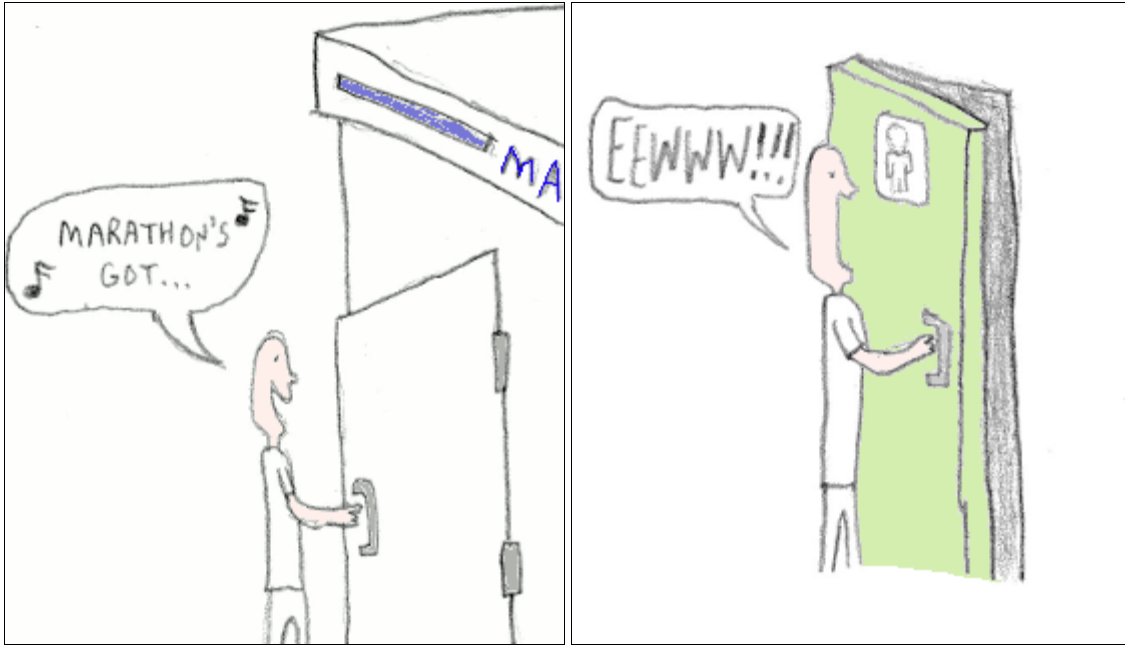


The Last Word™

Issue #520

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A person pooped in the urinal at Marathon



Marathon's got it—feces in the urinal, that is.

I was asked to embark (arf-arf!) on a brief trip to Port Huron, Michigan, for a Christmas family gathering. Traveling at all takes a lot of energy out of me because of my health issues, but I obliged.

On the way home, we stopped at a Marathon station in Franklin, Ohio. This gas station sells goodgum. But the real highlight was the restroom. I went into the beethoom to drain the main vein. The men's room had 2 stalls and one urinal. But the urinal and one of the stalls were labeled as out of order, so there was a line to use the only open stall.

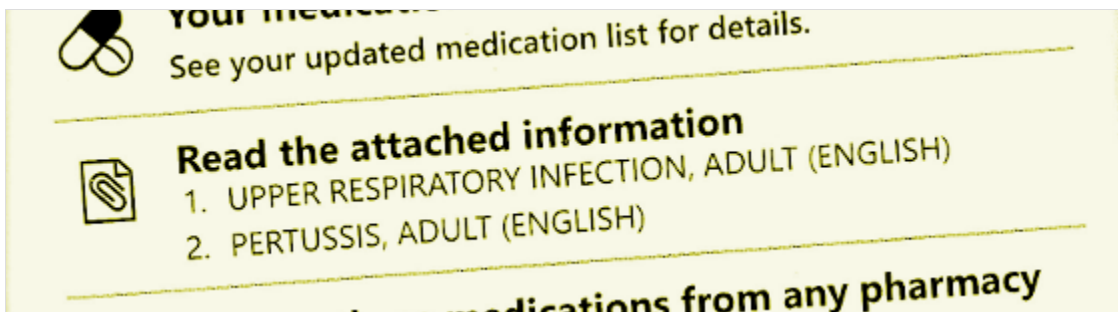
The *entire floor* of the restroom was wet. Not just in front of the toilets where we have a divine right to expect it to be wet from all the pee. The *whole floor*.

Best all, the urinal was draped with a plastic cover. Part of the cover was peeled back, and I noticed someone had defecated in the urinal. A big ol' log was standing guard in the receptacle, leering at all comers.

I'm talking poo-poo, my friends. Someone pooped in the pee-only potty!

But it would have been even funnier if it had happened at Boron.

Bust the pertuss!



Recent weeks have been as grim as any for my personal health.

What do you think my #1 medical worry is? Let me guess: crooked teeth. Just joking!

Rather—while the *Wall Street Journal* blares the supposed importance of a creepily flawless grin—

epidemic after epidemic has been either swept under the rug or gloated about by the pop-up media.

That's why recently I caught whooping cough—also known as pertussis.

At first, I thought it was just a wimpy case of bronchitis. After well over a week, it never really got better, and finally I had to go to the emergency room because I had a coughing spell that left me gasping for air. St. Elizabeth Hospital in Newport administered a round of x-rays and the dreadful cotton swab test in the nostrils. Then came the diagnosis: whooping cough.

