* like everyone else, so it was idiotic to treat me like I was. It makes no sense to put an accomplished artist in a remedial course and expect him to not to balk. It was the same in every other class, where they treated us all as idiots, teaching us the same ten things every year for twelve years, but in art I simply could not put up with it. I was given the option to quit (as I wasn't in all the other classes), so I did. I don't see it as my loss, since I continued to draw what I wanted at home. I became an artist anyway. I see it as their loss. Years later someone probably asked those art teachers, "Oh, Miles Mathis was at your school when you were teaching. Was he a favorite of yours?" And she had to answer, "He didn't take art", and watch the other person's jaw drop. I doubt when the other person asked why, she told the truth: "Because I tried to sit on him and he dropped art and took choir and band instead."

The same thing happened six years later when I was a freshman at Haverford. I initially signed up for art, since I thought I might finally be treated as an adult. But there were a bunch of requirements. I wanted to take painting, but the teacher said I needed to take drawing 1, then drawing 2, and only then could I take a painting class. So I just left and never came back. Besides, I didn't like anyone telling me what to draw or how. I wanted them to answer my questions and otherwise leave me alone. I didn't have time to waste with his requirements and wasn't interested in his "critiques". I could already draw better than he could, so why would I want a critique from him?

In that same week I blew my chance of ever graduating from Haverford, since we were required to take some form of PE each semester. I had thought I was going to be on the golf team, but when I arrived they told me it had just been discontinued. I could join the tennis team. I showed up there the first day and the coach told me to run laps. I told him I was there to play tennis, not run laps on his orders. He got mad and insisted that I had to take some form of PE, and they would be running in most of them. I just walked off as he yelled threats at me. I never did take any PE there. I knew I wasn't going to stay from the second week.

But let's go back to junior high, so you can see why I responded that way to running laps. Hutchinson Junior High. I had another run in with this Mize guy the next year, since he was also the tennis coach. At the time, everyone had to take PE in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, but in 8<sup>th</sup> you could specialize in a sport. After try-outs, Mize ranked me down at #10, which I knew was a cut. The guy had it out for me. But you could challenge up two spots, so I immediately challenged the #8 guy. I beat him. As soon as I could I challenged the #6 guy. And beat him. Then I beat the #4 guy and took his spot. I moved up six spots in about a month. Mize was furious. When I beat the #4 guy Mize dressed him down in front of me, yelling "how did you let this guy beat you?!" Mize knew I was planning to challenge the #2 guy, but he had other plans for me. A doubles tournament was coming up, and Mize should have paired me with the #3 guy. Instead, he left me with the #11 player, playing in the fifth doubles team. My partner was so bad we came in last in our bracket, but everyone got a participation certificate. Angry at not being on the #2 team where I should have been, I threw mine in the trash. Mize came to me the day after and claimed I had torn it up in front of the other school's coach. Which I hadn't. He may have seen me do it, but I didn't tear it up and throw it in his face. And here is the other thing that happened that day: the top three doubles teams were playing on beautiful courts at the richest highschool in town (Coronado), but Mize dropped us off at the nearby junior high, to play on concrete courts with metal nets. We finished early, so we decided to walk over to the highschool to see what the others were doing. Just as we got there, our minivan was pulling out, and Mize either pretended not to see us or really didn't. But the other guys on the van definitely did see us, since they waived and stuck out their tongues. So we were left to walk all the way across town to get back to our junior high. Many miles. The next day Mize called me in and had a wicked round of punishment planned me, for tearing up that cert. Ten "dirty dozen", a dirty dozen being sprinting a length of the field, doing twelve pushups, and

sprinting back. I told him I hadn't done what I was being punished for, and that walking back across town was punishment enough anyway. I asked him how he planned to punish the guys for not telling him we were there at the van. He said that wasn't my concern and that if I didn't do the dirty dozen I was off the team. I said fine and walked off. Once again, no one intervened for me.

Or I should say, no one you would expect intervened for me. The principal and my parents didn't. I was assigned to PE and sixth period study hall the next day and spent the rest of the year wasting my time there. The top student in the whole junior high, sitting in study hall for an hour everyday with a bunch of trolls. But Mize didn't come back the next year. We had a new tennis coach. I heard something happened to him, but never found out exactly what. Maybe someone else's parents got him, or maybe my Muses took him down.

