

The Last Word™

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When a person gummed in Springfield

I'm gonna mention gum, because my readers keep demanding it.

I enjoyed a fact-finding mission to Springfield, Illinois, on November 4 to 5. The skies were rainy, but Abraham Lincoln was honored as we visited his historic sites and museum. I even got to finally tour Danville! Also, some woman who worked at the motel stuck a fork in the toaster in the breakfast room.

But did you know that a person once chewed gum in Springfield? I don't mean Honest Abe himself. A few years after Lincoln's death, an Ohio dentist obtained a patent for what he called "improved bubble gum", but in Lincoln's lifetime, bubbling would have been a difficult chore indeed. It was on my first visit to Springfield—back in 1992—that a gummer was spotted.

It poured down rain on that outing too, because that was during that year's unending Midwestern monsoon. (An article about 1992 on the website of the National Weather Service's Detroit bureau is titled "The Summer That Wasn't.") That was also the trip where I got the idea for the fanzine of freedom you're reading right now. I think this was also the trip where I kept hearing Colourhaus. Anyway, we embarked on a short guided tour of a Lincoln site. I believe it was Lincoln's old home or law office. Another fella on this tour—a burly guy who was probably in his twenties—was masticating a big quid of beegum. He didn't bubble. But he was chewin' bubble gum!

He was really goin' to town with that wad! To quote an intelligent person, he worked that gum like a gummer. This failed to enchant the tour guide. The guide considered beegum a bit of a distraction, probably because he was afraid the man might bubble. So he interrupted his talk to confront the man about it.

"Sir," the guide lamented. He continued with something to the effect of, "Didn't we say at the start of the tour not to chew gum?" Actually, nobody had said such a thing. I'm positive our counterculture caravan had bubble gum—but we knew better than to chomp it during a tour guide's presentation at a historic site. Would it have been hilarious? You bet! But also distracting.

After the visitor was confronted about his gumming, he smirked like a smartass and discarded his gee. Other visitors snickered—perhaps because the mere mention of gum is funny.

This wasn't the only instance on that trip in which complete strangers discussed gum. On the way to Springfield, we stopped at a rest area on I-74 in Indiana. The vending machine sold this zesty viand. A little boy saw it and declared, "I want gum!"

His mom admonished, "You ain't getting no gum!"

Now that kid is probably over 30 with a master's degree and uses his education for the betterment of gum.

There's no tantrum like a Kroger tantrum!

I was going to sit on this story for years—because I was afraid that those involved might be readers of this zine and that they'd be upset if I wrote about this incident. I wanted to wait until after they forgot about it. But this is a slow ish, and my health is not the best, so I don't think I can wait years.

A few months ago, I was in a Kroger mood, so I once again visited the friendly commune Kroger. As I was browsing the dairy department of this supermarket, I overheard the sound of a youngster angrily yelling. I walked past the frozen food section and noticed that a boy who was about 10 years old was loudly arguing with his adult family members about something. He was stamping his feet like a kid half his age.

And he used every word in the book! He seemed to be particularly fond of words starting with *f*.

The grownups patiently tried to calm him, but to no avail. At first, I wasn't quite sure what this screeching public skizzum was about.



But the boy went on like this—for a half-hour! I lollygagged in surrounding aisles to try to catch his entire harangue! I remember once when I was about 3, I threw a tantrum at Florence Mall, but it probably only lasted for about a minute, because I gave up when I realized I wasn't going to get my way. But that kid at Kroger persevered!

As far as I can tell, he was angry because he received a shitty toy from one of those coin-operated vending machines that dispenses a random small toy in a round container. It sounded like the oldsters were trying to tell him that getting worthless toys was a known hazard of using these machines, and that it builds character. But he just wouldn't listen. No sirree! When he put his hard-earned money in a machine, he expected *quality*, dammit!

I'm not sure what the toy was, and I don't remember these machines being a big deal yet in my day. I found a website that sells these toys to medical offices to give to their young patients, but I used to be so incensed by medical visits that I would have hoped I got a *damn good* toy out of it! I can't find any toys they have that I would have been interested in when I was 10.

That kid is a future state senator or county commissioner!

More Facebook fascism

Because this is a day ending in y, right-wing social networking site Facebook blows. They think they're the wokest, but they're not.

