

# Life lessons from a lovely, lazy loaf of a cat

Peyton Britt, Opinion editor | February 25, 2021



If you know me at all, you know that I absolutely adore my cat. I talk about him, at length, at just about any given opportunity. From his sparkling, peridot eyes, to his snow-white chin, his berry red nose, his sandy, spotted, expansive belly and his lustrous grey and black striped coat, there is not a thing about him I find less than perfect.

Although his true breed and genetic composition are unknown, he has the characteristic Maine coon “M” marking on his forehead. Like Maine coons, he is also quite large, and his long body and tail have, over the years, expanded into something quite impressive — the darling fellow is around 28 pounds or so, with a waistline measuring nearly the same as mine. Please note that I am aware that it is not healthy for a housecat to be so extremely fat, and that over winter break, I have implemented a strict diet plan for him in the hopes of helping him shed a few pounds.

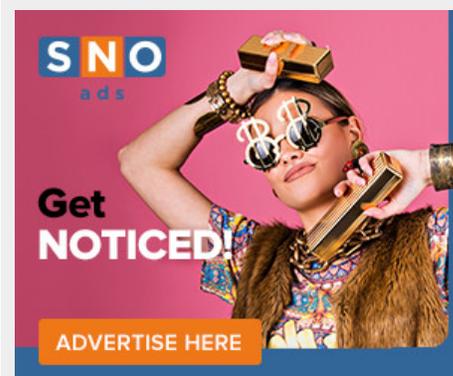
Because of his obesity, he is not able to clean himself very well. As a result, his fur can become matted and plagued by dandruff if no one takes care of it.

Fortunately, I have discovered that waterless cat shampoo exists, and it even comes in lavender scent! Using this shampoo, as well as three different brushes, — one for the undercoat, one for the topcoat, and one for mat detangling as needed — I have discovered a very amusing fact: unlike other cats, who flee at the mere sight of the age-old disciplinary tool of the spray bottle, Gus does not give a single hoot about being spritzed with liquids. In fact, he seems to find the process mildly amusing, if anything.

He is not alone in this; I also take pleasure in the process of grooming Gus. I used to view the task as an annoying obligation or chore, but as Gus ages, I have learned many things from him. For one, I have learned to value all the time I have to spend with Gus before he passes



Peyton Britt



nim. For one, I have learned to value all the time I have to spend with Gus before he crosses the rainbow bridge. When my family adopted Gus, I was 4 years old, so he and I have grown up together. Just as Gus has grown from being a skittish kitten small enough to fit in the palm of your hand, with ears so large one could only hope that he would grow into them (he did), into his current form, so too have I grown from my own equivalent of kittenhood into my adult self.

In my own process of growing up, I believe Gus has been a formative influence over who I am today. For example, I accredit my hatred of vacuum cleaners to Gus, specifically because of an incident in which I, having observed that Gus was deeply afraid of the awful howling sound the machines emit, tried to comfort him by holding him. He lashed out at me, leaving bloody scratches down the length of my arm. I do not blame him for acting as such — it was his instinct, and he did not know any better — but I do blame him for the fact that the sound of a vacuum puts me on edge to this day.

Another lesson I have learned from Gus is the value of taking care of those who cannot take care of themselves. In his old age, he has become more demanding, for lack of a better word. Still, I do not mind, because I know that he is reliant on me, that his happiness and well-being lies largely in my hands. That it is within my power to better his world, I see as a blessing and a gift: through small acts of caring, I can make a tangible, meaningful and significant impact on the life of an innocent creature who deserves nothing but the best.

There is nothing I would not do for Gus, and there is nothing I expect in return for my love. When people talk about choosing a cat to adopt, either from a shelter or from a previous owner, I often hear youth, lack of health issues and playfulness discussed as the qualities for which prospective adoptive cat parents look. I totally understand why this is — kittens are adorable and have more life left in them, various health issues can be pretty expensive and some people want pets who are active companions.

On the other hand, Gus has taught me to love older cats just as much, if not more, than kittens. I have learned to appreciate having a mellow fellow as a “roommate,” rather than your typical energetic playmate. Although Gus, and many other older cats, does not really do a whole lot, I deeply value his subtle personality and the calm, regal energy given by his presence. It breaks my heart a little bit to know that old, fat, lazy cats face the risk of never getting adopted as people pick shelters clean of kittens. I know if, due to some horrific circumstances, Gus ended up at a shelter, he would likely remain there until death just because of his age, weight and other various quirks — and what a shame that would be, because he is a remarkably beautiful friend to have.

