

All Good Things...

As the proverb goes, "All good things must come to an end." Some of my classically education friends might think of Chaucer... (Troilus and Criseyde). I prefer the reference to the final episode of Star Trek: The Next Generation. The meaning is the same. Now is the time.

Now is the time for Mustang Journals to cease operations. Why now?

I'm spending the majority of "Mustang time" on petty nonsense. What nonsense you say?

In the 1950s, America was obsessed with a vast communist conspiracy.

In the 1980s, America was obsessed with a vast satanic cult conspiracy, which was supposed to control all criminal behavior.

Today, America is obsessed with a vast conspiracy of academic fraud.

Not from a Wisconsin senator, but from a Spanish major turned librarian. He has become the self-proclaimed authority in all subjects (finance, law, economics, biology, physics, etc.) and his accusations of impropriety are final and irreversible.

Just like McCarthyism, a lot of good people are being hurt by the actions of the masses who blindly and uncritically follow the librarian.

His accusations are like quicksand. Once pushed into it you sink, and there is no chance for redemption.

Interestingly, there are no specific criticisms for each publisher. That is strange for a blogger that posts every single day to claim that he lacks the time to address each publisher as to their faults.

He makes a bullet list of accused publishers, and a vague list of overlapping and contradictory reasons why a publisher might be on "the list."

For example, he claims that if a publisher charges "too much" (not defined) the publisher is predatory and should be avoided. If the publisher charges "too little" (again, not defined) the publisher is not financially viable and should be avoided.

How do you escape this quicksand, should you ever be pushed? It turns out there is a solution, a very ironic one. Follow me for a couple of steps.

To prove a publisher is worthy and should be removed from “the list”, the publisher needs to join one of a couple of associations of the librarian’s choosing.

What are the standards for these associations? Lots of meetings, participation, etc.?

Nope. You write a check. For about \$1000 (now and each following year) you can be in an approved association, and your reputation is instantly improved.

Hmmmmm. Here’s the irony. I thought the problem he was trying to remedy was predatory practices. His system sounds predatory to me.

Let’s do the math. Over five hundred publishers are accused on “the list”. Each must pay \$1000 (every year) to get out of the quicksand.

(Math: 500 publishers x \$1000 per publisher per year = \$500,000 per year).

If the public believes the librarian and “the list” then someone is going to make \$500,000 each year. Where does the money go? Does the “list master” get any of the \$500,000 a year? That would be a nice bonus for a librarian’s salary.

The truth is I don’t know where the money goes, and neither do you. The money is obviously not being spent on just maintaining a website. Someone is making a fortune off this so-called conspiracy of fraudulent publishers.

America has seen similar results in the previous conspiracy fears. During McCarthyism, lots of people got their reputations tarnished, some permanently. Lots of people try to profit from the hysteria and the hope of avoiding the tarnish. (For example in the 1980s, law enforcement calendars were crowded with training programs on how to identify the satanic cults in your neighborhoods... for a price).

I find myself spending more and more time on this nonsense and less and less time on my interest, helping new professors discover the intimidating world of academic scholarship.

I often get the question: “You’re a lawyer, why don’t you sue him?”

This is an excellent teaching moment. Yes, I am a lawyer. Here is how the legal system operates.

If you sue someone successfully, you do not go to court and pick up a basket of cash. You don’t even get a check. You get a piece of paper that states the defendant owes you money. Nothing more.

What if the defendant does not have any money (in an account in his/her own name)? Well, that is the concept of being “judgement-proof.” You can’t get money from someone who doesn’t have any. All you get for your time and effort is the piece of paper. Suing someone who is judgement-proof is nothing but an exercise in futility. And anyone who knows me knows I don’t like exercise.

I know this dates me, but I am reminded of the climax of the movie “War Games” –

“The only way to win is to not play the game.”

I am very fortunate. I only hope everyone can find the solace that I have. I am in a great place with a job I truly love, friendly peers, supportive environment, wonderful family and friends. I am done with this game and the librarian who manages it.

I started Mustang Journals with an inheritance from my grandfather. Since Mustang was a break-even enterprise, I can take that money and spend it elsewhere. I think I will use it on my two kids in college. My grandfather only attended school to the eighth grade, but he worked hard and saved his money so that his son (my father) could attend college. I followed those footsteps. Now my kids are in college. I think my grandfather would have loved that his savings helped his great-grandchildren attend college. He was a very quiet man, but I’m sure that would have made him smile.

These are my words.

Marty Ludlum

P.S. I will do something the “librarian” will never do. I will help you. I can remember being a new academic and how intimidating the process can be. I can review your academic paper and give you my thoughts. No cost. No obligation. (I don’t have anything to sell). I had some experienced folks help me in my academic life and I want to return the favor.

Unlike the “librarian” I do not pretend to be the world’s authority in all subjects. But I will be the first to tell you I’m outside of my discipline areas. I promise to give you constructive comments for your paper. Contact me if you’re interested at mustangjournals@aol.com