



Episode 1,053: Down With Schooling? Brett Veinotte Explores Alternatives

Guest: Brett Veinotte

WOODS: I can't get over this trip you took. This is nuts, man. This is totally insane. The tour – this is what I've got in my notes here – 40 days, 9,000 miles, 24 tanks of gas, 3 oil changes – that's interesting – 36 cities, 11 meet-ups, 150+ voices, 20 podcasts, and 30 bonus shows, including daily audio/video drive journals. By the way, did you make videos of like you in the car talking while you're driving?

VEINOTTE: Yeah, some amusing moments there where I just have a GoPro pointed out the window. And it's not really a format I'm comfortable with, Tom, just like turning on the camera, turning on an audio recording, and just doing a stream-of-consciousness kind of thing. I like to edit, so this was one of the many ways I tried to push myself outside of comfort zone a little bit on this trip.

WOODS: Yeah, exactly.

VEINOTTE: Yeah.

WOODS: Yeah, sure, sure. Well, I ask that only because I have two email lists and on my entrepreneurship list I sent out an email the other day taking people to a video I did in my car. But in my version, I'm parked because I'm too scared to do it while driving [laughing]. So hey, you get your car video, but I'm actually just sitting here in a parking lot because I'm too much of a scaredy cat to try that.

Anyway, this whole trip, I guess you organized it around the event you did with Thad Russell, who's a friend of ours, and I guess you figured as long as you're going out to I guess California, might as well make a whole, big trip out of it and use it for your podcast. So it's a great idea. But let's start with that weekend. You did a weekend, November 10th through 12th, in Santa Monica, a weekend with Thaddeus Russell. And it was Renegade University, his platform, and *School Sucks Project*, which is your podcast, present A Weekend with Thaddeus Russell. Tell me what that was like.

VEINOTTE: So this actually the second seminar that we've done. We did one back in August in the very renegade town of Salem, Massachusetts –

WOODS: I so wanted to be there. Yeah, okay.

VEINOTTE: Yeah, so you're familiar with the area and obviously the well-known story of the Puritans and the witches, but the lesser known story of the pirates that actually supported most of Massachusetts' economy throughout the 19th century. So we just thought it's a cool location; there's a lot of stuff still standing there from all of these historical stories. So we started there. We had a great group of people. Some came from as far as Atlanta, California, and it was a really moving experience to hear how our work had affected people.

And from that experience, I said, well – first of all, he and I agreed we should definitely do this again as soon as possible, so that is how we set up the LA event with some new topics. And I realized I could also go across the country, take the microphone across the country, and take a lot of the things that I talk about on the show as far as like home education out of the abstract and really hear these stories of what people are doing, alternative forms of education, self-directed education, unschooling. So that was what got me to LA and back.

But while we were there, it was just a two-day seminar on a variety of Thad's favorite topics. And we recorded a five-hour listener Q&A podcast that I'm going to be putting out later this month, and it was just an extraordinary time. It's more of a social event, I think. About half the time was spent socializing, and then there is an actual classroom setting. We did it at Reason Studios. But it was just a great experience. I really enjoy working with Thad, even though there's a lot on which we do not agree. It's really energizing and challenging, and I hope we can do it again in the near future.

WOODS: Well, he's definitely one of these people I enjoy disagreeing with, because first of all, I always learn from him, and secondly, he's just a nice guy. He doesn't care if he's scoring points on me; he just enjoys having a good conversation, and it's unfortunately a rare thing to find somebody like that. Now, if you were gone for that many days, this had to be funded somehow. Was this listener-funded?

VEINOTTE: I just raised – I mean, this was something that I think I needed to do for myself for a lot of reasons. Like I said, I was in need of a challenge. I was in need of breaking out of a comfort zone that I had found myself in. So I was going to pay for it either way, but the way listeners actually helped, they saved me a lot of money on hotel rooms. Like if I was going to a city, I would announce that well ahead of time and people would offer me a place to crash for the night. I got a lot of nice, free meals out of it as well.

WOODS: That's great.

VEINOTTE: Yeah. So we raised money through – we have like a bonus content section and we have a Patreon page. So the show is funded, and part of my obligation is to return some of that money to the School Sucks Project, even though a few years ago I did quit my tutoring job to do the show full time, so that money is income as well. But you know, I was frugal for about a month. I saved up what I thought I would need for the trip. I took some money out of savings and transferred it into an emergency fund in case I wrecked my car or some other unforeseen thing came up. And so I padded a little bit, but no, it was one of the things I was able to do just by the listener support that I get for the show.