The main treatment was a battery of prescriptions—including an antibiotic and a steroid. But the steroid—which was designed to open the airways—probably wasn't anything like the steroids that some student athletes at Brossart bragged about abusing back when I attended school there. That's why you don't see me going around starting fights. Luckily, we have just enough socialism in this society to help pay for the prescriptions—instead of forcing me to lose my shirt to capitalist greed.

Once again, socialism works, capitalism shirks.

Also, bed rest for an indefinite timeframe was ordered. Cue the right-wing millionaires who have never worked a day in their lives, who will inevitably declare, "But you're not a millionaire, so your whole life has been bed rest, hawr hawr hawr." Cue me, who has worked every day of his life, who will inevitably reply, "So where's your book?"

Frankly, I would have—and should have—gone to the emergency room earlier, except that for 30 years I've resigned myself to not seeking treatment for anything that might be serious. We're accustomed to the bleak, gray world of capitalist healthcare, in which insurers cover NorthKey's illegal false imprisonment—but nothing useful. It seems that now that healthcare has been established as a human right that is not to be crimped by market vagaries, NorthKey has been doubling down at inserting itself into local crises so they can get back to running roughshod over constitutional liberties.

'C' is for alibi...That good enough for me...

Sue Grafton died, and her death conjured up a memory of when I worked at the local library.

Ol' Sue was a writer from Louisville best known for her "alphabet series" of detective novels. The books have titles like "*A Is For Alibi*" and "*B Is For Burglar*". At the time of her death, Grafton had every novel in her series published except the one for Z.

When I worked at the library, the libe acquired copies of what existed so far of the series—when it was finished up to somewhere around "*K Is For Killer*". I had what was essentially assembly line work in the libe's back office. Nothing traumatic (except for the repeated assaults that occurred on the way home). Just boring.

So my co-workers and I had ways of breaking up the boredom. Probably even bubbled! My tasks included typing up the file cards and pockets for each book. The computers there were the earliest models of the Leading Edge, so they weren't advanced enough to print up cards. We used typewriters. So—when I did the cards for the Grafton novels—I slipped in a little silly.

The third book in Grafton's series is titled "*C Is For Corpse*". Given our penchant for *Sesame Street* jokes, you know exactly where this is headed. When I typed up the card and pocket for this book, I titled it "*C Is For Cookie*"—from the song belted out by the incomparable Cookie Monster.

The card went into the card catalog like that—and the book went out on the shelf with the pocket like that.

That good enough for me.



A person smashed a brand new record player

This is our February issue, so it's probably been a whole month since you've broken your brand new toys you got as holiday gifts.

I'm too old to receive toys for Christmas. Rank commercialism often induces parents to buy toys that their kids don't want, need, or use, but some toys are classics. So are the stories of the toy's ruinment.

For years, there's been a story circulating on the Internet from a guy who got a Stretch Armstrong for Christmas growing up. It was the only thing he wanted. But he had this toy for only an hour before stretching it too far, bouncing it off a small trampoline, and sending it crashing into an antique lamp. The lamp shattered, and the broken glass cut open poor Stretch. "Goo oozed out everywhere and he was ruined," the story goes.

I know I've mentioned my battle with the Domino Rally. I had a Domino Rally during the early '80s domino toppling craze, and it was of such poor quality that the snaps broke off the plastic dominoes the first time you tried using them—which ruined them beyond repair. As a bonus, we stored the toy under an old armchair, and a broken spring poking through the bottom of the chair kept grinding back and forth into the box, slowly obliterating the face of the girl on the box. Wikipedia even mentions the fragile snaps, saying that "the snaps on the dominoes were very easily broken. When this occurred, the domino was unable to be used in the snap-in assemblies of the set, and thus was ruined for good." No truer words were ever uttered.

When I was about 6 or 7, I got a keen new toy ambulance for Christmas that would zip across the room when you pushed down on it. I had it about 5 minutes before it broke because it was of such shoddy quality (but I'm sure I was blamed for breaking it).

Decades ago, Kenner sold a record player called the Close 'N Play. It was a toy, but it played real records. Folks on the Internet say it ruined their Shocking Blue and Simon & Garfunkel 45's, and most versions of it were too small to play albums. One woman says that when she was growing up, she stuffed Cheez Doodles down inside her sister's Close 'N Play, which demolished it thoroughly.

One feller says he got a Close 'N Play for Christmas one year—and almost immediately, he threw it down the steps because he couldn't find batteries for it. The record player was smashed to bits.

Another poster says she had a Close 'N Play in her day, but her dad got tired of hearing "Winchester Cathedral" constantly, so he smashed the record player with the record on it. (And yes, the resemblance between "Winchester Cathedral" and the music in the late '70s Wendy's commercials has been noted.)

To this very day, the Close 'N Play is panned by former owners. One says that with a Close 'N Play, "Your 45s didn't didn't [sic] stand a chance to last any more than 5 plays before the grooves [sic] were gouged out." Kind of like that Panasonic I had. One person noted that although the Close 'N Play wasn't introduced until 1966, it used the same type of metal needle that antique Victrolas had to play 78's.

In the early '90s, I went to a record collecting convention at a local motel. I noticed some fartpipe lugging around what appeared to be a Close 'N Play and using it to test each record before deciding whether to buy it. In all likelihood, the Close 'N Play ruined the records. He also boasted that he collected records only for resale and that the only thing he really liked collecting was comic books.

