

WEDNESDAY: GRADUATE

*To the bastard talking down to me
Your whipping boy calamity
Cross your fingers
I'm going to knock it all down
Can I graduate*

– excerpt, Graduate by Third Eye Blind

Well. That took a lot longer and was a much bigger pain in the rear than I expected. I've earned another notch in my belt, the proud parent of yet another high school graduate who left school this past week with less to look forward to than his parents did. Observation of this right of passage consisted of too many people crammed into too-small venues intent on traditional American celebratory excess.

I wonder yet days later if a particular family member's vocal chords will ever recover from their screaming joy.

Crossing my fingers this kid can knock it all down when he next graduates.

Tick-tock

Meanwhile, I'm counting the days...only 87 days until my kid starts college.

And only 36 days left for the 114th Congress to work in D.C. before the general election, if I've counted correctly from the House majority leader's calendar (pdf).

36 days – not counting today – to fix the Flint Water Crisis. Check my math, maybe I'm off a few days, but that's not a lot of time give or take a few days. Flint residents are still experiencing problems with their water, which will only be fully resolved when the damaged pipes are completely replaced.

Will this Congress shunt the responsibility off to the 115th? Or will they buck up and do their job by people most in need? Hey, novel idea

here, since most of the time between now and election day will be spent in district – for the House members, this means campaigning. Why don't you folks actually fix the problem ASAP and then tell your constituents what a great job you've done while you're on the campaign trail?

Tick-tock.

American exceptionalism and EU air

Holy cats. Air pollution in the EU was responsible for 400,000 premature deaths – in 2010 alone.

I can't wrap my head around that number. That's massive. I can't imagine how much money is spent on health care for the people who die, let alone the even larger number of people who are merely sick from air pollution. And yet the EU member states are quibbling over how and when to implement new regulations to clean their air.

If you recall the video in which two citizen investigators discussed both VW's corporate infrastructure and the emissions controls defeat system, you know that EU automakers don't fear EU regulators. Their legal system is lax, and they don't have an effective overarching federal system to backstop the laws of individual member states. The fines assessed for violations are a pittance to nonexistent in some EU states. You just know VW's bean counters are cost averaging the fines across all the vehicles they've sold.

What worked to force the EU and member states to take real action is the U.S. – both its emissions standards at state and federal level and its laws with regard to fraud have forced the EU to snap out of its complacency and reexamine its own emissions standards and enforcement. There's your American exceptionalism (even if contemporary GOP thwarts environmental law every chance it gets, being fossil fuel's yappy little attack dog).

But the current dithering and weaseling by some EU states continue in spite of ridiculously high mortality rates and legal costs cutting into the profitability of businesses like VW. It may take

an even firmer hand here in the U.S., or we'll see more EU backsliding impacting us directly.

VW got away with selling those cheating passenger diesel cars in EU and the U.S.; as long as it took for a tiny U.S.-based research group to discover the cheat, what's to keep VW (or another EU-based automaker) from trying to slip another model under our radar? We know the EU won't catch it first. Put the screws to them now to discourage any further attempts. They've already killed or sickened more than enough of our own citizens because they weren't caught and punished at home.

Odd lots

No theme here, just interesting things swept into my feed.

- NY Fed approved 5 of 35 attempts on Bangladesh bank (Reuters) – Still mulling this one over days later. Why is the SWIFT system so brittle, relying on spelling errors to block illegal transfers? Something about this situation still stinks of human culpability.
- U.S. military blocking GPS signal in southern CA (AVweb) – Odd. Says it's for testing. Just happened to block yesterday. Was there anything going on in CA yesterday?
- At least one species of fish can identify individual human faces (Phys.org) – Yeesh. One of the creepiest things I ever saw was a

tankful of fish following humans. Could they recognize them individually, too?

- Long read: Review of *Hitler: Ascent* by Neal Ascherson (London Review of Books) – Worthwhile read; notes that much of what was attributed to Hitler was the work of his followers ‘‘Working towards the Führer’’. Could this same effect happen now? Has it already begun?

Whew. That’s enough to get me over the hump today. Catch you tomorrow!