WOODS: That's really great. So how did you decide what your stops would be?

VEINOTTE: I didn't want to drive – [laughing] it's funny that this was the original goal. I didn't want to drive more than three or four hours at a time, so I looked at where I was starting in New Hampshire and places that I knew I would stop based on places where I knew there were strong liberty communities or strong concentrations of *School Sucks* listeners, like Philadelphia; Columbus, Ohio; Detroit, Michigan. And you know, I announced it in our *School Sucks* Facebook group and the listeners kind of helped me shape the map that I was going to use. And the trip out took 27 days. The trip back, Tom, was 11 days, so the 3-hour drive was very much a fantasy on that part of the trip. We were doing 8, 9, one 12 or 11-hour drive from Richmond, Virginia to Brooklyn, New York on the day before Thanksgiving – you know, fighting the traffic.

WOODS: Oh, no, yeah.

VEINOTTE: Yeah. So yeah, and I actually had to, once I was in California, I re-drew the map for the return trip because I was pretty eager to get back home and not be driving anymore. But it doesn't mean that at any point in the trip I wasn't having a great time. Really, it was the greatest decision I've ever made in my life, and I just see it as a tremendous success, and I was so happy that I did get to stop in so many places and meet so many *School Sucks* listeners. My regret is I wish I could have stayed longer in each place, which when I do something like this again and I think I will, it will be more like, go to a place, stay there for five days, and maybe I only get to four places on a future tour, but I'll have a more immersive experience in each place and get to know the people better. It was hard to say goodbye everywhere I went.

WOODS: Right. You know, it's funny; I was talking to Gerard Casey, who's a professor emeritus in Dublin, about a trip to Ireland, and he had kind of the same view. I was like, "I want to see absolutely everything," and he said, "Maybe what you actually want is to" – because I was like, I want to spend a little time here, a little time here, a little time here." He said, "Maybe it would be actually better and more memorable for you to spend larger chunks of time in fewer places." And I think in general, that probably is a good idea.

But anyway, it's amazing what you did. Let's talk about what you did – you did roundtables with students at two alternative schools. And before we get into that, I want to get your thoughts on something I did while you were on the trip, which was I did an episode of the show with a staff member and a student from one of the Sudbury schools. This one was in New York.

And I'm sure you of course know having a podcast on this sort of thing, but just in case people for some reason missed Episode 1,043 of this show, this was one of these schools where the students really are in charge and they really are completely self-directed. And I'll tell you, first of all, the build-up to that episode based on a promo video they had put up where they're saying, *Imagine a school with no classrooms and no tests and the only person evaluating myself is me*, and on and on, I had people saying, *Yeah, man, that's what libertarianism is*. And I had other people saying, *This is like the worst thing I've ever heard of*. So I thought, well, I'll interview them and then we'll settle this whole thing. If anything, it got even more intense after that.

So I'm curious about that. Now, is this the kind of model that you actually observed in either of the schools you visited? And have you done anything on these Sudbury schools before?

VEINOTTE: Well, yes, I have. It's actually interesting that you would mention that. I did a visit to the original Sudbury school, which is in I think Framingham, Massachusetts, about four years ago, and then I reported on it on *School Sucks Podcast*. And I thought that the environment or the tone that we got from talking to staff and students at the school in Massachusetts, the Massachusetts politics are very, very palpable in the school setting. And I know people are all over the world and all over the country. Massachusetts is very, very left-wing. And you know, you pull into the parking lot of the school and there's just Elizabeth Warren bumper stickers on every car, and I didn't feel like it was a good welcoming committee to the Sudbury experience. So I think we took a little bit of a negative tone in our review. I was very skeptical of the democratic model, teaching kids that democracy is a viable solution to

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WOODS: Right, right, that was the thing that gets — no matter where my listeners fell on it, when they saw that part of the promo video, they all agreed, all right, that part's not good.

VEINOTTE: Okay, well, but it's a kind of voluntary democracy. Like, I think democracy is totally fine if I'm voluntarily with six friends and we're trying to decide where to go for dinner. In fact, I'll even make a sacrifice if I want Chinese food and five of those people want Mexican food —

WOODS: Yeah, I get that.

VEINOTTE: I'll sacrifice that so I don't have to eat alone, yeah.

