

FARK TURNS 10

Now does everybody know Drew?

Just because a number of people believe something doesn't make it a legitimate alternative viewpoint.

—Drew Curtis, from the “Equal Time for Nutjobs” chapter, in *It's Not News, It's Fark*

Fark, which turns 10 on February 12, is up for a lifetime achievement Bloggie this year (winners announced March 16 at South by Southwest).

It's up against the likes of Gawker and The Daily Kos. But Fark is not a blog.

For the uninitiated, Fark.com is a news aggregator, an edited community-driven news site.

The site receives thousands of news submissions from its readership daily, and founder and Lexington native Drew Curtis goes over them to decide what to post. Criteria? He writes, “usually, this is based on how funny the submitted tagline is more than anything else. The tagline is essentially the article headline rewritten into a one-line joke by the submitter.”

As for Fark's political inclinations, Curtis claims Fark to be “twenty-six percent liberal, twenty-four percent conservative, and fifty percent neutral or hating everybody.”

When he does guest lectures speaking at entrepreneurial classes for the University of Kentucky, he tells students “failure” has been the greatest contributor to Fark's global success. As a precursor to Fark, Curtis persevered through two business start-up failures. He says, “I would never hire anyone who hasn't failed. It takes that to learn anything.”

“Living in Kentucky you get an outsider's perspective of what's going on in the media.”

—Drew Curtis, founder Fark.com

Today on Fark, “Evansville Courier & Press laughs at Fark's Rich Brooks Ford headline. Better late than never.”

The Fark headline had referenced the release of the Rich Books Ford 150: “Options include 20-year lease on Motor City Bowl parking space.” (Fark was also lauded for the headline by *Seattle Times*, the *Detroit Free Press*, and more.)

Asked what the rest of the world thinks of Fark's headquarters in the Bluegrass, he says, “At first they're a little taken off guard. Then they stop and think, ‘Hey, it's the internet. You can do that anywhere.’”

In 2007, he told *Ace*, “Kentucky is a lot cheaper than living in Silicon Valley,” adding, “Living in Kentucky you get an outsider's perspective of what's going on in the media.”

In January, Fark Headlines was a category on *Jeopardy* in honor of its 10th anniversary. Correct responses included “Who is Usher?” and “Who is The Pope?” (You can watch it on YouTube.) There was also a Fark Anniversary party in Vegas (and there will be more around the country).

Now Lexington is celebrating Fark too — but there's no parade, no Fark Boulevard, no Drew Day (that we know of).

Curtis told the Facebook masses, “Fark is 10 years old on Feb 12th! But that's a Thursday. However the next day is



Drew Curtis in *Ace*'s 2002 “Who's Drew?” story

Friday! We're getting together to celebrate at The Chase in Lex KY on Feb 13th. I'm also happy to sign books or what have yous. Bring friends!

Here are some of the posted RSVPs:

Je5tEr writes, “A Friday the 13th right before Valentine's Day, what could go wrong?”

LineNoise writes, “So you want me to come to Kentucky AND create a facebook account? Why not ask for my kidney while you are at it Drew?” Then kidney is crossed out and replaced with liver.

Another reads, “I'll probably be snowed in — besides, banjo music scares me.”

The most ubiquitous response is, “you wrote a book?”

Yes. *It's Not News, It's Fark* hit bookshelves in May 2007.

The commentary highlighted in the book (a book that was far more comprehensive than the “best of fark” collection Curtis was encouraged to write) covered everyday and controversial subjects alike (i.e. politics, religion, Duke basketball).

He wrote, “Mass Media can really run an article on a story only once unless something changes. Take popular humorous news Web sites, for example. Mass Media can write an initial article about them, something to the effect of ‘Check out this new popular humorous news site.’ Once that's done, they can't run a story about the website again, because nothing has changed...In order to write another story, something has to change. For example, the author of the site could write a book. Now it's possible to interview him again.” Thus, the *Ace* May 24, 2007 coverstory can be found in the Archives (or Farkives).

That was a followup to 2002, when Billy Hylton suggested in *Ace*'s March 14 coverstory, “Lexington owes Drew Curtis an apology.” The cover read, “Who's Drew?”

(In Lexington, not that many people seemed to know the answer.)

In profiling the already infamous Fark.com, Hylton wrote at the time, “People in Russia, England, South Africa, Japan, and New Zealand are fans of his, yet he is

Photo by Karen Smither



Drew Curtis at Pazzo's

unknown in the Bluegrass—his home. The Lexington native and Lafayette High School grad is name-dropped at parties in Silicon Valley. He chills in New York City with people who operate web sites that you enjoy. He consults for *Wired* magazine. All thanks to a web site that originally sported nothing but a picture of a well-endowed squirrel.” (Oh he wasn't completely unacknowledged in the Bluegrass — while attending Jessie Clark, Curtis was awarded the distinction of “Most Dramatic.”)

Fark.com was getting 30 million hits a year way back then.

Now it gets over a million page views a day, and with the advent of facebook, Twitter, et al. everyone's a Farker.

Curtis has been featured in *Time*; *The Washington Post*; *PC Magazine*; *Maxim*; on hundreds of radio stations; and he was named one of the most 50 Important People on the Web by *PC World*.

Fark's a contender for a Lifetime Achievement Award at this year's Bloggies at SXSW.

And founder Drew Curtis can still go about his life largely unrecognized in Lexington everywhere from soccer to Pazzo's.

Curtis told *Ace* in 2002, “I'm definitely going to stay in Kentucky,” he assures. “I lived in England for a year. Every British person's dream is to live in a house out in the country. Around here that's an affordable goal.”

He said then, “I feel like I'm kind of lucky in the sense that you've got all the really cool stuff that comes with people knowing who you are, with none of the drawbacks like people always stopping you.” ■