From the day we adopted him, Gus has been my best friend. I say this without so much as a note of irony — no one else has been by my side with such constancy, love, patience and willingness to listen to my adolescent woes. Now Gus is well into his golden years at nearly 17 years old, and as I think about adopting another cat once he inevitably passes, I will not shy away from picking out a cranky, lazy, obese or elderly cat, because those characteristics are not undesirable but rather natural. Every part of a cat's life is immensely precious and delightful.

The gratitude and love I have for my darling Gus, A.K.A “Mr. Handsome,” goes beyond what I can express in mere written word, but I hope that in the writing of my appreciation that I can at least impart to a reader some fragment of the invaluable feline wisdom that has been so graciously given to me by my favorite living creature ever to exist.

## About the Contributor



**Peyton Britt, Opinion Editor**

Peyton Britt is a junior philosophy major with a double minor in English and political science. This is her first year on the Campus staff, where she serves...

48 Comments

## 48 Responses to “Life lessons from a lovely, lazy loaf of a cat”

- M Wright on February 27th, 2021 1:37 pm



I want to say how absolutely wonderful this article was to me. The same thoughts, feelings that I felt for my feline best friend.

Sadly he passed over rainbow bridge last month after going into renal failure. Even the thought of another cat taking his place just sent me into a tailspin. He was 2 months short of 6 years old & was as important to me as my grandchildren. You get that & I thank you.

- Suzan on February 27th, 2021 2:34 pm



Loved reading the life story of mr H. I too have an older cat I raised from a kitten.

She l'd not a main coin but she does have a strong personality but never says a word about her long lazy days because the cat has her tongue. I also see the inner beauty of an older cat. The shelters loss was your gain.

## S

- Peggy Cowling on February 27th, 2021 8:57 pm



Thank you for the wonderful story. We have had 3 cats all who came to live with us as kittens.

Our neighbours cat adopted us. They moved away and he went with them. A week later he walked back to what he decided was his home. He has lived with us full time and is 12 years old. We adore him and I agree older cats have the most wonderful personalities and are so much fun.

I am so glad you shared your story.

- Anneliese Del Monico on February 27th, 2021 11:18 pm



I also love the older ones. You said it all very well. And all of mine have been rescued. I love the kittens too. When the time comes I will look for 2 mature cats who were raised together and should stay together.

- Daniel Axelrod on February 27th, 2021 11:23 pm



I used to have a part Maine Coon male and what a loving cat he is

- Jesn dunham on February 27th, 2021 11:32 pm



Thank you. Some of my very best rescues have been senior cats. I'll take one over a kitten any day and wish more people felt that way.

- David Waters on February 27th, 2021 11:42 pm



loved this article

- Dottie on February 27th, 2021 11:46 pm



All tiger cats have the characteristic M on their forehead. It is not a Maine Coon distinction.

- Frank on February 28th, 2021 12:09 am



My God, young lady.  
What a rich and wonderful soul you have.  
May the Lord richly bless you.

- D Lucero on February 28th, 2021 12:13 am



Wow. Such a beautiful tribute to your “Mr. Handsome”. Very touching. I hope this inspires people to adopt senior and special needs cats. Bravo.

- Cathy Brouillette on February 28th, 2021 12:33 am



I fully enjoyed this article. My husband and I have 4 beautiful babies..lol 3 boys and I little girl.. I just wanted to let you know that I laughed and smiled throughout parts of this article..your very talented as a writer... just wanted to let you know that...

- Maud Rawson on February 28th, 2021 3:02 am



There is a realization of peace when a pet ages. We know this loved critter has had love and caring and it makes life much more wonderful this special bond. Yes, the day will come to go to the Rainbow Bridge yet even through sadness we can look at the love we have happily given to them is reciprocated and we both have been blessed. The price of love is grief and it's worth every year. If only all animals were cherished

- Tara Shell on February 28th, 2021 4:22 am



Thank you for sharing your story of Gus and the life you have shared with him it

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was deeply touching and I understand all too well the perfect companionship that only a Cat can offer. I have a 13 year old girl Cat named Kiwi 🐾 I adopted her from an ad in Craigslist as my former cat had passed and I was heartbroken. I saw her picture and she had the same bullseye tabby marking and striped short haired tail as my Dito so I knew she was meant for me. I love the golden tone that accents the beautiful exotic stripes she possesses.