WOODS: Of course, yeah, sure. Yeah, we all do that in our own private lives. But the way they were modeling it in the video, the kid was saying, "I move to make a law that" — it looked like they were aping the legislative process, and I just thought that's not good. I don't want that. I mean, it's one thing to say you've got to come to a consensus among your peers, but this just looked too much like, well, we want to be different in every way except we're going to ape the worst part of society, namely the political system. But I grant your friendly amendment.

VEINOTTE: Okay, so here's the thing. If that is framed in the school environment as this is the solution to all problems or this is why — this was the sense that I got in the Massachusetts Sudbury — this is why government can work, because of a system like this, that's a problem. But in this democratic — I mean, the Sudbury model was designed around New England town meetings, so what students are actually learning that they would never learn in a public school — and this is even being discouraged I think in a lot of higher education settings — kids learn to advocate for themselves. They want something to happen, they have to learn to make a persuasive argument for that thing.

WOODS: Okay, I will grant that. That's actually a good point. I mean, public speaking and making arguments and debate, these are skills that I would want somebody to have and you're going to acquire those skills probably more reliably when the issue means something to you personally rather than some teacher assigned it to you. *Here, go argue this.*

VEINOTTE: Absolutely. But you know, one of the best things about the Circle School, which was in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, which is built on the Sudbury model – they do the school meeting, they do have a democratic process, they do the judicial review, which I found a little creepy when I was hearing about it in the Massachusetts Sudbury school. But when I got to the school, teenagers came up to me, an unknown adult, and my friend Tony, who was visiting the school with me, and they introduced themselves. And they said, "Who are you? Why are you here?" They took a very active interest in a new adult.

Now, contrast this to my experience working with public school students generally, years ago when I was an SAT tutor and a college consultant. Those kids wouldn't even look me in the eye because the public-school setting creates this antagonistic relationship between teens and adults. Adults are kind of like the enemy. You had Robert Epstein on your show –

WOODS: Yeah.

VEINOTTE: – recently to talk about about the false idea of adolescence and how kids are kept in captivity, they're infantilized, they're kept away from the adult world, and this creates this idea that adults are the other. Or, because of the school setting and the disciplinary nature of school, adults are something to stay away from.

But these kids in places like Sparks Academy that I visited in Wichita, Kansas or the Circle School in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania or the Columbus Learning Cooperative in Columbus, Ohio, these kids are getting out there in the world with adults and having positive, mentoring relationship with adults. They're not just cloistered with a bunch of people who are the same age doing the same thing. They all have these unique, self-directed and dynamic experiences with people who are older. So when a new adult shows up, it's like, hey, the last interaction I had with an adult was pretty positive and pretty educational; let's go see what this adult is all about. So that's how I was greeted at Circle School, and that really had an impact on me.

WOODS: That's very, very interesting. And I think we're – present company excepted – but we're so accustomed to thinking of the world the way it currently is, where students at a particular age, they all go off and they socialize with peers of that same age. And we think of that as normal, whereas, let's say a homeschool setting, where students are more likely to be interacting with adults more often, we think of that as artificial and they should be out with their peers. But separating them from their families and throwing them into a big group of other people their exact age is what's artificial, because the rest of your life you're not going to be doing that.

VEINOTTE: No, and that's like right out of the Prussian model of education. That was more military training to build comradery around people of the same age so they could become an effective unit in the Prussian army. That's where that comes from. I think I

want to say Kaiser Wilhelm originally – no. The name is escaping me, but that is 19th century Prussian schooling in origin, that grouping by age.

WOODS: You know, I couldn't help noticing that you mentioned in your list of places that you had a concentration of listeners – you mentioned Detroit, and I know you went to Detroit.

VEINOTTE: Yeah.

WOODS: I'm curious to get your impression of what things are like there right now.

VEINOTTE: All right, well, when I first set up that meet-up, I found out that it was going to be in Gibraltar, which is a suburb of Detroit. So this about a couple weeks before I left, and I said, *What a relief. I don't have to anywhere near Detroit – or I'm going to be like 30 miles away from Detroit.* But after ten days of getting out of my comfort zone and having new experiences and realizing the rewards of that, when I got to Gibraltar, Michigan, my host there, Mike, said, "Okay, we've got plenty of time before the meet-up. Do you want a tour of Detroit from the highway, or do you want a real tour of Detroit?" And you know, just kind of reflecting on the satisfaction that I had gotten from challenging myself the previous ten days, I said, "Let's go do the real Detroit."

