

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Peter Schwartzman

Nothing gets me riled up as much as...

1. People who throw litter out their car windows. I have seen this done so regularly I now feel discouraged by humankind. People of all ages do it and often so nonchalantly that one can only think that they see it as a perfectly normal and acceptable activity.

Two items seem most commonly involved: cigarette butts and fast food packaging. Don't all vehicles have ashtrays in them? Is there some relationship between the quality of one's food and the willingness to disregard others, the environment, and the law?

Realistically, one small cigarette butt and one paper box (for French fries) isn't likely to mean much. But as with all things, if too many people partake in this behavior, lots of damage can accrue. And as I've learned during a few neighborhood cleanups in the past year, there are way too many people engaging in this careless and disrespectful act. My suggestion: if people are caught in the act doing this, their names should be taken and posted in the newspaper and the city's website. Perhaps this shame would send the necessary message.

2. People who forget to turn off their cell phones during a special performance. Obviously, I am biased on this one as I don't own (and hope never to own) a cell phone. Thus, when the ringtones start whining, I can rest assured that it isn't me. Yet, why can't people be more considerate of others? If you are attending an event, wouldn't you have enough respect to turn to your phone to vibrate? Also, if an event is happening in a dark auditorium, please leave your phones in your bag or pocket. Opening them up to check for pages, texts, or even the time, greatly disrupts the atmosphere. This past spring I went to such an event and you would have thought it was the 4th of July with all the cell phone flashing that was taking place.

3. People who harass you about what you eat. I hear that vegetarians are known for berating people for eating meat—trying to make them feel guilty or immoral. I've certainly witnessed this. But actually, more often, I witness "meat eaters" question/jibe/challenge, in a mildly harassing tone, vegetarians or vegans about not eating meat. (I should point out that I am biased here as well, since I've been an ovo-lacto—eggs and milk okay—vegetarian since Oct 2002.)

Based on this mode of behavior by so many, I sense that some see people as threats to themselves if they eat differently from them, especially when it pertains to "meat" or "no-meat." So, I ask, if you are someone that hassles people about their choice of food, try to recognize that it is a touchy subject and, thus, please deal with it gently and carefully. Personally, I enjoy when people ask me why I am a vegetarian, but I don't expect it nor do I think they should care. Similarly, I don't go around asking people why they eat meat.

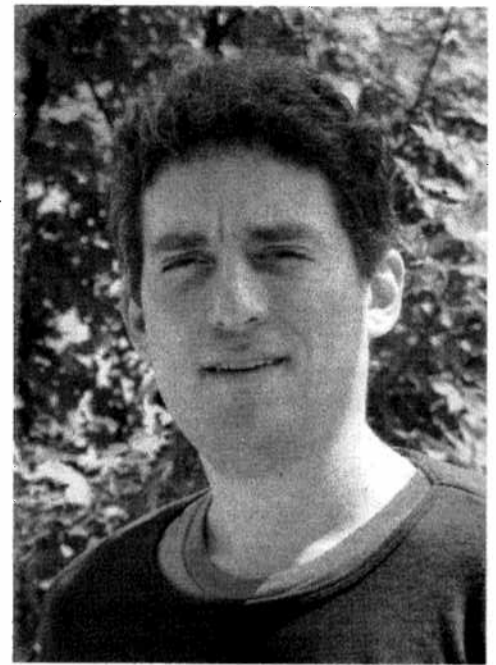
4. People that blame the victim for everything. I'm sure you've heard the refrain: People are poor or unsuccessful because they don't have what it takes or because they have made some bad decisions in life. In short, they are to blame for their poverty or their hardship. This emphasis on individual responsibility relieves the greater society from facing its shortcomings. The truth is that the playing field remains far from even, though strides have been made. Thus, every individual's situation must be judged on its own merits. However, details such as race, class, gender, handicaps/challenges and family life/circumstance, must be included in the discussion. So often, I hear categorical dismissals of people without such consideration. The classic example is the extraordinary pain

and suffering endured by so many poor people in Louisiana and Mississippi in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Blaming them for not evacuating or not heeding warnings shifts focus unfairly away from the terrible circumstances they were abandoned to—such as, no access to public transportation, insufficient supplies at "safe" havens, incredible delay in emergency aid, et cetera. Remember, it is very easy to "blame the victim" because it absolves us all of community responsibility. Better to be actively involved in improving support for victims as, and when, it's needed.

5. People who are hopelessly pessimistic. Life is full of possibilities of all kinds. Too often, we neglect to think outside the "box" and, therefore, overlook potential pathways and possible solutions. For example, what if someone declared that she was going to help Galesburg become a national hub of cultural exchange? Many

might take such a suggestion as misguided. Others would flatly see it as unrealistic. "Remember, this is Galesburg," they might retort. But, I ask, where does their pessimism leave us? What if she, and others, worked towards her stated goal? Wouldn't it be a worthwhile enterprise even if they fell short in a few areas? Their efforts to invigorate the community should be applauded, not casually dismissed or summarily rejected. Right? I commend those in our community that work tirelessly to make Galesburg the best city it can be and those that are willing to think outside the norm and dream. If you don't want to be a joiner or a supporter, at least don't be a detractor (unless, of course, there is a compelling reason to be).

Maybe I am just too uptight or intolerant? If you think so, please share. If you sympathize with any of the "peeves" mentioned above, share that as well.