The next year, in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I had another similar experience. With me, it was always something. It was in our required Health class. One of the requirements was learning CPR, and to do that the teacher brought in a dummy. CPR Cindy, or something. Each student was asked to give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to CPR Cindy. But as that was happening, the head came loose and I could see inside. Her head was all full of spit and fungus. It was disgusting. When it came my turn I refused to kiss the dummy. I said there was no way I was putting my mouth on that thing. I could learn from the pictures in the book. The teacher wiped the dummy with disinfectant and told me it was OK, but I still refused. So he sent me to the principal's office. I explained my position, and the principal said they would clean the dummy and I would have to try again the next day. I am sure the Health teacher got in trouble for not keeping the dummy clean. So again the next day he insisted I kiss the dummy, but I still refused, on the basis that the entire proceeding was flawed as a matter of public health. Having all thirty kids slobber on the same dummy was ridiculous, especially in a "Health" class. Both the teacher and the principal informed me it was one of the main requirements of the class, and that I couldn't make an A without doing it. I still refused. There was a big final exam that counted half our grade, and I remember when the teacher handed it back to me on the last day. He said, "Well, Mathis, you had the high score of all my classes on this test, but you are still getting a B". I just shrugged. You will say it didn't matter, but it later did, since that B is what kept me from being valedictorian. There was a five-way tie for valedictorian, and to break the tie they went back to 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

There was a second thing that prevented me from being valedictorian outright, and that was a class I took as a senior. That year they introduced honors classes: if you took an honors class, you got five points for an A instead of 4. The problem was sixth period, when they didn't have any honors classes. Most seniors not in sports or band took a senior study hall, which means they got to go home after fifth period, at 2:30. But I personally organized a sixth-period honors government class in the first semester, since government was a senior requirement. I made the proposal to the senior advisor and she recommended I write it up and submit it to the principal, which I did. They said that if I recruited enough people to fill the class, it was a go. It was a big success. We needed the class to be honors, because if it hadn't been, our GPAs would have dropped even with an A. That was proved second semester, when I tried to do the same thing with a Sociology class. It didn't work because they couldn't get a qualified teacher for it. But I decided to take the class anyway, because I was applying to a couple of top colleges and didn't want a senior study hall on my transcript. So instead of five 5's on my GPA that semester, I had five 5's and a 4. The A in Sociology only gave me a 4. So my GPA actually dropped. My valedictorian competitors who took senior study hall had a 5.0 GPA that semester, while I had a 4.83. So it was like getting another B.

But let's back up. There's another Latin story in there, one you haven't heard. In the summer after 10<sup>th</sup> grade the Latin Club had gone to Michigan for the National Convention. That's where I got arrested

the first time, remember? While there, I became the National Champion among first-year students. What did I do for that? Model a toga? No, it was based on taking tests. If you scored highest on a test called the Pentathlon, you were National Latin Champion. The test includes sections on grammar/vocabulary, derivatives, reading comprehension, Roman literature, and mythology.

Anyway, I became a second-year student in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, and we went to the Texas Area Convention that winter. Texas is so big they have to divide state meets this way for most things, including sports, band, and languages. Area D was always held in Amarillo, since Amarillo High School had a famously huge Latin department, no one knows why. Their team was about a hundred kids, while ours (Lubbock Monterey) was seven. Amarillo had the second biggest Latin Club in Texas, after Baytown Lee in Houston. But we had the best teacher in the nation, an old lady from Genoa who knew everything about everything, so they hated to see us coming. Despite having the best teacher in the nation, our school's administrators did nothing to promote Latin, while Amarillo High heavily promoted it. In Lubbock they were always trying to discontinue the program. Anyway, we had several other strong members, one of them being our third-year student Elizabeth Drew (now Meadows), who had been the best Latin student in Texas the previous year. She would be a National Merit Scholar that year, score 212 on her PSAT, and go on to St. John's College. Her specialty was Grammar and Decathlon, and I was being groomed as her successor.

We got up early and loaded into the van for the two-hour drive to Amarillo, and I was then exactly what I am now: I didn't want to waste a minute of sleep, so I got up about five minutes before the van arrived and put on a wool cap to hide my bedhead.



I have on a wool cap right now, as I write this, but that is because it is 60 degrees in my house. A kitten is keeping my lap warm.