So we wound up in a very scary-looking area. I mean, Detroit is amazing. It's surreal. You can drive for what seems like miles and everything is abandoned, like storefronts, warehouses, residential – entire neighborhoods. You can just see it. Like, no one lives in one-, two-, three-mile stretches in some places. So we're already in a pretty scary area. Mike and I are in his pickup truck, and we have two young listeners who made the trip from Cleveland, Danny and Alice, they're in the backseat. So the four of us are in a very scary area, and then Mike turns off from the scary area and goes down an alley. So it's like, scary area, get out of the scary area. No, he does the opposite and turns down an alley and goes behind the scary area and stops at this old railroad abutment. And he says, "All right, come with me. We're going up here." And I said, "Oh gosh, I hope he knows what's up there."

So we climb ladders up a concrete wall. There's like step ladders that are sort of situated on this concrete wall that's up about 15 feet above street level. And up there, it's landscaped and there's this man. His name was Tom. He's built two tiny homes out of building materials that he's gathered I guess from abandoned construction sites around the city, and he's hauled them up there. Now, this was a house, Tom, with like pocket doors and stained-glass windows. It was very small. It was only about 120 square feet, maybe. But he had built this house and he told us he had been squatting there for 17 years. It was riverfront property, you know? In a nicer area, you're talking like, I don't know, a \$500,000 to \$600,000 lot that this guy had just squatted on for almost two decades.

So I took out the camera, and it was an intense as an experience, but I interviewed him, I shot some video of his house. And it was really amazing. I felt very accomplished, conquering the fear of this – I mean, you hear these stories about Detroit. It's like, oh, people are just driving around, setting things on fire and shooting each other. It was a really interesting experience.

And parts of the city are really nice. Here in New England, we've already had the kind of factories shut down and everything gets boarded up and then they go through this rejuvenation and become condos and storefronts. That is just starting to happen in the Midwest, so there are places in Detroit where you could buy probably a whole neighborhood for \$50,000, but in 10 or 15 years I think that area is going to be rejuvenated in the same way a lot of New England towns have been rejuvenated in the last 30 or 40 years. So it's a really interesting place.

WOODS: The numbers, when you look at Detroit in terms of the schools, in terms of property values and population, the numbers tell a story. Of course you saw an even more striking story because you saw it right up close. But what does something like that kind of collapse do for the process of education?

VEINOTTE: So the way I would answer that, most of the people that I was able to talk to there, they were unaffected by that because they had taken educational matters into their own hands a long time ago. How it affects the whole political-educational complex there, I'm not sure. I'm not sure what happens to those schools. I can tell you I have several photos that were perfect for my *School Sucks Across America* photo album of schools abandoned and boarded up, a surprising number of schools abandoned and boarded up. But I don't know what happened to the students who went to those schools or where they are now. I know Detroit is a pretty left-wing place and people believe that public schooling is education, so I don't know if there were a lot of innovative options that sprung up around to educate kids in light of the failing schools, but fortunately, the time that I spent there was with people who weren't worried about that.

There was one woman that I talked to who, she had to send her kids to public school. I mean, this happens when people get divorced, the co-parents have different attitudes about what education should look like or if public school is even education at all. Sometimes one of the co-parents wants to spite the other and send the kids to public school because that's what everybody else does. And I know this is kind of going on a different track here, but that was one of the valuable lessons from this trip, was talking to this woman who has children in public schools around Detroit, and she was really quite upset about this.

But before she did that, she was able to home educate her children for a number of years, and I think through that experience they were able to build a kind of self-assuredness, a confidence, a certain degree of self-direction in their learning that it's probably okay for them to then be inserted into that system. I think they have a much better chance of understanding what it is and surviving it.

And one of my really valuable takeaways from this trip is, like, we went to school, we went to college, we went to graduate school, and I really feel like I was taught to view education as a kind of tube that I had to push myself through. I couldn't go back in the other direction. I couldn't get out. And there was a faint light at the end of that tube through middle school and high school and even through college that was a promise of like happiness or success or worthiness, employability even. And self-directed learners like this woman's children or people that I met all across the country, I realized that they don't have to look at education that same way, as a tube they have to push

themselves through. They see it much more as a panorama with almost endless options.