Maybe he can be the main character of a new comic book: *The Adventures Of Record Ruiner*. In each edition, this genius supervillain teams up with Harley Quinn to destroy another rare record.

Endless gummer nights

All the motormouths who complained that our high schools were teaching Marx were right—if they were talking about Richard Marx!

I was a typical American high schooler of the late '80s and early '90s—or at least typical for normal American places, which did not include northern Kentucky. So—being such a cool dude—I was aware of music titans like Richard Marx or the Escape Club. Some folks who pretended to be hip wouldn't even remember most of the major music acts of the era, because they had such one-track minds that they never listened to more than one or two artists. I remember a few people in high school who liked ol' Richard, and I remember at the end of the Walk-a-Thon hearing the opening notes of "Right Here Waiting" blaring from a



schoolmate's cassette player, but Brossart rarely got any hipper than that.

I was also aware of gum. Some folks who pretended to be hip wouldn't even remember most of the major brands of gum of that era, because they had such zero-track minds that they didn't even like gum. It just so happened that I tended to hang out with people who chewed the stuff by the gallon. I didn't wake up each day saying, "Today, I'm gonna hang out with some gummers." It just worked out that way. Not only did they gum, but they also bubbled big. And they wouldn't give up 'til they were satisfied.

So it was only natural that someone in those days would get the brilliant idea to have a contest in which the high school that sent in the most gum wrappers would win a free concert at their school. Cincinnati radio featured ads by Care-Free—a brand of sugarless gum that nobody liked—that invited students at local high schools to save their gum wrappers so they could get a concert. One year it was Richard Marx. Another year it was the Escape Club. I assume the winner was based on the most wrappers *per student*. But I'm not sure if they could accurately determine how many students were enrolled at each school. (Would I have been counted at Campbell County because I was on the class list despite being banned from enrolling?)

These commercials ran constantly, but I don't know *anyone* who entered the contest. My comrades gummed, but not with Care-Free. My current bizbud told me she used to try pink Care-Free when nothing else was handy, and it tasted of medicine and made her gag. She tried to enjoy a satisfying chew but just couldn't. Also, although many kids at Brossart gummed, not all of them would have produced any wrappers—because some students there chewed used wads they found on the floor or in the garbage can.

I never heard what school won the Richard Marx concert. However, I do recall that Pendleton County won the Escape Club show. Somehow I'm almost absolutely certain Pendleton County today wouldn't teach *any* Marx—not even Richard. Pendleton has become a leading candidate for most right-wing county in Kentucky. It's actually surprising that the Escape Club—whose biggest hit made a negative reference to Ronald Reagan—were able to perform at Pendleton County.

Maybe Care-Free gum is where the Escape Club got the idea for their song "Call It Poison."

According to the Intertubes, Care-Free held contests in other cities back in the '70s in which schools won concerts by England Dan & John Ford Coley, the Raspberries, Hall & Oates, the Grass Roots, and the Atlanta Rhythm Section.

Tooting our horn about this invention idea

Be inventive!

I've come up with an idea for an invention that should have appeared on *American Inventor*: a shopping cart with a horn.

Friends, there's nothing worse than kids blocking the aisle at the supermarket—except *adults* blocking the aisle at the supermarket. How many times have you gone to IGA and been boxed into the evaporated milk aisle by self-righteous clods?

If it can happen to me, it can happen to you! It can happen to everyone eventually. (I'm sure that's what the Yes song was about.)

One time years ago, I was at the grocery, and people boxed me in and tried to sell me something. So I became enraged, lifted my cart so it was at a 45-degree angle with the floor, and slammed it down with all my might! The noise probably shattered their chemical peel.

But with a cart horn, such destruction can be a thing of the past!

One toot with the horn, and you can expect aisle hogs to kindly step aside. The DLC always expects everybody else to step aside for a Joe Lieberman/Paul Vallas ticket—so I have just as much right to expect people blocking grocery aisles to step aside with just as much cheer.



No excuses for hate talk

Some people don't get it, so it's time to be serious and honest about this. At some point, this bullshit has got to stop. I'm tired of it.

In the era we live in, I shouldn't have to point out that there are some attitudes that need to be relegated to the sanitary sewer of history. Some folks don't seem to pick up on cues that nobody wants to hear their bigoted rantings, so here it comes.

We don't want to hear any more hate talk.

Is that clear now?

I don't care where you "heard" it—whether it's talk radio, cable TV, church, or "the guy on Facebook." If you claim to be Christian, I'd like to know what part of Jesus's teachings justifies this kind of talk. It's interesting how many people I know who do not purport to be Christian but are better Christians than some of those who claim to practice the faith.

If you feel so threatened by the modern world that you can't form an opinion without being told what to think by some right-wing pundit who accuses *Happy Days* of promoting a far-left agenda, that should be your problem and nobody else's. If you listen to far-right windbags but not anyone with sense, that's your fault.

I try to associate with smart, progressive people, and I have a right to expect things to be discussed at an intelligent level. People who spew bile are too brainwashed to discuss things intelligently, so they need to learn regard for where their goofy opinions aren't wanted. There's more of us than them, but we can't afford to pander to dangerous mob rule by the 1%. I have an important gob of mucus in my nose I'd much prefer to deal with.