In early November, Facepoo coaxed a big, green langley out of its proboscis and smeared it all over America's unsuspecting visage. After the local village idiot and his right-wing pals invaded a bicycling group by posting juvenile insults and threats, I found a page of theirs in which they harassed heroin addicts by posting photos of their children. These sick fucks seem to be awfully interested in pictures of little kids.

When I gave their page a bad review, they immediately made false allegations against me to the Bellevue police. When I called the whiners out on this in another Facebook group, one of the usual suspects began arguing with me over a politically charged post I allegedly made 2 years ago. He didn't provide any proof I posted it, of course. Then a slew of other folks chimed in to echo this clown's complaint. The timing was suspicious, as I couldn't recall them ever posting before. I assume they're sockpuppets or Russian troll accounts.

Regarding the second complainant—not to be confused with the first village idiot—maybe I should have mentioned the time I witnessed his reckless driving in a local fast food parking lot. But I didn't get the chance, because Facebook deleted my earlier post. Facepalm does that a lot. They champion right-wing fake news but they delete posts—even whole accounts—that challenge it.

May all their TV sets become Coca-Colafied.

My new money-making project is here!

It's been a rough month for the "free market" incels. Being humiliated at the polls—which happens *every* time that people actually bother to, you know, *vote*—was only the start!

In the spirit of this permanent progressive mandate, I've released my newest major project, and it's driving the knife in even further against the Far Right. It's titled *LeftMaps: Campbell County, Ky*. For years, LeftMaps has been a series of detailed local maps showing streets, terrain contours, and more. The maps were intended for bicyclists—and other cool people! I offered primitive versions of a few of these maps on a website. But now, this project covers all of Campbell County in convenient e-book form!

Best all, the maps in this e-book are accompanied by commentary that incisively details right-wing extremism, corruption, meanness, incompetence, and bigotry that has plagued many local communities—perhaps even yours!

And this atlas is yours for only \$2.15! What a barg...

<http://www.lulu.com/shop/tim-brown/leftmaps-campbell-county-ky/ebook/product-23883476.html>

Admittedly, I didn't produce the maps with automobile travelers in mind. The cost of owning a car in Kentucky is exorbitant, because the state refuses to regulate insurance rates. But coolsters will find these maps at

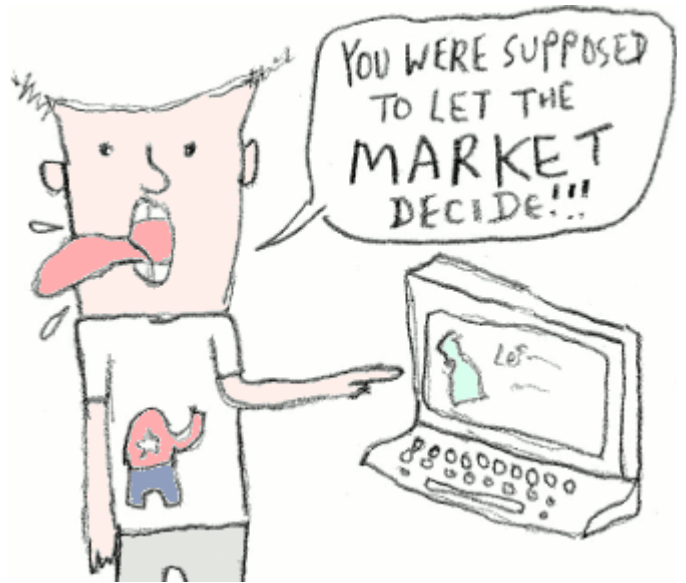


least somewhat useful regardless of their method of transport.

I have to put extra work into promoting this project, because the local media is not expected to make any mention of it. Lately, *almost every* article in the local press has been about NKU athletics or the Ark Park's supposed greatness—to the complete exclusion of almost any other topic.

I'm waiting on the edge of my seat to hear the tired "something something McDonald's" spiel that will be preached if this project doesn't make much money. Greed-driven crybabies claim no project should exist if it doesn't make money. If they want it to make money, they should buy a copy. But they won't, because it's easier for them to sit at their computer all day and pound out debunked tropes they got from Rush Limbaugh in 1994.

What do I get from this project if I don't make much money? I get the satisfaction of once again shattering the Far Right's fragile feelings—which would happen even if the e-book didn't detail their misdeeds. Their mantra is that I'm supposed to "let the market decide" whether this e-book exists. But this atlas will be available regardless of profitability—and *they can't stand that!*



Yet more money goes up Spectrum's rectum

As you know, Spectrum and Cincinnati Bell share a monopoly on local Internet service. Both are varying levels of bad.