So when it comes to any part of the country, regardless of its school quality or economic situation, if people have taken the steps to embrace self-directed education and practice it in their homes, they have a much healthier and more helpful orientation towards what education is. They see so many possibilities that people relying on the schools probably don't see.

WOODS: Now, as somebody who has hosted as many podcast episodes on this sort of topic as you have and who's followed all this as closely as you have, is it possible for you to go on a trip even as extensive as this one and still find things that you didn't know before or things that surprised you?

VEINOTTE: Yeah. I mean, I feel like a lot of it was reinforcement, but what was the most impactful was seeing these things in practice. Like I talk about them on the show in a very abstract way. You use phrases like self-directed education and unschooling. But on the way back, we wound up – I had actually this Australian documentary filmmaker who took the whole trip back with me to make a documentary about *School Sucks Across America*, and his name was Nick. So Nick and I wound up outside Albuquerque, New Mexico with this young unschooling family. I think they had an eight-year-old daughter. And just the realness of, *Okay, what do you actually do today? Let's spend the day in your background doing what you normally do.* And she gave us a tour of this – Imagine the New Mexico landscape. So there's this arroyo, this canyon that was cut by like floodwaters thousands of years ago and we're in this canyon, and she's showing us what the rocks are and what we can forage and what we can eat, and it was just a really, really amazing experience to get a tour of what is to me, a New Englander, an alien landscape from an eight-year-old girl who seems to know it inside and out. There were a lot of moments like that along the way.

WOODS: Let's talk about, if you don't mind, just one of the highlights or one of the things on your trip. Then I want to get to some other highlights. But in the midst of all this, you managed to be a featured speaker at a Libertarian Party meeting in Reno.

VEINOTTE: Yeah.

WOODS: What was going on over there?

VEINOTTE: Uh – [laughing]. This was – it was a smaller meeting, but I had been kind of following through your show some of the controversy around the Libertarian Party and the new politics of the Libertarian Party. So I didn't really know who I was speaking to. I was the featured speaker and I was going to talk about *School Sucks Across America* and the mission of the podcast, and I also realized that some of the libertarians who were attending this meeting had brought non-libertarian guests, some of whom had very, very different attitudes about the public school system.

So I introduced myself, and I then I said, "I am a casual observer to the current controversy in the Libertarian Party and this split between people like Tom Woods and people who think Tom Woods should sign a piece of paper saying that he's not a

fascist." And then I just kind of stepped back and read facial expressions and body language to see who I was actually dealing with. And it was a mixed group. It turned into a very, very interesting conversation, not just about the current state of politics and identity politics, but also about the school conversation as well. But it was a nice challenge. It was a very lively discussion that unfortunately we did not record, so it will not be a podcast.

WOODS: Yeah, but sometimes the best conversations are when there's nothing being recorded. That's just part of the way life is. So all right, let's talk about some highlights. You did an eight-person podcast on the roof of a parking garage in Philadelphia. What was discussed?

VEINOTTE: Oh my goodness, Teach for America. The first guy that got on the mic — are you familiar with Teach for America?

WOODS: No, but I hate it already. Should I [laughing]?

VEINOTTE: [laughing] All right, so Teach for America is a way of going after — I'm framing this very negatively, I admit. But it's a way of going after young, idealistic, mostly liberal college students and putting them at the front of inner-city school classrooms with the promise of doing their part to give back to society or close the gap —

WOODS: Oh, okay, okay. Yeah, right.

VEINOTTE: So one of the participants had been tricked into — [laughing] — Teach for America and he had a very, very negative attitude about his experience. So he did about a 30-minute, very graphic monologue about his experience. But we talked about Sudbury schools. One of the participants had started a Sudbury school right outside Philadelphia. And we talked about cybernetics for a while, which is a fascinating subject.

It was important — the reason why I mentioned that to you before we started, this podcast on the roof of a parking garage, I was about four days into the trip, I think, and on day three, I'm just driving down the New Jersey Turnpike, and there's nothing but traffic and trees. And I said to myself, *Is this what this trip is going to be? Is it just going to be me on some boring highways seeing nothing?* And I was stressed at the beginning. I was frustrated and really kind of unsure of what I was getting into.