Nobody wants to be a captive audience to hateful, arrogant chortling by those who think they have a license to force their ideas on everyone else. Attitudes like theirs are a leading factor in youth suicides, and there's blood on the hands of right-wing "personalities" and checkbook clergy who spread the hate.

Instead of shooting your mouth off, go read a book.

Music worst

I'm about to discuss something you probably haven't thought about in years (with good reason): VH1.

VH1 began in 1985 and was supposed to be the mature cousin of MTV, which was owned by the same conglomerate. But VH1 crashed down with such a thud that nobody today cares about it. Sort of like MTV.

MTV seemed to be entering crisis mode in the late '80s, and there was actually a brief period when VH1 seemed to play quite a few worthwhile music videos that MTV eschewed. (It's like when WKRC played a 10,000 Maniacs record that Q-102 didn't.) It's a shame Storer Cable offered VH1 with poor video quality and audio bleeding in from other channels, but you know how authentic and unspoiled I am, so it wasn't exactly my biggest obstacle in life.

After that, it was all downhill. By the end of the decade, I thought of VH1 as an outpost of pretentiousness. It had an elitist air that loomed fart-like through many American living rooms.

VH1 seemed fixated on certain bad tracks just for its own sake. I say that because not all of it was bad music you heard everywhere else. Some of it wasn't played much elsewhere. I can appreciate it if they smuggled each of these videos onto the airwaves once or twice, giving the viewing public a chance to judge them. But nope. It was the same ones over and over.

My heart sank whenever I tuned in and saw some now-washed-up legend thinking he was cool again because he started making videos and sang like he was storing cookies in his mouth. Or the nobody who thought he invented the spoken word record. Or a new remix of an earlier unremarkable video that VH1 ran into the ground—which meant VH1 was ready to play the new version every 15 minutes. VH1 also dredged up videos from over 20 years earlier and would play the same ones multiple times in a single evening. Ever hear of *variety*?

During my most successful incarnation of the People's Forum, we had a discussion of a pretentious promo VH1 ran constantly that showed different kinds of fruit tumbling out of a basket. Although probably not intentional, this promo made a mockery of great music traditions.

Hyping tunes that were not only relatively obscure but also mediocre at best was VH1's clumsy attempt to act like they were smarter and more mature than everyone else. At 16, I considered myself mature, responsible, and intelligent. I didn't see this in some of my classmates, but I saw it in many others of my age. If we weren't mature enough for VH1, then the channel's fan base at the time must be a pile of fossils now.

If I had a radio show of lost hits, I'd feel humiliated to include some of the VH1 favorites from that era.

Later, VH1 adopted the slogan "Music first", as they claimed to broaden their musical selection during a



time when MTV was playing less and less music. But by that time, I'd gotten my own place and haven't had cable since. Most of what I've happened to see of VH1 since then is not promising.

Meanwhile, VH1 has launched numerous other regional variants around the world, though it's heavily censored in Russia, since Russia is run by Donald Trump's friends and all.

In Russia, you still watch VH1. In America, VH1 still watches you!

Boffo bubblin' with the Shadoe!

You got *American Top 40* in my bubble gum!

You got bubble gum in my *American Top 40*!

Know what? It's fucking hilarious!

Since you're in the mood to puff out some mean bubbles while enjoying a classic installment of *AT40*, you won't want to miss this...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KrKeR3wIHtI>

In case you're afraid an Atari 800 kill screen might make your modem blow up if you click on that link, here's a description of that link and some background.

That's a clip that somebody uploaded of an *American Top 40* countdown from 1988—one of the first episodes hosted by Shadoe Stevens. The records in the countdown are spliced out to protect copyrights, but we get to hear Shadoe introducing each song.

This clip also includes the original commercials, and we know it's gonna be a barrel of guffaws right from the giddy-up, as Shadoe announces the show is sponsored by Bubble Yum—a bubble bustin' brand of beegee. You could kablammo some biggies with that stuff. We hit cooldirt only 4 minutes into the clip with a commersh for a bubble blowing contest conducted by Bubble Yum.

Back in 1988 when this aired, I was 15 and was being force-fed the relentless terror of Bishop Brossart High School. Unlike some people, I didn't go around blaming Bubble Yum for my overbite, so I considered this commersh a rare source of humor instead of cowering in the corner every time I heard it. I laughed and pointed at the radio the first time I heard this ad, and family members snickered as if to agree that the contest was a ridiculous idea.

According to the ad, here's how the contest worked. You'd "photograph the fabulous bubbles you and your friends can blow" and mail the photos to the Bubble Yum people. Contestants with the "funniest, zaniest, most boffo" bubble pictures would win prizes like big screen TV's and limo rides. (Wow.) The ad said over 2,000 runners-up would win a camera.

It was implied that you were supposed to send in a photo of yourself blowing a bubble that popped all over your face. They didn't come right out and say it, but I knew right away that's what they meant. How else could it be "boffo"? I think they just didn't say it because they didn't know what the proper, scientific phrase for this action is. But everybody in the English-speaking world calls it "blowing a bubble that pops all over your face." On the school bus one morning, I overheard 2 kids from another school discussing bubble gum, and one of them noted you could "blow a big, big bubble and pop it all over your face." Do an Internet search for variations of this phrase, and you'll find folks in New Zealand who you've never even met calling it that. It's not just you who calls it that. But it just doesn't sound encyclopedic.