She comforted me through the pains of losing lives and family and now she is 13 or 14 and her kidneys are “tired” so she gets extra special care and lots of love.

She is the fourth grey striped tabby in my life and I have grown to think that they are the most beautiful cats of all. In the Middle Ages they were called “Greymalken or “Grey Ones” She is more psychic than I am with her big green eyes that see things that I cannot but we go into trance state together and it’s bliss ❤️💕💕💕💕

Senior Cats are by far the best companions for older adults They are so mellow and lovable and cuddly

Every night I dream of my cat and make sure I keep her safe because our bond is strong and we are together even in other realms like the dream state.

Mystical Magical Cats are the greatest gift of all They slew the mice that carried the plague in Egypt and so were revered for all time They have guarded temples and us for centuries. I am eternally grateful for the beautiful companionship of the Feline race!

The Felines are Mutual ❤️💕💕💕💕💕

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- Yossi on February 28th, 2021 4:35 am



I read your entire article and unfortunately it's full of judgment. I did not ADOPT a cat I purchased three cats kittens from a REGISTERED breeder but of course you would never talk about reputable breeders or people who want pedigree cats ( why get off your high fake moral horse?) for example of course you have to mention that shelters are where people get them from as if thats the only option. secondly, guilting people into adopting an older cat is just wrong people will get what they want wether it's a kitten or older cat. A mutt or pedigree. I was willing to pay thousands of dollars for a pedigree cat that's my choice and I wanted a kitten and I wanted males again my choice. people have choices and writing a useless and biased article like that won't change reality. So basically the article was a waste of time to read.

- Tammy Ranaldi on February 28th, 2021 4:38 am



I just loved your article 😊. Gus is so blessed to have you as a friend. He is darling and I'm sure keeps you going. Thanks for reminding us other cat lovers that our pets are more valuable than any expensive stuff we could buy. They are our family be it cat or dog or whatever you have that you call your little friend. Be blessed and safe. Hats off to The Gus Man. TR 😊

- Tracey on February 28th, 2021 4:52 am



Thank you for a wonderful articial, I loved the read.

- Ashley on February 28th, 2021 4:57 am



This was such a sweet article



- Carla on February 28th, 2021 5:14 am



Wonderful job just like my beloved vMr. Ben handsome Maine Coon. They are awesome cats. He crossed the bridge and I miss him every day.

- Becky Evans on February 28th, 2021 5:45 am



Hi Peyton, It's 5:30 in the morning and I'm awake, reading your nice piece on Gus. Your compassion shines through the article and I wanted to say thanks. Thank you for thinking about an aging animal with love, and sharing that with the world.

Best regards, Becky

- Sheri on February 28th, 2021 6:18 am



Beautifully written and so true. I too had a Gus who was very needy in his last years and now at 15 his brother Jack is as well. I treasure every moment.

- Marilyn A Mack on February 28th, 2021 7:37 am



I have an elder cat, too. A lovely calico named Sedona. I found her in the woods in Michigan. She was abandoned probably by some heartless person who enjoyed her kittenhood but could not make a commitment beyond that. She is overweight (voluptuous) has beautiful markings and is as devoted to me as I am to her. I would not trade her for a million bucks!

- Betts on February 28th, 2021 7:49 am



So much of what you wrote was me with my beloved Sugarbear of 19 years. He was my gentle giant and has moved on to his

my gentle giant and has moved on to his

next life this past October.

I miss him so very much. I adopted a feisty little girl and I love her to the moon but still miss everything about by 19 years with my sweet boy.

Loved your post.

Betts

- Alan Segal on February 28th, 2021 7:53 am



What a sweet article. I too have an aging kitty in the beginning stages of kidney disease. I cherish her every day and marvel at the non verbal connection we share. I love watching her, “be a cat”. So glad you have such a meaningful connection with your kitty.

- Angila Russell on February 28th, 2021 7:54 am



I have had both dogs and cats. Cats have been very loving even as they aged. Dogs not so much so.