As you also know, when Spectrum took over Time Warner—another merger rubber-stamped—the company vowed not to increase rates. But now—for the third time in only about 2 years—Rectum has again raised its rates. This cartel now charges us an alarming \$70.99 a month just for Internet—some 40% more than the national average. And yes, that's their "budget" plan.

After I mentioned Spectrum's rate hike on Twitter, Rectum took it upon itself to reply. The company pretended as if it was being helpful and invited me to call them about it. I know better, as it's not like I'm Spectrum's only customer who has to pay that much.

Capitalism can't dry up and blow away fast enough.

Packages (including beer) keep getting ruined

It's happened to me, and it's happened to you. We've all had packages utterly demolished by the postal service or shipping companies. And I don't just mean the Jim Bunning questionnaire that the post office cut in half and returned to me in a clear plastic envelope.

A person on the Internet said they ordered trading cards—but the United States Postal Service's website that lets you track packages said, "Because the item was perishable, it has been disposed of by the Post Office." Trading cards are perishable? That might be true if they came with the bubble gum (you knew that was coming!), but they didn't. Even then, the postal service defines perishable materials as those that "can deteriorate in the mail", and even those may be mailed if packaged "so that they arrive before they begin to deteriorate." Even that flat rectangle of bubble gum that came with baseball cards that would shatter if you dropped it more than an inch wouldn't spoil that quickly.

So the trading cards were gone. We've established that. Someone said they must have actually been stolen and recommended filing a theft claim. There was also speculation that somebody else shipped a perishable item, which broke in transit and got all over all the other packages, thereby ruining them.

Someone else ordered electronics components that were shipped by UPS. When they didn't arrive for days, the customer checked UPS's website, which read, "PACKAGE DAMAGED IN TRANSIT"—even though the seller listed the order status as complete. When the customer called UPS, the company brushed off the damaged package as normal.

There was even a business that purchased and resold goods that shipping companies had supposedly lost. So—instead of accidentally losing the packages—people at the shipping companies were selling them to this firm.

Maybe that's what's happened to a seller who regularly used UPS to ship to Amazon warehouses and discovered that half the items didn't even arrive. The seller said someone at UPS must have been opening the boxes from the bottom, stealing the merchandise, and resealing the boxes—so that empty boxes were shipped.

Another person claimed that 2 items they ordered—with a total value of \$600—were ruined when the postal service left them out in the rain. The seller was skeptical of this claim, saying the items were protected by plastic bags inside the boxes. Another customer says their package was destroyed when it was somehow run over by a vehicle while in transit. Another says they sent beer via UPS, but it was damaged in transit and “all merchandise was discarded.” After hounding UPS about the wasted beer, they concluded that only one or two bottles had gotten broken, and UPS somehow couldn’t account for the rest. UPS then refused to pay for the missing beer.

Another seller said FedEx completely destroyed a package containing an assortment of rare and exotic beer. Nothing of the beer remained—even though it was “packed like a tank.” As with the UPS case, FedEx refused to pay for the losses.

Still another customer says FedEx pulverized over \$1,000 worth of DJ equipment. Another says they ordered a very expensive telescope via FedEx, and it arrived in shambles. Another says that a box of Christmas ornaments they ordered through the mail was smashed while in transit. Another said the postal service ruined their copy of *The Economist* magazine, delivering only the cover. The rest of the magazine was nowhere to be found.

Stuff got ru.



A story about feathers to tickle your funny bone

My recent attention to petty shoplifting stories and old anti-theft scare films has given my fans a few good chuckles.

One reader is a former cashier at a crafts store who says she came face to face with an embarrassed feather fetishist. One day, many years ago, a young man sauntered into the store. He crept up and down the aisles with a suspicious air about him. Store clerks can often tell when a person plans to steal merchandise, as the culprit gives strange glances towards the counter. The cashier in this story kept an eye on this customer lest he opted to purloin any big-ticket items.

The clerk was able to peep through a shelf to witness the fella grabbing a small bag of feathers off the shelf and hiding it inside the front of his pants.

The young man then picked up one or two other items—but purchased those legit.

The cashier knew he stole the feathers but didn’t call the cops—because she wasn’t being paid nearly enough to worry about a bag of feathers that probably cost about 75 cents. Apparently, her boss didn’t have a great attitude towards workers, so she didn’t care if he lost a few cents here and there.