In case you've been living under a boulder your whole life and don't know what I'm talking about, I'm referring to when you blow a large bubble that bursts and covers your face with the sticky goo. Blowing bubbles that pop all over their face is the #1 reason people chew gum, in fact. Gum is wasted if you don't do this.

The commersh also announced that the contest was "void where prohibited." Why would any state or locale—outside of Singapore—actually *pass a law* prohibiting this contest? But—unless they live somewhere like Singapore that outlaws gum entirely—I can't feel too bad for folks who resided in a place where the contest was prohibited. That's because I don't know anyone who entered the contest anyway. *Nobody*. This may seem surprising, because my pals tended to be bubble gum poppin' people. Then again, this was before digital cameras, so everyone had to worry that Kmart's photo processing center would lose or destroy their bubble pictures.



Nowadays, you can bubble just about anywhere and generate an almost bottomless supply of bubble gum selfies at the press of a button. Not so in 1988.

Since Bubble Yum had over 2,000 cameras to give away in a contest nobody entered, what happened to all the cameras? Most cameras I had in that era either got stolen or they were such poor quality that they broke after about a year. But one thing is for sure: Cameras were damn expensive! That was probably a \$150,000 investment by Bubble Yum—down the shitter.

Various brands of bubble gum ran ads on *AT40* in the '80s—starting in the Casey Kasem years and continuing after Shadoe took over. Some of the commercials even touted the size of bubbles you could blow! Now that the old Casey episodes are being aired again, it's a mystery why bubble gum makers don't run ads during it. Fans of the show who chomped beegee 30 years ago probably still do. We do know the pastime of boffo bubbling continued at least into America's lost decade. Facebook actually has a page titled "i blow huge bubbles and my teacher gets mad cause they pop all over my face." This page has only one post, which was made in 2009. It reads, "my teacher always yells at me for having to go to the bathroom to peel gum off my face." The group also has a phone number in the Philadelphia area. Bubbling didn't go out with the '80s.

Ray Conniff humiliated himself in front of Nixon

Bandleader Ray Conniff was a square's square—and he was proud of it.

I know it sounds strange to hear more modern acts like Papa Roach, Anteros, and Weezer alongside the late Ray Conniff. Conniff is perhaps best known for recording pop standards with a chorus of singers in that crazy Ray Conniff way.

Back in 1972, President Richard Nixon got Conniff and his singers to perform at the White House as part of a formal dinner honoring the founders of *Reader's Digest*. The event is now widely known as the "Richard Nixon/Ray Conniff incident."

Conniff had recently hired a singer for his chorus named Carole Feraci. While the chorus was preparing to perform a number, Feraci unfurled a banner that said, "STOP THE KILLING." Then she gave a speech urging Nixon to "stop bombing human beings, animals, and vegetation." This was in regard to the ongoing Vietnam War and the bombing of Cambodia.

Millions of Americans rightly agreed with Feraci's stance. But during the brief speech, Conniff embarrassed himself by trying to grab the banner from Feraci.

Feraci was allowed to sing the first song, but then ol' Ray made her leave—apparently at the urging of hecklers. Bernard Shaw—then of CBS—reported that Conniff said that "some singers cried with embarrassment" at Feraci's display. Martha Mitchell—wife of Nixon's Attorney General John Mitchell, who himself went on to be imprisoned over Watergate—said Feraci "ought to be torn limb from limb."

With the modern miracle of YouTube, an account of the incident is now available for the whole wide world to ogle (beep)...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WK34b4PGn4>

Poor Tricky Dicky's fee-fees got hurt! And Ray Conniff made an absolute spectacle of himself by trying to silence Carole Feraci.

But Feraci couldn't be silenced. She reportedly issued a statement not too long ago criticizing energy company greed and the rise of fascism under Donald Trump. *Reader's Digest* is in ruins after repeatedly cheering the Nixon administration. It's also been reported that the incident described above took place only a day after John Mitchell met with G. Gordon Liddy to draw up the plan to bug the Democrats' headquarters.

And Nixon went on to humiliate himself in front of the whole country.



It's no joke, my finger's broke!

A litany of hilarious *Sesame Street* jokes caused a car door to close on my left index finger so now I'm going to sue Gordon.

I'm just joking about the suing part, but the rest of this story is for real. It's true, it's true, it's all true!

It was Thursday, January 25, around 2:30 PM in the parking lot in front of Big Lots in Bellevue. We were

about to head into the store. It wasn't for gum, although they do stock goodgum from time to time. I think it was for contact paper, which is the next best thing. Anyway, after my *Sesame Street* comedy routine caused the injury, we went in the store as planned. I was in such pain that I felt lightheaded. I didn't even have the strength to keep my hand elevated like I was supposed to.

We then drove over to Kroger next door, but I almost passed out on the way over. My eyesight took on a weird color balance like the wolf vision effect in the "Electric Avenue" video, the Action Cam photos when I had a bad memory card, or a solar eclipse. This visual effect is called a *grayout* and usually occurs right before fainting or going into shock. I had double vision for hours after. People also said I became "loopy."

I didn't go to the doctor, since I don't think there's much they can do about a broken finger. And make no mistake, it's broken. As Matt Bevin likes to say: No question about it. It went numb, but mild pain spread to other fingers. So I tried to magically cure the broken finger by taping Q-Tips to it to hold it in place for the Time Being. This is the same thing I did when I broke my fingers at work on May 5, 2004. Q-Tips—in addition to being notorious toilet cloggers—are the perfect size and hardness but allow a tiny bit of flexibility.