I hadn't gone to the Area Convention in my first year, since I had some conflict with a band event. So I wasn't clear on the rules. At the National Convention, you can take as many tests as you want. I had eight top-tens, including three firsts. But in Amarillo, you were limited to five. I asked my buddy if that was five including decathlon, or five plus decathlon, and he said he thought it was five plus decathlon. So, long story short, I took five plus decathlon, and they threw my decathlon test in the trash for being over the limit. Sort of a big deal, since it was the winning test. My buddy, who should

have gotten second, also had his test trashed. So they had just disqualified the two top tests. Not only that, but of the other five I took, I scored four firsts and a third. The four firsts were also high scores, meaning I had beaten the third and fourth year students as well, including my teammate Elizabeth Drew, the top student in the state. By the time I had gone on the stage four times for the four medals, the entire Amarillo High contingent was standing up cheering me, the guy in the wool cap. When I didn't even place in decathlon, a hush went over the room. Everyone was shocked. But no one filed a protest and the decision stood.

I think they were very embarrassed by that, because when I came back next year and did pretty much the same thing, but winning the decathlon this time, they had a special award for me, which they called the Somebody Memorial Award, but which was obviously an attempt to make up for the year before. I remember a lady came up to me, very somber and earnest, and told me to etch my name on the plaque and send them the bill. I never did, but I appreciated the gesture. Sort of.

OK, that wasn't really about breaking rules on purpose, but it may interest some people. So let's take a bit meatier example. In Lubbock, the public libraries had lots of free parking, as they should. But in Austin, where I went to college 1982-84 and lived until 2000, the libraries had none. You had to pay the meters. I was a poor post-college student, barely paying the rent each month, so I needed that money. Plus, it was a matter of principle. You shouldn't have to pay to go to the library. So I never fed the meters. I just threw the tickets in the garbage. Eventually that caught up with me, since when your total hits a thousand, they put you on the list for a boot. Again, I found that absurd: stealing your car over some parking tickets. Truly fascist. There are other ways they could have dealt with that: flag your license renewal, your inspection, or something like that. But no, they think they have the right to steal a car over some unpaid parking tickets from the public library! Plus, they could very easily have a poverty plea on stuff like that.

Not to mention, parking fees are stupid to begin with. They don't do anything to control parking, and are just another soaking. Next they will have walking fees downtown: sidewalk tollbooths for passage. I probably shouldn't suggest it, even as a joke, since you can see them doing it. They already have TV licensing in the UK, which is no less absurd.

Well, one day after many years of that, I walked out of the library to find a meter maid writing me another ticket. She said, "Is this your car?" I said yes. She said, "You need to wait here, the boot guy is on his way." I said, "Am I under arrest?" She said no, so I got in the car and drove away. That happened several more times, and the look on the meter maid's face was always priceless. It was worth any amount of hassle. But the next time I walked out the boot guy was already there. I walked around and saw he already had the boot in place, but hadn't put the screws in yet. So I got in on the passenger side, slid over, and fired her up. I drove off, with most of the boot falling on the ground. But one part got caught in the wheel well and I dragged it for about a block before it fell off. I made several quick turns and lost the guy, if he was thinking of following me. When I got home I parked a couple of blocks away, knowing they would show up at my house. I planned to not answer the door. I was curious to see how far they would take it.

Unfortunately my housemate was home when the policeman arrived, and he didn't want to play my games. Or wasn't very good at them. He told them I wasn't there, but they put the screws to him and I could see he was crumbling. So I crawled out of my hole and presented myself. The funny thing is, they couldn't figure out what to do. There were no laws on the books regarding this, since it had never happened in the history of the world. I sat on the curb as this guy called in a second car, and then they called in a supervisor. The three guys huddled for a while and then suggested I pay part of the

outstanding sum as a gesture of compliance or something. I said, how much? They said, “Two hundred, and we will agree to drop the other thousands and the whole case”. They said I could be charged with endangering a boot guy, since the boot could have exploded and hit him in the face. They said they would drive me downtown and drive me back. It seemed like a good deal, so I took it. I knew I “owed” them far more than that, and I happened to have some money in the bank by that time, since it was many years after college. And I certainly didn't want to spend time in jail or have to go to court to fight this, though—given their confusion—I am sure I could have won.

A few months later they sent me a bill for the boot, but that wasn't part of our agreement, so I threw the bill in the trash. That may have eventually caught up with me as well, but I ended up moving out of Austin less than a year later. As it was, I had spun that game out to almost twenty years. I lived in Austin 19 years and never paid a parking ticket or traffic ticket. In a separate story, I was eventually arrested for those minor traffic tickets and paid about 1/20<sup>th</sup> of them to get out of jail. By the time they caught me, most of them had expired from the statute of limitations. So the way I look at it, I saved a bundle. And as far as the booting goes, my opinion was that if they wanted to steal my car, they were going to have to do that: I wasn't just going to give it to them. If they wanted to play games, I was all in.