But why shoplift feathers while paying for items that were more expensive?

Fast forward 6 or 7 years. The clerk was now a manager at this shop but still did cashier work. A somewhat disheveled man bopped into the store one day. The clerk-turned-manager thought to herself, “Where have I seen this guy?” The man disappeared for a few moments and emerged with (you guessed it!) a bag of feathers.

As he was making the purchase, he went out of his way to tell a bullshit story that his dog really enjoyed chasing feathers and that the feathers would be used to line the dog’s bed to make it cozy.

Why was this guy so eager to tell an obviously made-up story about his dog chasing feathers?

After the man left the store, the clerk finally realized something: This was the same guy who stole feathers years before!

So what was the deal with the feathers? There can be only one conclusion: The man had a feather fetish. This made him embarrassed to buy feathers—so instead, he shoplifted them, or he made up stupid stories to justify buying them. That store is lucky that Amazon now sells items like feathers, so fetishists can just order feathers there instead of stealing them from the shop.

Why did the man need to get more feathers? I guess feathers wear out. Lord only knows what he used them for—or how often.

I don’t think he was making golf balls.

My Little Pony gallops into bad reviews

The immature bullies in middle school who thought they were macho supermen because they constantly

sang the Transformers and My Buddy advertising jingles were just as infatuated with My Little Pony.

My bizbud says she was never into My Little Pony—perhaps because she was getting too old for it by the time it became popular. But this equine legend lives on, as this franchise continues to produce toys. Now it has a battery-operated toy that looks like a mermaid and can swim in the bathtub, sink, or toilet.

And it's gotten some humiliating reviews.

A woman says she bought this toy for her 5-year-old daughter, and it worked for only 2 weeks—breaking the day after it became too late to return it. It turns out it wasn't properly waterproofed even though it was meant to be used in water, and the battery compartment rusted. She said, "Now we have a broken toy and a disappointed and sad kid, and a disappointed and irritated mom."

Another reviewer says the batteries corroded after only a month, and that they were lucky the battery acid didn't leak into the bathtub when her granddaughter was in it.

Another said that one of the fins broke off, so "buy at your own risk." Another called it a "shameful money grab" that worked for only 15 minutes. Still another asked for "a full refund for this garbage." Yet another reviewer posted photos indicating that the toy almost caught on fire!

I don't remember offhand ever having any toys that caught fire (except chemistry sets, which were meant to). The most dangerous toy I remember having was a plastic toy gun that fired disks in the air. You would wind up the disk by hand before pulling the trigger, and sometimes it went off in my hand. I looked around on the Internet, and apparently, it was called the Lunar Launcher—and they still make it. Its Amazon page blares, "Take flight to the cosmos with the Lunar Launcher." The only thing I remember it taking flight to was the neighbors' roof. Now it gets bad reviews because it often breaks the first time you use it. Someone purchased 2 of them—one for each of their kids—and they both broke within minutes. Another reviewer said her son "split his nose open" when the disk went off.

My Little Pony...Less than meets the eye!



A person shoplifted from Disney but planned a trip there anyway

When a Disney amusement park bans someone, they mean it. Mean it like a dictionary, they do. A big ol' unabridged! The ban may last a lifetime.

Someone on the Interpipes said they knew a feller who shoplifted from Walt Disney World, was jailed, and was ordered never to return. But only a few years later, he planned a big family trip to that park.

You do realize he almost certainly got caught when he tried to return, right? Disney has ways of finding out if banned guests come back. If he somehow got into the park, and was detected then, he would have been escorted out—with no refund—even if he was with his family. Usually, a Disney arrest is forever.

Ol' Walt might cut you some slack if you were young and immature—but not much. Someone said cheerleaders at their high school were caught shoplifting there and were banned from all Disney parks for 10 years. The school's cheerleading squad was also banned from competition for 10 years.

On the other hand, it might be harder to stop a banned guest from returning decades later if they got a different credit card account and address, because even if someone works there for years, they probably won't recognize a person who got in trouble there years ago. Then again, some visitors try to return the day after they get banned. The park takes their money and lets them get through—only to arrest them again. And Florida's trespassing laws are apparently tougher than Kentucky's. (Remember, Kentucky doesn't even let police detain people for third-degree trespassing—though NKU ignored that law, as you know.)