A WHOLE SUMMER SHOT TO HELL BY A BROKEN FINGER!!!!!!!!!!!!

Brand new TV stands keep getting broken

It can be a royal barrel of baste to read review websites.

I managed to find bad reviews for 2 different moving companies charging them with the same sin: breaking a brand new TV stand.

A mover in Texas was accused of showing up an hour late and being slothful on the job so they could charge more (as they charged an hourly rate). They broke drinking glasses by packing them with heavy items on top of them. When the customer refused to pay because of this, the mover held his TV set as collateral. Then the customer discovered the mover had broken his new television stand. The moving crew also drank on the job and left their beer cans behind.

A New Jersey-based mover also should have been made to attend a poo eat. A customer witnessed this mover repeatedly breaking her furniture and reports that many other items "were broken and lost." Some of her furniture got drenched with cat pee. Her new TV stand got broken, and the mover managed to lose her ironing board. Another customer accused this mover of breaking \$10,000 worth of belongings.

Now peep this vid...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G3flFVoO74k>

In that video, a man confronts a mover who broke his antique glassware. "Tea set!" he repeatedly yells in distress. He also finds his comic book collection has become waterlogged—and therefore ruined. "That makes 'em worth nothing! Shinola!" he declares. When the mover suggests just letting the comic books dry out, the customer replies, "You don't dry them out. They're done! They're shit! They're fucked!" It appears as if some items got stolen.

Another mover got bad reviews for breaking a coffee table and stealing a \$3,000 designer purse. This mover also broke someone's TV, though it's unclear why this customer hired a mover just to move to an apartment within the same building.

Stuff got ru.

A person thought Bubble Tape isn't real

How can anyone who peoples this big, mean nation today not know what Bubble Tape is?

As you know, Bubble Tape is a brand of bubble gum sold in canisters roughly the size and shape of a hockey puck. Curled up inside the container is a 6-foot-long roll of gum. It's designed so you can break off the amount you need, like a Scotch tape dispenser. Most gummurs I'm acquainted with aren't big fans of it, because they don't like gum being dispensed in random quantities like this. They want pieces of standard sizes, because they want to know how big of a bubble they can blow. In addition, Bubble Tape loses most potential adult



customers because it looks like it's marketed just to elementary school kids.

But, believe it or not, I have a family member who had never heard of Bubble Tape in their entire life until just recently. This despite the fact that it's been sold openly and notoriously since 1988. I first saw it when some girl in my freshman algebra class chomped it in violation of Brossart's voluminous discipline code.

A few weeks ago—in the heady days when my whooping cough was thought to be just plain old bronchitis—we went to an important family gathering. There was a roll of pink Bubble Tape sitting on the coffee table smiling its ass off. My family member said, "Is that bubble gum?" Of course it's bubble gum! What do you think it is? The President of the United States?

They proceeded to explain that they'd never seen or heard of Bubble Tape ever before. How is that even possible? It's been staring us in the face at respectable gas station convenience stores for 30 years.

Another relative assured that Bubble Tape is "good stuff."

I can't believe a person just missed out on 30 years of bubble kaboomin' fun.

Let's talk about gum, baby...

"Let's talk about gum, baby...Let's talk about you and me..."

It seems like bubble gum is one of very few products people *discuss* more than they *use*.

Some people chew it and bubble with peerless efficiency—but they don't talk about it or boast about their bubbling skills. But it seems like there's many more people who are just the opposite: They talk about bubble gum much more than they chew it.

In elementary school, there was a brother-and-sister duo who talked about beegee a lot but very rarely chomped it. When our school had Olympic Day, the boy dumped an entire tank of fruit punch off the fire escape. He was the same kid who, after seeing a commercial for life insurance for people 65 or older, said he was going to buy a policy, even though he was only about 8. The only time he ever bubbled was when he blew spit bubbles in class.

At the same school, I had a classmate who lived part-time at an apartment up the street from me. One afternoon, I was playing in my front yard, when this boy rode his bike down to the intersection facing the yard. He sat astride his bicycle right in the middle of the street and launched a lengthy speech about bubble gum. He bragged that he had acquired a large quantity of this viscous viand and that he was just itching to ingest it. He scheduled his whole day around his plan to bust some beegee. He concluded, "I'll be chewing some later!"

Guess what, kid? Nobody cares.

This happened after the time when I was in 2nd grade when he brang Reese's Pieces to school and got skeeped at by the gym teacher. This touched off a years-long running joke that the candy was not Reese's Pieces but bubble gum.