As you know, that is still my philosophy: If they are going to hassle me, they are going to have to earn their money.

You will say even that last thing is minor, but I am not claiming to be a hardened criminal. I am not recommending you ignore all laws, join the mafia, and go out in a hail of bullets. I am telling you just a few of the most pointed incidents of my youth, as colorful examples.

Here's another short one, of the same type. When I moved from Austin to Amherst, MA, in 2000, I drove a Penske truck pulling my car behind it on a trailer. As in 2021, I did that to save money, and I did save over \$5000 each time. The car that they had tried to boot died soon thereafter from old age and my brother sold me his old Mazda for just \$1500. So that is what was on the trailer. I arrived in Amherst with an expired Texas driver's license, but didn't feel like going to the DMV in Massachusetts, so I never did. I also didn't bother to get Massachusetts plates. Mass has a raft of taxes and steep fees for things like that, and I didn't want to get on their records. They also have a state income tax, and didn't want to get on that list, either. As now, I had almost no income, but still. Best not to sign up for anything you don't want to be a part of.

Them: Don't you want to buy a pretty new license plate with shiny new numbers on it?

Me: Nah, already got one.

Them: You can get a picture of a lighthouse or a whale on it!

Me: Nah, don't need that.

Them: But yours doesn't have the right year on it.

Me: Yeah, neither does anything else I own. I like being retro.

So I drove for four years with expired plates, registration, and license. I almost never drove except to go to the market, which was in the next town, and I almost always drove there at night, to avoid the cops. I got pulled over once at night but somehow dodged the guy with a Jedi mindtrick. He even called my license in but I guess just for outstanding warrants. He must not have noticed the date on it.

My Mom did not find any of that amusing, I must admit, and I know a lot of my readers will ask what she asked: “Why would you put yourself through that over a few dollars? You just like to be difficult.”

No, I really was that poor, and I wanted to spend that money on other things. I didn't want the state telling me how to spend my money by sending me an endless line of bills for things I didn't need. The money I have saved by acting like this has been *very* substantial. Tens of thousands of dollars that I could spend in my own way, for things I actually wanted and that were truly useful to me. Things like books and painting supplies and clothes for my models. Plus, again, it was a matter of principle. I was practicing acting on principle on little things so that I could act on principle for the bigger things. That is how you do it. If you cave on the little things you end up caving on everything and end up a blob. This paper could be titled "How I Avoided Becoming a Blob". As with the Turning 60 paper, the subject here is how to avoid being crushed by the world. How to avoid having your spirit sucked out of you and your body turned into a dried-out husk. Job One: fight back. When anyone pushes on you, push back harder. Don't give an inch.\*

When I moved to Bruges, Belgium, in 2004, I was told I needed to register with the town and country, but I never did. A policeman visited me in the first months, but his surname happened to be Matthias so I guess he thought I was family. He asked me if I was going to get a job and I said no, and if I planned to use the medical services and I said no. I told him I was an artist and he could see all my paintings. He could see I was very healthy. He could tell I was just bringing money into the economy and not taking any out, so he didn't bother me again. I stayed there for three years on a three-month visa. Illegal, but not majorly so. The official at the airport checking my passport on the way out wasn't too happy, but what could he do? Deport me? I was already leaving.

So I think you can now see how I got here. I didn't become that guy overnight. I have been a royal pain in the ass to all authority from the beginning, getting worse every year. In my opinion, that is what it is to be a citizen in a Republic. You have to push back against the system everyday or it will run over you. The Republic has an automatic revert to tyranny built in, and the only way to prevent it is citizens asserting themselves. You have to question authority from an early age, standing on principle for smallish things, because if you can't do that you can't stand on principle for larger things later.

But it goes deeper than that, since it isn't fundamentally a question of government. It is a question of *who you are*. You have no chance getting on as a spiritual being in the cosmos unless you do it on your own terms. Doing what you are told and following rules is guaranteed to keep you (and society) in stasis. It is the antithesis of growth.

