

Substantial Disruption



The Sky Is Falling

By Mike Tully

How many advocates for arming school teachers have seen a teacher go nuts in the classroom? Not “cut loose and act crazy” nuts, but in the pathological sense. Show of hands? Nobody? Let me tell you about Sister Mary Nowhere.

I call her “Sister Mary Nowhere” to protect her privacy, assuming she’s still around. She was a real person, a Sister of Charity who taught at a parochial high school. Her meltdown came in a room filled with nature’s most fidgety, frustrating and unforgiving creatures: high school sophomores. Sister Mary Nowhere was thrown to the wolves.

Mental illness can come on gradually and it’s not easy to determine the point at which the ore cart is shoved into the Crazy Mine, but I think I know when Sister Mary Nowhere was shoved: during Sophomore English class. She was walking between a row of desks and the outside wall with windows when she spied an object she didn’t recognize in an unoccupied desk. She reached down, picked it up, turned it over, turned it over again, raised it to a higher angle to get a better look. She was the only person in the room who didn’t know what it was. Initially shocked when Sister Mary Nowhere began to physically examine and fondle the object, some students began to giggle. Most of us did our best to keep from laughing out loud, although we teared up from the strain. Sister Mary Nowhere detected a disturbance in the force.

Wanting to get to the bottom of things, she asked the one student she knew would give her an honest answer: yours truly. I was on board with racing to the bottom if that’s what it took to release the pressure on thirty sophomores about to explode like the Hindenburg. “Michael,” she said, holding the object in front of her face and looking directly at me. “What is this?”

I swallowed. “It’s kinda like underwear,” I said, as the room exploded into hysteria. Sister Mary Nowhere was brandishing an athletic supporter. She dropped it like a hot coal, turning the color of hot coal herself. Poor Sister Mary Nowhere was sent around the bend by a jockstrap.

She was never the same. Our next lesson was based on the famous Chicken Little “[The Sky Is Falling](#)” story. We weren’t sure why she was teaching high school sophomores about Chicken Little but assumed she had a reason. Then Sister Mary Nowhere began to recite. “The sky is falling said Chicken Licken,” recited Sister Mary Nowhere. “The sky is falling said Henny Penny. The sky is falling said Goosey Loosey. The sky is falling said Foxy Loxey.” On and on she went, reciting the same verses over and over as we slowly began to realize she was unraveling. The next day brought the same thing, “the sky is falling” over and over and over again. Then the day after that. After a fourth day of falling sky, Sister Mary Nowhere took an indefinite leave of absence. The last we heard she was off somewhere making ashtrays.

If we had lived in the world envisioned by the NRA and similar gun radicals, Sister Mary Nowhere might have been armed. While she probably wouldn't have kept her gun after wandering off into "Chicken Little" land, nothing would have kept one away from her before then. That's one of the problems with the "keep guns away from the mentally ill" theory. They frequently acquire the guns before anybody realizes they are mentally ill. When that happens, we measure the impact in a body count.

One may argue that basing gun policy on the Sister Mary Nowhere episode is not good governance. A single event rarely justifies a change in the law. But at least Sister Mary Nowhere actually existed, unlike the fantasies of the NRA's Wayne LaPierre and others with their fever dream of a fully weaponized society. In Wayne's world the sky is always falling. If he were king Chicken Little would be the national bird.

Consider how LaPierre characterized proponents of stricter gun laws when he [recently spoke](#) at the Conservative Political Action Conference: "Their goal is to eliminate the Second Amendment and our firearms freedoms so they can eliminate all individual freedoms." Those who don't share his anarchistic philosophy on gun ownership don't really care about keeping children safe from firearms, he argues. Their ultimate goal is take away all your freedoms. *The sky is falling!*

[Writing for Daily Caller](#) in 2013, LaPierre fantasized Al-Qaeda pouring over the border, government confiscation of all privately-owned guns, the collapse of civilization, and a nation without police. He conjured up these horrors in service of his lone super power: scaring the crap out of easily scared people who spend their discretionary income on more guns than they need. He tells them the sky is falling and listens for the *ka-ching!* when they stampede into the sporting goods store.

LaPierre suggested a gun would come in handy should the sky actually fall, writing: "Hurricanes. Tornadoes. Riots. Terrorists. Gangs. Lone criminals. These are perils we are sure to face—not just maybe. It's not paranoia to buy a gun. It's survival." He'd shoot a tornado?

The NRA and LaPierre have called for maintaining armed security guards at every school in the US and agree with Donald Trump that some teachers should be armed. If parochial schools were included, who would deny a gun to a sweet, sad little nun with flowing black vestments and a bonnet? What can go wrong when you arm somebody who thinks the sky is falling?