- Regina on February 28th, 2021 8:25 am



Love your article and your bond to Gus. I have Lucky my fat cat, one eye clouded over from cat fight.( My previous Snow Ball despised Lucky)

. I call him Grumpy Old Man and he has that calm regal wisdom of old age which the younger cats aren't listening. And he growls at them to maintain his space. I let him in on my bed after I put throw blankets but this morning he opted to explore the field behind my house and enjoy the new spring air with birds singing after the ice melted.

Cheers to the Quilt of life and all its different patterns and colors!

- Marilyn Sanders on February 28th, 2021 8:59 am



I love love love what you wrote so true I



I love love love what you wrote, so true!

have 2 cats and love them dearly

How I wish more people could be like you

God. God bless

- Jo on February 28th, 2021 9:09 am



I couldn't read the whole article after really looking at the picture of the cat. The kitty is so over weight which can cause so many health problems to list.

- Laura on February 28th, 2021 9:10 am



I can totally relate, I have a Gus too, his name is DJ (18 lbs of pure love) lol omg Gus is adorable, adorably charming, I just want to squeeze love him lol

During a vet visit for DJ, the vet instructs the tech assistant to place DJ on the scale, as she's picking him up, I lean in close to DJ's ear, stroking his head, I say; now remember DJ we're not fat, we're big boned!

hahahaha the expression on both vet and tech... priceless! 😂😂😂

so ya I totally get this! 🐾❤️

- William may on February 28th, 2021 9:55 am



Great Piece I have two black cats Denison midnight and they are a big part of my life. All the best

- Janice Clarke on February 28th, 2021 10:21 am



What a beautiful piece. You are a true animal lover. You expressed so beautifully the joy, the comfort and companionship a cat can bring into your life.

- rob on February 28th, 2021 10:29 am



may you and gus have many more



may you and gus have many more wonderful years together

- Brooke Kvasny on February 28th, 2021 10:59 am



This was a beautiful and we'll written story about a girl and her cat. It made me cry because it reminds me of my Frex, "Mr. Handsome" to me. He was the best cat I ever owned. This will sound silly, but the love that both he and I had for each other was immense. I have since adopted 4 cats since Frex's passing, two older cats and two kittens who were brothers. I love them all but I don't think I will ever find a cat like Frex again. It's been over a year since his passing and I miss him every single day.

Thank you for the beautiful story about Mr. Gus! Sounds like he's a pretty special guy like my Frex was

- Katie on February 28th, 2021 11:20 am



Well written. If only everyone could see the significant imprint these little guys leave in our hearts. Their personalities are so big, I never tire of just watching them live.

- Renea Bacon on February 28th, 2021 11:21 am



I really enjoyed reading this piece.

- Tricia on February 28th, 2021 11:46 am



Thank you Peyton for putting my sentiments to words of my cat Charley who I have come to enjoy waiting on as he can be demanding at times. His wish is my command because I love him.

- Cheryl Stone on February 28th, 2021 12:38 pm



Wonderful article. Older kitties rock!



- Ty Tan on February 28th, 2021 2:11 pm



It is my opinion that you should stay out of the OPINION section, “Yossi”. The only one on a high horse here is you (and “Jo”, with her absolutely useless comment). No one said that everyone is required to get their cat/kitten from a shelter, but most would agree it’s a better way for the majority of people to get one (thankfully, since so many cats need homes). I paid \$1,000 for a Siberian cat once. I loved him dearly and he was worth every penny. But I wouldn’t do it again, because I’ve also adored every shelter cat that I’ve adopted. In fact, I paid nothing for my current tiger tabby girl, we rescued each other at a free cat adoption day at the shelter. There is a place for breeders and purebred cats, but it should be common sense to you, Yossi, or anyone else, that more people should be rescuing cats from shelters than spending thousands with breeders. There is no reason to get upset that someone has an opinion in that regard, and getting defensive about spending a large amount of money on your cats is not an excuse to insult others. No doubt you love your cats very much, and they deserve that love as much as any. Every animal, whether mixed or pure, deserves a wonderful home, so be a good human and rejoice at every adoption (and let’s not forget that shelters take in plenty of purebreeds as well). Peyton, I thoroughly enjoyed your article and I’m so glad it showed up in my suggested readings. I laughed, I cried...it seems that a lot of us cat lovers share similar feelings for our feline companions.

Thank you!