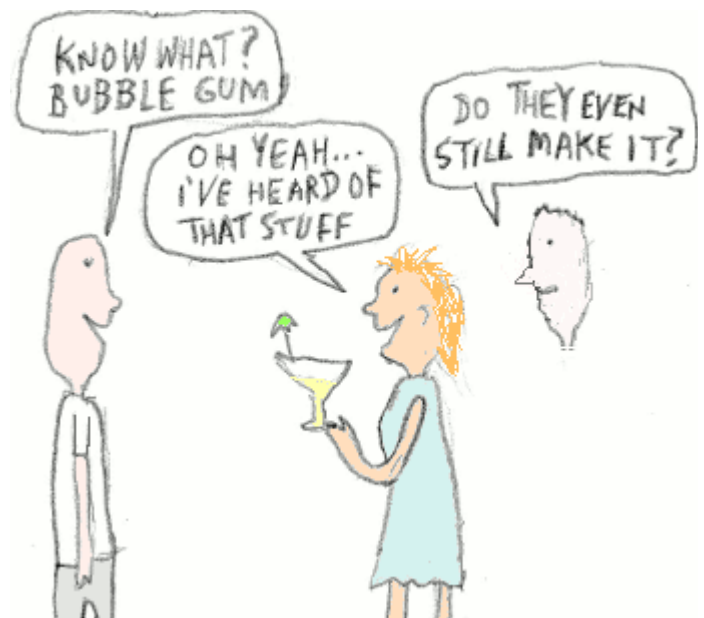
But did he ever follow through on his stated plan to chew bubble gum? Certainly, he discussed the stuff more than he chewed it.

When I was a sophomore at the calamitous Bishop Brossart High School, I was at lunch one day, and a person mentioned gum. Some girl responded by discussing in detail how she had spent the entire previous evening sitting at her kitchen table, blowing huge bubbles, and getting them to burst all over her face. I have no idea how she found the time for this bubbling session, because Brossart assigned about 6 hours of homework each night—but this bubble kerpowing endeavor was more constructive than any schoolwork assigned by this school. Yet she too discussed bubble gum much more than she chewed it.

In college, a young woman often talked about bubble gum commercials that had aired a decade earlier. She was also among the many who talked about this versatile confection much more than they masticated it.

Everybody knows someone they've known *their whole life* who has *never chewed gum* but then inexplicably crams a stick of it into their mouth one day. The person then proceeds to gum like a pro.

Go ahead. If you go to a party, class reunion, or wedding any time soon, mention bubble gum. Inevitably, people will start discussing it—even if there's no beegee anywhere in sight. It will be the highlight of the day, and you'll be the life of the party just for bringing up the topic!



Eyeglasses keep getting ruined

I'm a bifocals guy, so I'm at a disadvantage at knowing where to buy regular eyeglasses. But one of the nation's leading eyeglass retail chains stands accused of demolishing customers' spectacles just so they can sell them new ones.

I found a page on a well-known consumer affairs website that relates a couple stories of this retailer allegedly doing just that. The site says these stories "describe perfectly good glasses ruined" when the store offers to clean them.

A man says he visited the store and they insisted on doing a free cleaning of his gafas. He later discovered the cleaning had damaged the specs. He came back to the store, but the only remedy they offered was to sell him a new pair at half-price.

Another customer complained that another location of this retailer all the way across the country did the same thing. This person took their glasses to this store to be adjusted and cleaned, but "hours later they fell apart." As in the previous story, the store offered a new pair at 50% off.

A user of a review website also accuses this seller of destroying their glasses. They said they took in their brand new glasses to be adjusted and they were mishandled. Only later did they consult the Internet, where they found that "others have had similar lens ruining experiences" there.

Keek! Ruin!

Sea-Monkeys got wasted

Our January 2015 ish talked about what a scam Sea-Monkeys are. Sea-Monkeys are packets of brine shrimp eggs sold through mail order ads in comic books. They were supposed to hatch into powerful, majestic beasts but never grew bigger than a dust speck and didn't live very long.

Someone e-mailed me saying he ordered some when he was growing up—and they promptly got ruined.

That dude was so excited when his packet of Sea-Monkeys finally arrived. So he uncluttered his desk for the big event. The first barrier on the Sea-Monkeys' highway to destructment was cleared when the envelope full of eggs ripped downward, spilling the tiny eggs onto the desk. Not a big deal, because you can just scoop them up.

But it was late summer. Perfect weather to play with the electric fan. That dude had a brother who liked to talk into the fan to produce a robot voice. The unruly sibling turned the fan on full blast—dangerously close to the lightweight Sea-Monkey eggs—and began talking into it and laughing uncontrollably.

The fan wasn't aimed directly towards the pile of spilled eggs, so the eggs stayed put for a bit. But the fan had a button on the back that enabled it to oscillate. Yes, it happened.

The dog sauntered into the room, and the bratty sib began telling the dog to bark into the fan so it would sound funny. But the dog failed to get in front of the fan, so the fan had to go into oscillation mode.

Whoosh! There went the Sea-Monkeys!

The eggs blew away and were ground into the shag carpet. It's generally assumed that they never hatched. The dog probably ate some of the eggs.

The Sea-Monkey legend has continued even into the past few years. In 2016, a woman posted on her blog that someone had recently given her and her 8-year-old son Sea-Monkeys. But they thought they were bathtub toys like a rubber duckie—not living beings. The son played with the eggs in the tub thinking they'd quickly expand into rubber toys. The family didn't know Sea-Monkeys aren't bath toys until a few days later when they finally read the instructions. Then they scooped up the eggs that had clung to the inside of the tub and put them in the aquarium. Somehow, the eggs hadn't gone down the drain.

Major Morgan the Electronic Organ was so much cooler.



Kings Island charges adult admission to kids

Because it's a day ending in y, I'm gonna incisively poke fun at Kings Island, even though I haven't been there in 28 years.

Since Kings Island has brought back Winterfest, this costly amusement park is now subject to getting bad reviews not just in the summer. Recently, someone gave the park a poor review because it charged adult admission to a 6-year-old—even though the child isn't old enough to use the ice skating rink without an adult. This meant her mom had to spend *another* \$15 to skate.