Sometimes fired employees will pull one over on Disney. They keep their ID and costumes after being fired and then let someone borrow the costume and change once they get inside the park. Then they impersonate a real employee, and guess what they do then? Stealstealsteal!

Reading stories like this, you don't know whether to laugh, cry, or say, "Stealstealsteal!"

Bert & Ernie's Garage was a real toy

"Bert & Ernie's Garage—where you can buy gas for 10 cents!"

That was one of our big battle cries back when I was 17. "Gas" was pronounced a bit like "goss", as if to mimic the aristocratic tone of a Ruth Warrick character.

I didn't invent this saying, but I knew it was inspired by a real toy. I vaguely remembered a toy that included the *Sesame Street* comedic duo, motorcycles, and a little gas station. I didn't think Ernie and Bert were the proprietors of that filling station though, so recently, I searched on the Internet to see if there was a different toy called Bert & Ernie's Garage.

Guess what? There was...



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64I5OVgTHkU>

The full name of it was Bert & Ernie's Tune-Up Garage. One website says it was introduced in 2012, but it had to have been around in 1990. I know it existed then, because I can't think of any other reason that a mere mention of a garage would have prompted someone to blurt out, "Bert & Ernie's Garage!" when there was nothing that had anything to do with *Sesame Street* anywhere in sight.

As for an earlier toy with motorcycles, I see the Internet mentions one from 1976 that looks familiar. However, it has no Bert—just Ernie—and the gas station is owned by the Count. Bizarrely, the toy is labeled as being for ages 3 to 7. I can't imagine a 7-year-old being interested in it.

Ernie and Bert. Kings among men!

Rewinding to the days of cassette singles!

I'm gonna mention cereal, because my readers keep demanding it.

Records—*vinyl*, that is—are making a comeback! But there seems to be no such renewed love for cassette singles.

Perhaps cassette singles are a reminder of an unhappy chapter in America's history: the 1990s. Nobody today seems to long for the decade of helmet hair, Newt Gingrich, and the prison-building boom. Besides, cassette singles really didn't have many advantages. They were good for boom boxes and car stereos, but that was about it. Plus, copying a record to a blank cassette worked just as well.

But as the '90s slogged on, cassette singles didn't have much competition. Record companies stupidly phased out vinyl, and CD's would have been a major financial investment for the music buyer. I usually bought singles instead of albums—since singles represent the brevity and accessibility of the era's greatest music. Singles were the people's medium. So when cassette singles took over, I amassed a collection of them.

I remember buying the cassette singles of "57 Channels" by Bruce Springsteen and "They Want EFX" by Das EFX when they were new. That was before greedy record labels began phasing out *all* single formats—which made it impossible to buy some well-known songs of the era unless you shelled out \$20 for the album on CD (in an era of stagflation, no less).

Did you know that some cereal boxes in the '90s included a free cassette single offer? People on the Interpipes say that back in the early '90s, they received tapes of "Hippychick" by Soho or "Think" by Information Society by sending in the proofs-of-purchase from cereal boxes. Some folks say they collected 2 of each for some reason—and danced around listening to them on a Walkman-style tape player.

"Hippychick" is known for the line, "I stopped loving you since the miners' strike." This inspired my statement, "I have been on level 1 since the miners' strike," which I famously deployed when I was a high school senior to fight against the school's idiotic "level" hogwash.

Again, the cassettes were available by sending in proofs-of-purchase. The tapes weren't in the cereal box

itself. So you didn't have to worry about Grins & Smiles & Giggles & Laughs crumbs getting down inside the cassette and ruining your tape deck.

Mister Rogers and his mighty middle

Now I've seen everything. And when I say everything, I mean *everything!* This ranks right up there with Casey Kasem launching a profanity-laced tirade while reading a letter from a listener.

If I pointed out that Bernie Sanders came within only 36 votes of winning Campbell County, you might—I repeat, *might*—believe me. If I noted that “One Toke Over The Line” was once performed on *The Lawrence Welk Show*, maybe—just *maybe*—you'd believe me.

But you'd *never* believe me if I told you that Mister Rogers once extended his middle finger on his own legendary television program. Never, ever, ever. Well, guess what? It happened, and it wasn't an outtake...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qW0UP9DOckQ>

My jaw hit the floor when I saw that. I had to keep watching it in disbelief.