I knew at age 11 that it didn't matter if I won that city-wide art contest, for instance, because that wasn't really the point of the thing. The point was to create the best art I could, which I did. As far as the rules or the judges stood in the way of that, they were justly ignored as insignificant. I knew after the fact that my entry was better than any of the winners, since I could see them, so that was the personal take-away from it. Nothing could change that, not even the destruction of the piece. I had still drawn it regardless, and that couldn't be destroyed. That action and achievement had printed in my brain and soul and would be there always. It would remain a building block of my life no matter what.

Same with the map of Texas. The F meant nothing to me since I knew I didn't deserve it. The experience simply steeled me for larger negatives. Same for being kicked off the team, not making valedictorian, and so on. I got more by doing things my way than I lost by not doing them like everyone else. I learned I didn't need anyone else's approval as long as I was sure of my own. That was confirmed first in art, where my abilities and tastes trumped everyone around me from the earliest age. Those around me, even the adults, didn't even try to contest it, so I knew my confidence wasn't misplaced. By the time I was ten my art teachers were asking me for pointers. I remember my teacher



at the Lubbock Garden and Art Center asking me if I drew dark to light or light to dark. I told her neither one. I drew the most important things first and filled in from there.

That sort of early confidence, standing on actual works, was formative. It gave me the surety to trust my own abilities, feelings, and opinions. And that trust in myself gave me the stance to push back against the world on a wide range of topics, especially topics where I could stand on tangible success. Part of that pushback was ignoring nonsensical rules, laws, customs, common knowledge, and even “science”. Eventually I got to the point of taking nothing on faith, questioning everything, and believing only that which I could confirm myself in personal research. Which hasn't been much.

Specifically, those early artistic experiences gave me the mettle to later tell art professors at the University of Texas to stuff their recommendations, threats, and attempts at shaming, since their opinions meant nothing to me. Same for the magazines, museums, critics, and all other self-appointed experts in a dead field. I knew from the cradle that art was what *I* would make of it. In other words, it was up to born artists to recreate the field of art from ashes, not writers, critics, and the other no-talent loudmouth creeps that now make up the art world. They are the ones that had burned art to the ground, so the only thing to do was to drive around them with the proper sneer, running them under the wheels if they didn't get out of the way fast enough.

You can see how my run-ins with the various Mr. Mizes of the world would tend to give me a low opinion of authority. I learned at a very young age that those set up as experts, teachers, gurus, or sages were almost never what they appear to be. The experts that surrounded me at age 14 collapsed into quivering piles of jello on the first touch, and the same can be said of the experts that surround me now. That doesn't mean there is no truth or expertise in the world, it just means you have to look beyond the appointed paths for it. The mainstream is now an utter fraud, the first alternative ditto, so you have to graduate to the third path before you even begin to hit some reality.

I know what the reaction of some will be to this. It is the same reaction whenever I tell my stories or defend myself or give asked-for advice, or when my name comes up on a forum. “That guy is just making excuses for his poverty, trying to make it look romantic or something. I don't need someone to tell me how to be poor my whole life, I can do that on my own. Imagine setting yourself up as some sort of guru, selling 'secrets of my success' handbooks while admitting you have no family, job, or mainstream support.” Yeah, amazing isn't it? Even if that were all it was, you have to admit it would be novel. Boldly anti-American in its contempt for money and institutional recognition, isn't it? But of course that isn't what is going on here. To start with, I am not selling anything. If I were I wouldn't be poor, so that cut doesn't cut. It is a bald contradiction. Nor am I claiming to have everything or to have done everything right, and I think I am pretty good at limiting my topics and commentary to things I know something about. Beyond art and physics, one of the things I know a great deal about is living in the margins, off the grid, on my own terms. You may not see that as a great success story, but I do, and so do many of my readers. I remember in my 20s, everyone told me I couldn't do this. I couldn't be an independent writer or an artist or a scientist, since those don't exist anymore. That is a bygone age and the life I wanted to live went out with cobbling and barrel making. Even back in the old days, independent writers and artists and scientists were **rich guys**, supported by other rich guys. I was not a rich guy, so I had better think of something else to dream about. And the idea that I could be all three, artist, writer, and scientist: madness. Megalomania if not outright insanity.