**BACKTRACKING**

Terry Hogan

Homeburg revisited

George Fitch, among other things, wrote a novel titled "Old Siwash." It was a bit of a tongue-in-cheek, slightly bigger-than life story based loosely on his student days at Knox College. Little did George know that the choice of the name "Siwash" would, in a few generations, run head on into the realm of political correctness. Knox College turned its back on history and on its own alumni and "Old Siwash" was cast aside. I have addressed my views and the views of a fair number of other Knox alumni in the past. I need not do that again here.

Instead, it is time to visit, or perhaps revisit, the mythical town of Homeburg. Homeburg is also a creation of George Fitch. In 1915, "Homeburg Memories" appears and one can see more than a few similarities between Homeburg and Galesburg. Homeburg is a small, Midwestern town whose life turns on the coming and going of the passenger train. Few secrets last long in Homeburg. The comings and the goings of folks are tracked by the common folk and the newspaper reporter, all watching who arrives and departs on the 4:11pm train at Homeburg.

On reading the book, you can readily place the mythical Homeburg in Illinois. One of the first things to be discovered by Homeburg residents of new arrivals from the 4:11 train is whether they "pull for" the Chicago Cubs or the White Sox. The railroad, we learn, is the "Great F. C. & L. Railroad" which one might associate with the C.B. & Q. railroad.

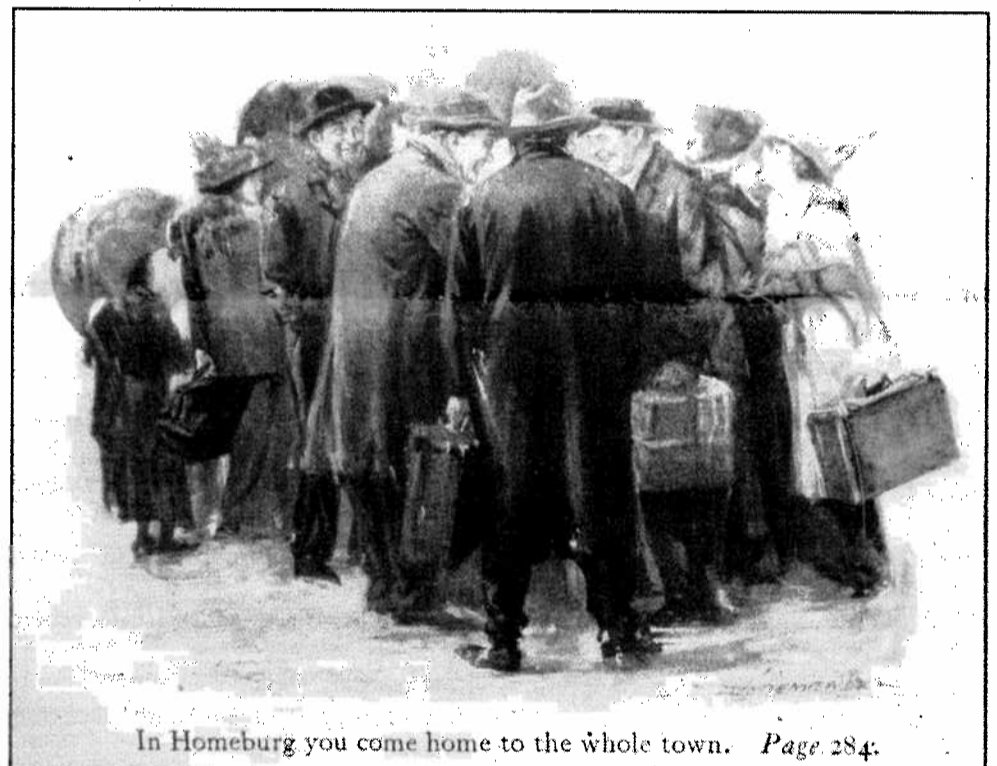
Perhaps the most telling aspect of the story is when Fitch writes about "the servant question." He is generally poking fun at the self-proclaimed ruling class in Homeburg, but the Galesburg roots become apparent:

"A hired girl in Homeburg is a very reasonable creature. We never have any trouble with them, and they have very little with us. We usually catch them green and wild, just off the steamer, and they come to us equipped with a thorough working knowledge of the Swedish language and nothing else to speak of."

With the reference to the Swedish immigrant hired girls, it clearly places Homeburg in or near a center of transplanted Swedish culture. Fitch does everything but place Old Siwash in Homeburg.

So how does Galesburg (Oops, Homeburg) get treated by George Fitch? Just a sample will suffice:

"News in Homeburg? News in a town where



an ice-cream social is a sensation and a dog fight suspends business for three hours? News in a town where it takes a couple five years to work up a wedding and seven kinds of wedding cake is the only news in it? Where the city marshal hasn't made an arrest for two years because no one has done anything after nine P. M. except snore, and where they have to put up the lamps in pairs to keep them from getting lonesome?"

I suppose this may be why I haven't heard an upwelling of support to embrace Homeburg as being Galesburg. But in a town that is struggling to bring a few more dollars into the city limits from the cars that speeds by on I-74, perhaps it should. In bad economic times, one cannot literally afford to take oneself too seriously.

Welcome to George Fitch's Homeburg. Stop in and let us help you make some good memories of when towns noticed your arrival. We still do. Stop in, slow down, and watch a few trains go by. Meet a few of the locals and find out how life was, when it was slower. And be sure and drive by Old Siwash where Old Main still stands. Old Main has seen it all: from Abe Lincoln to George Fitch.

Homeburg, your home away from home.