But it was in Philadelphia that I realized that this whole experience, this whole trip, it's not about collecting pictures of the St. Louis Arch and the Empire State Building; it's about making connections, real-life connections with the people who have been listening to me and supporting me for so long. So it was just so positive to get together with this group. At one point, I think it was like ten people, but by the time we started the podcast it was eight. The venue that we were planning to record it at was a cafe that was apparently like a real hotspot for college students to study. So we all went in there and I looked around and I said, you know, it's kind of rude for us to do this anti-school, anti-college podcast in the midst of all of these college students who are using this place as a quiet place to study.

So I know – I learned on this trip that if you want a great view of wherever you are, find a parking garage and drive your car up to the roof. And that was where we had parked ours earlier, so I said, "Guys, I know a spot." We all walked up there. I set up the mobile recording equipment. And we just had this really amazing, really connected, humorous and enlightening conversation for about two hours.

And it was a turning point for me in the trip when I realized what I was really out here to do. It wasn't about, like I said, sightseeing. It was about the connections with these people. So any time along the way where there was a frustrating moment about being stuck in traffic or being on a long, boring drive, I would think about that experience in Philadelphia. There's pictures of it on my website. And I would say, *Okay, that's what I'm out here to do*. And fortunately, I was able to create a lot of similar experiences on the rest of the way out and on the way out – even in totally insane places, Tom, like California. Have you have been to California?

WOODS: Yeah, I've been there a bunch of times, sure.

VEINOTTE: What did you think of it? Like, were the politics really out and front and center where you were?

WOODS: Well, I haven't been there in a while and I'm sure it's much, much more in your face than when I was last there. But I really try to ignore that stuff. Like I'm from Massachusetts and you know being in New Hampshire what Massachusetts politics is like, but I still visit every year at least once because I just love it. And I really try to shut the politics out.

VEINOTTE: Yeah, see, I don't think I was prepared to do that. My first stop was San Francisco, and one of my drive journals I had to delete because it was so negative. I was commenting on these ten lanes of traffic going on way to go into San Francisco, and I was like, how is this even a real place? San Francisco had this feeling kind of like of the movie *Idiocracy*. Have you ever seen that movie?

WOODS: I know of it. I haven't seen it.

VEINOTTE: Right, so 500 years in the future. But yeah, I was very hyper aware of like having to pay a ten-cent plastic bag fee at convenience stores for the crime of needing a plastic bag, which is bad for the environment. And just multiply that times a million, like what the people who live in some of these places – I mean, San Francisco, especially, which is an absolutely beautiful city. I mean, all of California is absolutely beautiful. And it's funny that every individual that I talked to there was completely reasonable. They all said, *Oh yeah, this place, this is a real problem, the government here*. But last time I was in LA I was 13, so it was all about, ooh, let's see Arnold Schwarzenegger's star on the Walk of Fame and the Hollywood Sign. I didn't know the things about California that should bother me when I was 13 years old, so I think that might have been a better experience. I was almost looking for things to upset me about the politics of California.

But the people there, the ones that I met with outside of Oakland and then of course everyone who we got together with in LA, that made it a place that I would actually go

again. The community in Oakland, like a lot of these guys, they worked in construction, so they had awesome stories about dealing with the San Francisco city government that I really enjoyed listening to.

WOODS: When this documentary comes out, what do you think people are going to see in it? What are they going to take away from it?

VEINOTTE: Well, I think right now, Tom, Nick, the filmmaker – I don't know exactly what he has planned for the dozens and dozens of hours of footage and interviews. A lot of it is I'm driving my car and he's sitting in the passenger seat interviewing me about some pretty serious and in-depth subjects. How that will all come together, that is really going to be Nick's creation. I'm just featured in the film. And you know, I did ask that he keep me in the loop as far as what he's planning to do and the story that he wants to tell, but I know that experience that we had in the Albuquerque, New Mexico area, that was all captured on film. The day before that, we were at Ernie Hancock's house doing *Declare Your Independence*. There's plenty of footage from the event in LA. So I know it's going to be very lively, but I'm also interested and unsure of what the story Nick ultimately will tell with the film, what it will be. I'm not sure yet.

WOODS: Well, can I ask this: is he a sympathizer?

VEINOTTE: Oh, yeah. Yeah, he was actually a really big fan of *School Sucks* for years, and he had this filmmaking background. He's actually done a lot of automotive, like car-racing films. And he proposed this idea to me, and I said yeah, I think I would like to be the subject of a documentary film no matter what, so let's see what happens.