Yes, so I guess that is the biggest rule I have broken. May be up there with the biggest rule anyone has ever broken. Because here we are 40 years later, I am nearing retirement age, and I never had to get a “real job”. And yes, I do see that as a smashing success, because it means I never had to work for the

man or compromise in any way. I did what *I* wanted to do every day for 40 years, and how many can say that? I set my own goals and I hit them, *all* of them. In fact, I surpassed them by huge margins. I look around me in utter disbelief, since my expectations and hopes were so much lower than this back in the day. My critic will scoff and say, "You hoped to be even poorer than you are now?" No, I initially hoped to be able to paint what I wanted and make a subsistence living for it. That seemed like heaven to me at 23, since all I wanted was my freedom. I didn't need or even want fancy houses or cars, but I did need absolute freedom to pursue my own projects. At the time, I had no conception what those projects might be in future, but I had a strong feeling I needed to make room for them. Within two years of painting full time, I had already hit that goal, so I expanded it. Did that mean I wanted to sell more paintings for more money? No, although that is what I think everyone else would have done. It is what my colleagues did. There are only so many good paintings you can paint in a year: after that you become a hack and just churn them out for the sales. I had no desire to do that, and actively avoided it. So I looked for something else to do. I took up the piano again, but that was just a hobby. More than an hour a day bored me. Becoming a working realist had given me a quick education in the art market and in the tyranny of Modernism in general, so I took up my cudgels there as a writer and polemicist. It was a job that needed to be done and I felt I was the right person for it. I also had other writing projects, some of them fiction, but in that period the most important work I was doing was in what I called counter-criticism, battling the critics and other writers of Modernism. Not only was it a glorious battle, but it prepared me for bigger battles to come.

By 2000 I was feeling limited again and was setting new goals. Were any of them financial? No. Although the ceiling is low for realism, there were things I could have done to make a lot more money. But each of them I saw as a step backward: not only would I be taking projects I had no artistic interest in and working with people I didn't like, I would be destroying my own love of art and my inspiration, burning that for what was to me meaningless advancement.\*\* I didn't even consider it advancement, since while my bank account would be advancing, I would be diminishing. So I kept to my own art projects while looking for something to fill my spare time, which was considerable. When I moved to Amherst in 2000, I kept up my counter-criticism, even expanding it by writing for the Art Renewal Center. But I still had free time to fill and was looking for something important to fill it. Enter physics, another old love like the piano.

Although my mother was a mathematician, I had always seen myself as an artist first. I still do, to be honest, and look forward to returning to painting after my next move. But science is a strong second, and the visual science I do is almost like art. It doesn't bore me after a couple of hours like the piano. As with painting, the more difficult the science is, the more I like it. I don't do landscapes because they are too easy. But painting faces and hands in a naturalistic manner is just as rewarding as it is difficult. It is the same with real physics, which requires a visual and mechanical understanding of Nature few seem to have. Like real art, it is based on innate talent and is not something you can get from a book or even a teacher. Yes, it requires long hours of work, but as with these papers I write, it is work that rises up from the self. It doesn't come from the outside: from computers or committees or even laboratories. It comes from THINKING. From sitting and staring at the ceiling. From turning the problem over and over in your mind like a lump of clay in your hands, looking at it from all sides until something pops.

In 2003 I had some windfall, so what did I do? Put some money down on a house? Buy a car? Not even. I sold my car and moved to Bruges. Why? Because I wanted to. It was the most beautiful place I could think to move, and beauty is very important to me. I thought it would be good for my art, and it was. I thought it would be good for my science, and it was. Why was it good for my science? Does Bruges have a great science library? Not to my knowledge. Bruges was good for my science for the

same reason it was good for my art: it took me even further away from the Modern world and all its distractions. I was out of the US and all its post-911 bullshit, for one thing. Bruges isn't part of the Modern world: it is barely a part of Europe, being a place out-of-time. There is hardly anything to do there but work, other than drink beer and eat waffles. So I was free to get lost in my own ideas, which turned out to be just what was needed to re-invigorate physics. It was the one thing no one else had tried.

No one else had considered the possibility (strong probability) both Relativity and Quantum Mechanics were fatally flawed in a multitude of ways, and couldn't be unified for that reason. All other theorists were in academia, where that idea wasn't allowed. So physics had been locked down for many decades, rotting from lack of movement.