That's a scene from one of the first episodes of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, back when the show aired only in black-and-white. In that scene, host Fred Rogers is singing along to a children's song, when suddenly he gets a big smile on his face and proudly displays the middle finger of his right hand to the camera. Then he does the same with his left hand. He waves his hands around with each middle finger fully telescoped, in full view of children on the set.

Was that a real scene from the show? Hell yes it was! It's not like some guy who looked exactly like Mister Rogers in 1968 and had a living room that looked just like the set of the show went through the trouble of making a fake. If the scene isn't real, where did it come from?

Did Mister Rogers even know it was an offensive gesture? Some have said that a middle finger wasn't considered vulgar back then, but actually it's had an offensive meaning since ancient times. It was ubiquitous as a foul gesture when I was in grade school only a decade after that scene aired. I remember the children's song, but I don't remember a middle finger accompanying it.

The most mild-mannered man on TV flipped the bird!



When magazines are newspapers and newspapers are magazines

You may have heard of the actuality show *Hoarders*. But for years, I've contended that there should also be a show called *Wasters*. Compulsively wasting things can be as bad as compulsively hoarding.

I cringe when people throw away perfectly good magazines—for magazines are usually intended to be hoarded. This contrasts with newspapers, which are generally discarded once you read them.

But there are exceptions. Sometimes magazines are actually newspapers, and newspapers are actually magazines—if you define each by their hoardability. For example, a magazine is really a newspaper if its content is no longer relevant after you read it once. It may be bound like a magazine and printed on slick magazine paper, but really it's a newspaper. This is not to denigrate actual newspapers. Newspapers have always had a role in any free and open society. But they are not usually something you keep and treasure.

Conversely, a newspaper is actually a magazine if it contains a story so big that you save the entire issue. For instance, take the “ROSE IS OUT!” edition of the *Cincinnati Post*. That was the big headline when Pete Rose was banned from Major League Baseball. For a long time after that day's edition was published, I noticed the *Post* running ads in its pages selling souvenir copies of that issue. So—although it was unbound and was in a broadsheet format like many newspapers—it was actually a magazine, for it was meant to be saved. (The *Post* did not do the same with an issue in that era that included hilarious photos of local celebrities made up as clowns. As far as I know, the *Post* also never identified exactly who they were, though they were believed to be certain local politicians and newscasters, including Carol Williams of Channel 9.) The far-right *Campus Report*—which NKU wasted money buying a bulk subscription to—looks like a newspaper, but it too is really a magazine: Its content was so over-the-top extreme and arrogant that I saved every issue I saw, so I could study it as if I was a specialist in abnormal psychology.

Some publications try to blur the line. The trade publication *Billboard*—known for its recording industry news and music charts like the legendary Hot 100—looks like a magazine, but for years, it called itself a newspaper on the cover. I was told that this was because some jurisdictions taxed magazines but not newspapers. But because of its hoardable content, *Billboard* falls safely in magazine territory.

All publications shall be presumed magazines unless proven newspapers in a court of law.

Operation KroSandwich?

You're never gonna guess what I did the other day. I goed Krogering! I Kroed for it until I could Kro no more!

As I was in the deli aisle at the friendly commune Kroger, I noticed something utterly nifto. Remember the Bubblicious wrapper in the '80s that made it appear as if the big, bubbly logo was blowing a small bubble? The bub emerged from the lower right of the bright lettering. It would tempt people to buy a pack and bubble with it. Admit it: Every time you saw it, you wanted to cram a big, juicy blob of beege into your mouth and puff out some mean bubbles! Now Kroger seems to be doing something similar with its lunchmeat!

The shelves with the packs of lunchmeat that were packaged in the store had little placards on them with a photo of a towering sandwich with many kinds of lunchmeat and other ingredients. This sandwich included a slice of turkey, ham, or some other meat that was folded over itself—making it appear as if it was blowing a small bubble that was expanding to the right of the sandwich. I actually thought it was bubble gum at first. The other side of the placard was a mirror image, so the apparent bubble was on the left.

I hope that anyone who saw it that day was able to resist the urge to buy lunchmeat so they could try to blow a bubble with it—because Kroger was of course out of most kinds of lunchmeat, including their roast beef that's almost \$10 a pound. The placard was taunting customers who were once again confronted with empty shelves.

Luckily, if people wanted to blow a bubble with a roast beef sandwich that badly, Arby's is right across the street. In the case of Arby's, however, it's the bun that bubbles, not the meat.