WOODS: Yeah. Yeah, well, it just goes to show how, as frustrating as it is to have to deal with a lot of the problems we face today, at the same time, it's still a very exciting time to live. Could you imagine the logistical impossibilities of having a documentary film made about your trip in the old days and the team you'd have to hire and you'd have to go through some big company and maybe they wouldn't be interested? None of that matters anymore. You can have a guy with a camera who can do an unbelievable job with editing software and he can produce and market it on his own. That's really something.

VEINOTTE: Yeah, and you know, I felt for him at times because he was a crew of one, setting up the lighting and the tripods and the cameras and clapping the slate. He did it all. And occasionally if I could chip in and do some thing for him, I would, but yeah, it was really impressive to watch him work and collect all this footage. So that's something to keep in mind, that it was done with a crew of one, which is also still – even though the technology allows it, it's still pretty impressive.

WOODS: All right, so what are your final thoughts as we wrap up today that you want to share either about your trip or about the *School Sucks Podcast*?

VEINOTTE: I can't wait to do something like this again. I mean, don't you really find that, when you do like the cruise or you did your 1,000th episode, wasn't that just such a rewarding experience to come face to face with those people?

WOODS: Oh, yeah. It is amazing and it makes you think – at least with the 1,000th episode, I was thinking I wish I could have like the 1,001 be the same as this one. But that event is – if you haven't done event planning, that event was far more expensive than anybody would realize. The giant video screens and stuff like that, whatever you think that costs, multiply it by ten. So it was not a cheap event to put on, but I thought – I don't like the expression, "I need to give back to society," certainly because I don't think I took anything, but in terms of my listeners, well, some of them do actually support the show financially and I thought, look, I'm going to take some of that support they gave me and show them a great time. So that was a lot of fun. So I know exactly what you mean. But what makes it all the more sweet is precisely that there's a delay between times that you get to do it, and then you'll really appreciate the next time.

VEINOTTE: Yeah, absolutely. I think my next event will be – I want to do like a *School Sucks* summer camp kind of thing next summer where for maybe a month I go out to the Midwest and I do the – I think it's called the Midwest Peace and Liberty Fest in the Detroit area, and then pitch my tent a few other places around there and really get to know the people.

But I think it was a really important thing for me to do for personal reasons. I had been seeing the world and seeing the country through the window that is the computer screen – you know, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube – where almost everything coming at me was negative and almost everything coming at me was completely out of my immediate control. And part of this trip was to actually go out and operate as much as I could in my sphere of control, with the people who are listening to my show, with the people that I've managed to influence through this work. And making connections with those people and hearing their stories and having them share their wisdom with me, I was just so impressed with group after group after group of people that I encountered on this trip.

So I would do *School Sucks Across America* again. I would do a *School Sucks Across What's Left of Europe*. We've talked about going to Australia. I definitely want to get down to Mexico this winter. I feel like this wanderlust has come over me. And I was a real shut-in for a while and a real introvert, and that was part of the challenge of this trip, was like, am I going to be able to go to place after place and be able to interact with 10, 15 people in each place. But it worked out and I feel like I'm much better off for it. And like I said, it was the greatest decision I've made in my life, to do this.

WOODS: Isn't it fun to be behind the microphone all this time, and then you get in your car and you drive around, and everywhere you go you find people who have been listening in? These people I've never seen or talked to before and they've been listening in. I don't know how to describe it. It's great.

VEINOTTE: It is. And you've had those experiences in real life, right, where people just see you in traffic [laughing].

WOODS: Yeah, literally in traffic. I had a guy drive – literally, we weren't even stopped at a light. He drove right up next to me and started talking.

VEINOTTE: [laughing]

WOODS: I'm not sure I want to have this particular conversation, but yeah, that is fun once in a while.

VEINOTTE: Yeah, that would be a little intense for me, but I do like ahead of time making the plan and then going to where those people are. It was just a really rewarding experience, and I learned a lot and I got a lot of great content. I said 20 podcasts, so people can see all of these discussions, mostly roundtables, some involving as many as 15 people, at SchoolSucksProject.com. It's right at the front page of the site, all of these shows.

WOODS: Okay, I was just going to ask you for the website but you took the words right out of my mouth. All right, so of course I'll link to this stuff. I'm going to link to some episodes that we mentioned, and I'll link to your website at TomWoods.com/1053. And until next time, thanks a lot, Brett. We always enjoy talking to you.

VEINOTTE: Thank you so much, Tom, and thanks for all your great work. I really appreciate it.