I remember going back to Lubbock for my 20<sup>th</sup> highschool reunion in 2001, since I was already working on the Relativity side of that by then. My science club and other nerdy friends from the old days weren't impressed by my new artistic ways, my long hair, my open shirt and hippie beads, so I tried to tell them I was working on some interesting physics things as well, sending papers to *PRL* and so on. They couldn't have been less supportive or interested, once again feeding me that old line about how I couldn't do this. Same song, millionth verse. Our valedictorian came up to me and personally let me know how disappointed she was that I hadn't become something important like a scientist or doctor. She was an accountant. She actually flicked my necklace contemptuously. Another woman, who had asked me to the band dance as a junior, told me in great solemnity that unless you published work in top peer reviewed journals it was as if you had never done the work. You might as well throw it in the street. When I mentioned the internet, she scoffed: the internet was nothing, she assured me. No one would ever read anything I wrote.

You have to laugh. [I so love proving people wrong.](#)

So I guess you can see why I am like I am. I am both the product of my environment, and not. I am not, since my environment didn't encourage me or enable me to do anything I have done. My environment would have preferred I do anything else, and told me so. With only a couple of exceptions (like my Latin teacher), my environment did everything it could to squash me. Lubbock, Texas, was not exactly the artistic or scientific center of the universe, to put it nicely. I remember the guide to colleges and universities in 1980, written out of Harvard and Yale, described Texas Tech in Lubbock as “a vacuum within a vacuum”, which, though apt, would have been a lot more cutting if Harvard and Yale hadn't been the same sort of vacuums. Academia was then, and is even more now, a pressure cooker with no pressure—just a big pot with a lot of arbitrary rules and forms posing as an institution. The amount of free-thinking that goes on in all the universities combined could not power an oven light.

But the way I AM a product of my environment is in my attitude toward this world I grew up in. My sharp, adversarial nature has been perfected in traversing these narrow halls, and in driving over or around all these people assuring me I wasn't who I knew I was. It also explains my dual nature, I think, which I will admit can veer from highly charismatic to the opposite on a dime. I had long periods of both as a child, being the sunny center of everything from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grades, and then switching almost overnight to the awkward outcast from 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades. I mostly switched back in college, when I came into my looks again, but by then I had learned how people really are. As a child, I had performed without considering my audience: I assumed they were all wishing me well, as I was wishing them. But I soon learned it wasn't so.

That experience was annealing, since it steeled me for my reception in the greater world of science and the internet. I was not shocked to be confronted by the hordes of rigid mandarins, stick-in-the-muds, and envious little boys who I had already been ignoring as inconsequential for years. If I was shocked by anything, it was that as I advanced up the various ladders, these people seemed to keep to the same level of argument. I had expected my foes to get bigger, but they never did. They remained at a highschool level, and in the 24 years since that first science paper I haven't been seriously challenged by anyone. There simply isn't anyone left. In art and physics, it is a ghost world. A zombie world. The computers now run physics and the physicists are just their keepers.

So what can you learn from all this? What is in it for you? If the governors were allowed to speak my name, no doubt they would assure you that even if I am what I claim to be, I am an atavism, a reversion, a blip in the Matrix, an unrepeatabe and unfortunate accident, a one-time confluence of genes or chance events. But although I am supposed to be an egomaniac, I don't agree. I don't think I am that rare. I think that with a little counter-education, a lot more people could be doing what I am doing. Which is why I take the time to write these things, encouraging you to break the forms that bind you. Never listen to those who tell you something can't be done, or that it can't be done without money, or that it can't be done on your terms. I tell you it can, and I know.

\*On anything important. In a relationship, yes, you have to compromise on some things. You learn to let the little things slide. It may surprise you, but I don't like to fight in relationships. I prefer it very peaceful in my house. So I just let most things go. In my last relationship—which was four years—we almost never fought.

\*\*For instance? Well, I was asked by my agent to paint Earl Campbell's portrait for a big fee, but turned it down. I told my agent I was a painter of women, not of sports stars, and that he should try to get me some commissions in that direction. That is where my interest and talent was, not in big ugly men. He said, "So you don't want to paint blacks?" I said, "No, that has nothing to do with it. I also don't want to paint rich white guys in business suits. It bores me and I am not good at it." Thing is, "in the business" you aren't supposed to turn down any work, especially with famous people, and especially when you are young. So my peers did what they were told. I didn't. Art was mine and I wasn't going to let anyone ruin it for me. I have never regretted it. I am proud not to have worked with the rich to any real extent. I still refuse sales to this day. I have had big offers for my work from all over the world, especially Russia, but these people won't tell me who they are. They want to buy through corporate fronts. They could be oligarchs for all I know, and probably are. I don't want the Phoenicians getting my work. They probably will anyway, but not while I am alive to prevent it.