- Glen Nicholson on February 28th, 2021 3:20 pm



Thank you for your lovely essay. I'm older now too and have weathered the passing of many dear Furfamily, some who lived upwards of twenty years. One Siamese cat of enormous character made it to 21. My dearly loved Tortie, Esmeralda, live to 18. She adored dogs, walked on a leash, flew on airplanes in my lap and crossed the entire U.S. in a sleep pile with 2 Cocker Spaniels. I have taken in older friends, some with little time left. One was Shih Tzu I found abandoned in the road. I will spare you the story of cruelty and neglect she'd endured, but she was the sweetest, happiest little girl for the two years she was with me. The look on her face as she tasted peanut butter for the first time is one I'll never forget. My heart still has a small bruise from the day she left me. Animals teach us to be joyful in this day, to forgive and truly forget, and to accept our limitations as we age, while doing so with grace. What more could we ask?

- Inez M Moton on February 28th, 2021 3:32 pm



Awwwww. LOVED IT\*

- Diane on February 28th, 2021 3:41 pm



First of all, Yossi or Jossi, or whatever, is completely out of line. I don't think Peyton was beating anyone up for wanting a pure bred. There are pure breds in shelters, because people don't research and don't want to deal with the behavior of the breed. If you want a specific breed, go for it. But, it's a fact that, like children, once an animal isn't adorable and new, they lose their appeal. It's harder for older children to be adopted and the same is true of older animals. (I'm adopted, btw) Luckily, there are people and families who seek out the beings who are

...miss who look out the beings who are overlooked. Whatever your preference, you do you. Peyton, Gus is a lucky guy. I had a Gus. Her name was Baby. I saved her life, and she saved mine. I have her tattooed on my wrist next to my semicolon. I wish I could share a picture of it. She was a beautiful cat, inside and out. I miss her every day. Thank you for sharing Gus with us.

- Shonda on February 28th, 2021 3:50 pm



This was a great article. Although the M on the forehead isn't a Maine coon trait at all...it's a tabby trait. Which is the coloring of the cat and not the breed. There are many cats of different breeds with the tabby M trait. Only the tabby colored maine coons will have this marking.

- Marie Goble on February 28th, 2021 4:09 pm



Tossing,

I am sorry to say YOU are the only one on their high horse. Your post bordered on RUDE. From what I read in Peyton's article, NO ONE was trying to "guilt you" into an older cat from a shelter. If you feel that thousands of dollars buys you more/better love than a shelter cat, then by all means, BUY. I totally see the appeal of having the breed of kitten you love most. I completely understand.

NOBODY was attacking you for your choices — we all do what we feel is right. All Payton was doing was explaining the many reasons she loves her Gus, a senior fat cat. I have had 14 VERY loved kitties of all breeds and ages. Four of mine came to me quite unexpectedly while visiting my vet's office. My Pitty-Pat was the only kitten of five who survived after being abandoned right after birth by his mother. I bottle-fed him for 6-weeks before he

was able to eat soft food on his own. Not having a mother to teach Pitty-Pat how to BE a cat, he had to learn everything, like walking, on his own. This precious boy...he was the love of my life. He died of cancer a five years ago at the age of 12 from cancer.. I STILL dream about my loving, mellow gentleman. And inSTILL miss him — the gorgeous, tiny little guy I bottle raised, AND the big, beautiful old man he grew into.

At the same vet's office two years later (I need to stay out of the vet's office during kitten season), I found three more loves of my life: Rascal, a long-haired peach and white boy who immediately saw me at the age of 6-weeks old, as his mother. He used to nurse on my earlobe and did until he was about 14 and in the end stages of renal failure. He ended up needing insulin shots and was too weak to be able to do anything more than to be held and loved. Even then, he PURRED like crazy. At the same time I adopted Rascal, I brought home his sisters, Goosey Lucy and Mouse. I just COULDN'T leave them behind. My oldest cat, Ginger was with me half my adult life — she lived to be the ripe old age of 23. So, many times I thought was was at the end of her nine lives, she rallied. I began affectionately calling her "Lazarus." Now I have a purebred white Persian who is my LOVE. He was given to me by a friend who couldn't keep him. I love him so much that someday I may seek out a breeder of Persians. They have their place in this world too...

My others loves (6 of them) I trapped in my backyard the same week we brought our newly adopted daughter home. There was no mommy around. Mama brought her six kittens and left them on my back deck. Young and old, I have ADORED THEM ALL with ALL MY HEART I can't RADE

I NEED ALL — WITH ALL MY HEART. I CAN'T BARE  
the thought of going to the “pound” (the ASPCA) —  
it would break my heart to only be able bring one or  
two cats home with me and have to leave the other  
beautiful souls alone and unloved, behind cage  
doors.