The extra \$15 to skate wouldn't be as bad except that adult admission was already \$10 more than kids' admission. If you're not old enough to skate by yourself, you shouldn't be charged adult admission. So Kings Island got a 1-star review for that—and the fact that Winterfest turned out to be such a disappointment overall.

Someone responded saying that, although the commercial shows guests going up in the Eiffel Tower to look out at the Winterfest lights, the tower was closed when they went there.

Another reviewer says her 7-year-old daughter was charged adult admission—only to find out she wasn't tall enough to ride any of the rides.

Back in September, Kings Island got a bad review because it pulled its stunt of closing down so a private group can use it. This causes people to travel for hours from out of town just to discover the park is closed—not unlike in *National Lampoon's Vacation*. The reviewer called Kings Island beforehand and was told the park would be open all day starting at 6 AM. She made the 3-hour drive from out of state only to find out it was closed for a private group. It would not open until 7 PM. So her family waited in the parking lot for 13 hours, since they didn't have the money to drive all the way home and back. When the park finally opened, the reviewer was barred from most of the rides because of her weight. (The notion that “overweight” people shouldn't ride amusement park rides is hogwash, because Kings Island didn't have these restrictions in my day, and Disney World apparently still doesn't. Someone on another website said they weigh 494 pounds and rode a kiddie coaster at Disney with no problems.)

Still another Kings Island reviewer said the restrooms had “questionable material in standing water on the floor.”

Places with a theme make me run out of steam!

Bandit's stack of worries

I'm in the mood to worry you silly!

I'm a hopeless worrywart, so why not spread the pessimism around?

Here's something to worry about. What if you turn 65 but can't collect Social Security because the government thinks you'll get younger?

What if every member of the Kentucky legislature who doesn't claim to be in the Tea Party secretly is?

What if some venture capitalist uses eminent domain to take your house and doesn't pay you for it?

What if Matt Bevin issues an executive order requiring the arrest of people who disobey food restrictions imposed by their doctor?

What if this order also establishes a database of offenders that forbids you from receiving student loans or Medicare?

What if the order requires you to take a urine test to prove you're in compliance?

What if your ass gets bitten off in public?

What if your street gets renamed for your high school principal who hated you?

What if you use insurance you got under Obamacare to pay for your eyeglasses and Congress passes a law requiring the words “GOVERNMENT ISSUE” to be stamped on the lens?

What if that happens when you're 14 when all the pizzazz is supposed to enter your life?

What if you can't get Social Security because the Office of Vital Statistics had a silverfish infestation and your birth certificate got eaten?

What if Donald Trump enacts a national dress code that requires you to wear a shirt with a fictional character you resemble?

What if you have to take the P-ACT again because old security footage shows someone farted during the test?

What if?



People are afraid it might snow

It's official. America has raised a generation of wimps.

Life for me has always meant that—no matter how bad the weather is—you perform your chores. There was an era in high school when I had to wait for the school bus each morning along U.S. 27 in bitter cold. It was so early in the morning that it was still dark outside, and the wind was blowing such a strong gust that the heavy iron flagpole in front of McDonald's swayed. This was in the dead of winter. They very rarely called off school. When I had something to do, I did it.

In the past couple years, however, the phrase "winter weather advisory" seems to send everyone into a panic—even if the weather is nothing even close to what I had to go to school in. The 2 winters before this one were some of the mildest in years, but last year had at least one such advisory that sent everybody scrambling like it was the end of the world. Grocery stores become sheer chaos when each advisory is issued.

I blame the rise of extreme helicopter parenting, which was part of America's rapid decline of the 1990s and 2000s. This in turn was cheered by the right-wing media and political "leaders" of the time. When the once-edgy *Sesame Street* started looking more like *The Care Bears*, America just wasn't the same country it was in my day. The Far Right praised the end of what they called "the great disruption"—which lasted from the mid-'60s to mid-'90s—but when the "disruption" died, America died with it. This "disruption" was actually humanity's natural order. The only things it disrupted were the ideas that appealed only to authoritarian personality types.

Folks today just haven't been trained on how to react to inclement weather. They were never taught what in my day were considered basic skills.

I have a serious medical disorder called hypcobalaminemia, which destroys your central nervous system. So I buy whole milk, which has enough vitamin B12 to stave off my decomposition. Reportedly, however, many of the younger stockers at local supermarkets won't order whole milk, because they've never been allowed to get within 50 miles of whole milk in their entire lives, so they just assume nobody else drinks it either. I'm an understanding guy, so I don't blame them. That's because, apparently, due to the environment they were reared in, they *can't possibly fathom* anyone drinking milk that isn't skim. They're products of the America of Newt Gingrich and George W. Bush.

I have a long memory and I remember how rough most of our winters in the '90s were. Most of the media has swept this under the rug, because it doesn't fit their narrative (as they deny climate change). But Channel 9 recently surprised us by running a brief retrospective of the record-smashing 1996 blizzard. They didn't mention though that this storm came at the end of a prolonged government shutdown caused by congressional Republicans. The shutdown meant that many people didn't have any advance warning. On a related note, locals also had no warning of the deadly 1997 flood, because the 104th Reich had stripped funding from flood gauges.

The winter of 1995-96 was long and punishing. Imagine the next time there's a winter like that. And it *will* happen. People have become so terrified of everything that they're going to lock themselves in their houses for 4 months.