However, when the time is right, I know down deep  
in my soul, that I am meant to go and adopt the cat  
in a shelter, who is the oldest, sickest, ugliest  
(whatever) who has such little chance of otherwise  
being adopted. That kitty will be adored, cherished  
and SPOILED for the rest of whatever life they  
have left.

Why do I tell you all this? Because I want to share  
with you that ALL cats, old or young, can be  
precious in our hearts and souls — no matter HOW  
they come to us. Do I WISH you would consider a  
shelter cat? OF COURSE I do, because it would be  
one less beautiful soul peering out from behind  
bars, waiting for “their person” and their furever  
home.

Please don't close your mind entirely shelter cat.  
And please know that you are not being  
condemned for YOUR choices. We all do what we  
feel we need to.

In case anyone is wondering, I am also a lover of  
dogs — not just cats — and I am just as  
passionate about them as I am cats. 😊

- Lidia on February 28th, 2021 4:21 pm



Your cat us adorable! If you want to get him  
to slim down just switch him to either  
canned grain free cat food or raw meals,  
you Will change his life and he ll live longer. Aldo  
playing daily should help him,they merda mental  
and physical stimulation.

You can check out Karen Becker's page Mercola pets 😊

- Rho Cat on February 28th, 2021 4:36 pm



In 1982 I adopted a beautiful tabby kitten. She was 4 weeks old. She was named Saha after the cat in Colette's "The Cat ". She was the best friend I ever could have wanted. She went everywhere with me; bars, pool halls , subways. She was on my lap when I got married at a drive -through in Vegas. (We're from Toronto). You get the idea..... She died in 2001 and I learned so much from her about love, life and grief..I still miss her so much I can't put it into words.

- Bobbi C on February 28th, 2021 4:48 pm



This was a wonderful story. I completely feel the same way about my pet, which is also my best friend/companion. All they want is a warm lap to lay on and to feed them on time, and of course your love and attention.

- Lorraine Piccarillo on February 28th, 2021 6:40 pm



All I can say is you are a very Loving, Spiritual, Person. And you Loved your Beautiful Cat Gus, with all your Heart, an Mind, an Soul. You spend most of your life with him. With out words, you both communicated telepathically with each other on a human level and animal level. You knew his wants an needs. Gus looked into your eyes, and you knew what he wanted. Our Animals give us Unconditional Love, that many humans dont no How to give. May God Bless All the good righteous People in his world that Love Animals. From a Loving Cat Women! PS i Love dogs too, and many other Animals in God's Earth. Keep writing good Articles like that it made

# me Cry. From Cat Lady!!!!!!

▪ Blake on February 28th, 2021 11:25 pm



Hey "Yossi" besides the fact that in my opinion someone who wasted thousands of dollars for a cat is an idiot, and then you express such negative crap just to VALIDATE that you have to spend so much money for a cat actually made me laugh so hard. Btw those people who choose to spend that much money, kudos to you. Except for those like "Yossi Grumpy Cat" that try turning such a great story into an argument because I enjoy blowing my money even though pure breed animals can be found in shelters and not as expensive to get. Bless those people who rescue animals in shelters, and those people who spend their money for animals without bitching about individuals who choose to adopt !

If you want a picture to show with your comment, go get a [gravatar](#).

Name (required)

Email Address (required)

Speak your mind

## Opinion

**Valentine's Day is tacky and useless**

Of all the useless

**Why do independent artists charge so much?**

Being an

**How to locate silver linings in our world, as explained by a field mouse**

**A letter to the administration**

To the

**Capitol riots are further evidence that the US is a failing state**

holidays we celebrate in America, I think Valentine's Day is hands-down the worst of the bunch. This is in comparison to hol...

being an independent artist is hard. It is hard to be successful, actually make money, gain respect and be treated like a professional. Whether an art...

This past year was a beast; to enumerate each of its ugly parts would be redundant and thus a waste of my time. If I may hold your attention for a sho...

administration, When asked why there appears to be an "us versus them" mentality at this institution, the answer is very cle...

I often hesitate to make sweeping generalizations morally condemning groups of people for the simple logical reality that such statements can be entir...

