

The Last word™

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People beered at Polar Plunge

People smuggled beer into Polar Plunge. They indeedity-doodledy did. I was there, but I wasn't beering...



Some libraries close the book on food

Food and libraries. What a mix!

Libraries may frown upon food and drink being imbibed therein. You might spill bevs on the books. However, bubble gum is usually tolerated, despite the inevitable noise of bubbles busting.

There have been exceptions to the above rules. For instance, the main branch of the Cincinnati library did have a small snack stand. The website of a college library in Ohio admits books “can be damaged by accidental spills or messy fingers.” But this libe allows food under certain rules, one of which is: “The food cannot be messy and cannot give off strong smells that disturb others.” Yet people pass gas every time I visit a library. Libraries at the University of Notre Dame allow snacks “that are not damaging to the collections or distracting to others.” At some University of Pennsylvania libraries, “messy, aromatic foods” are verboten. The website lists hoagies as an example. A public library in upstate New York allows snacks but expressly prohibits alcohol. A college library in England allows only bottles of water and specifically prohibits gum. The same clause says, “Bottles of ink are also prohibited.” That’s a useful warning in case you plan to drink ink. A high school library bans “visible gum.” That’s a euphemism for bubbling.

Some libraries have simply thrown up their hands in defeat. A librarian posted on Reddit...

“People *will* eat food in the library whether you want them to or not. The stricter your policy is, the more time you’re going to spend fighting with patrons about it, and the more likely they are to just sneak the food in and hide the evidence (like, say, shoving wrappers and crumbs under the cushions or refusing to let you know when they spill something because they don’t want to get told *again* that they can’t eat in the library).”

Because people defied rules on food in general, that means they also violated rules on gum, which in turn means they also bubbled. After all, gum is wasted if you don't blow bubbles.

Safely and surgically defying these Allowed Clouds has become a time-honored tradition. Some years back, an Internet celebrity made a point of eating candy in college libraries—just to fight the man! Occasionally at a library I'll notice a hunk of discarded food just laying around. An Internet post complained of "older adults who aren't able to eat without creating a giant mess." And in 2013 this gem appeared on YouTube...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5vn_ocESxg

Here's a synopsis of that video in case you're afraid an SRA Reading Laboratory card will fly out of your screen and imitate a beak that gnaws your face off. That clip was filmed in a library, where a patron sitting at the computer table loudly guzzled soda, crammed chips into his mouth, and crunched the chips loudly. A man bipped along and made him leave the libe.

The magic has continued just in the past few weeks! Snap Map recently revealed the antics of a student using a library at the University of Kentucky. As she sipped an iced coffee, she let the beverage slosh around and menace the libe's expensive electronic equipment. I'm reminded of the *Sesame Street* segment where Ernie dances around with a stack of cups and saucers and tells Bert he's not going to drop them because he glued them together. Pizza posed a similar threat at a library at Colorado State University.

Don't be surprised if the next time you grab a book off a library shelf, a half-eaten hamburger or soft pretzel comes with it.



Home of Buckeyes doesn't buck trend of stuff getting ru

February was off to a flying start before it even began, as this happened on January 31! I can't be at every party in the world all at once, but Snap Map is the next best thing to being there!

While browsing Snap Map, I stumbled upon some uproarious hijinks at Ohio State University! I found that at 2:20 AM a huge crowd of students—perhaps *hundreds*—was gathered on a lawn on campus. It was snowing. A feller brang a pair of skis to the lawn and smiled his ass off as he sailed by! But the real draw was using the university's huge, rectangular bins to sled down the hill. About 5 students crashed into each other at the bottom of the hill and laughed uncontrollably!

When it got light out, footage appeared of the ruined bins all over the walkway and lawn.

A couple days later, an even bigger crowd appeared and did the same thing! This time, they also pushed the school's dumpsters and benches down the hill, and tried to shove a scooter into a storm sewer.

Even NKU isn't safe from the hilarity lately. On one of the coldest days all winter, Snap Map showed a shirtless student diving off an air conditioning unit behind a dorm building and pretending to swim in the snow while everyone laughed. There was a good, satisfying snowball fight at the University of Kentucky a couple weeks later involving dozens of students, but after the library's computers were almost decimated by spilled coffee, that's hardly noteworthy.

Solid mold



Damn, I'm hungry! I think I'll rattle me up a nice sandwich with aged white cheddar cheese and mayo! Deelish!

I think I'll open that new pack of cheese I just bought from Kroger and dig right in! But wait! Look closely! What is that you see?

Why, it's mold.

I guess when they call it aged cheddar, they do mean *aged*. On the other hand, the expiration date on that pack of cheese wasn't bad. It wasn't great either. Still, it was the best Kroger had.

Some would argue that the mold really wasn't all that bad because it's small enough that it has to be circled in the photo—a dumb argument indeed. Some would say it's somehow my fault I got moldy cheese because I didn't get a pack with a better expiration date—even though it was the best the store had. Some would say it's my fault because I should have seen the mold before buying it—even though the mold was covered up by the packaging. Some would say Earth is flat or pi equals 4 or martial law works. People can say a lot of things, I guess.

The long and short of it is that Kroger in Bellevue sold moldy cheese—and they do it often. For several years, online comments have revealed that when food starts to spoil at other Kroger locations, it is often moved to the Bellevue store, because the Bellevue store is less bourgeois. I think the evidence is pretty convincing that even more effort is now being made to punish the Bellevue location. This isn't even the only time in recent months I've gotten moldy cheese at that store. It's happened at least 3 times since about December.

I didn't start a progressive populist zine so I could defend big corporations. Major corporations stand almost alone in clown world. All the things I used to warn you about aren't so funny now, are they?

A bunch of magazines got wasted

Back when folks used to read print magazines—when people still knew how to read—there were countless stories of magazines getting ruined as they were sent through the mail. My 8th grade homeroom teacher said someone at the post office drew a mustache on a picture of Muhammad Ali on a *Sports Illustrated* cover. Sometimes magazines never arrived. Other times, only the cover would be delivered—with none of the pages in between. There were times when some of the blame for that rested with the publisher for allowing some big celebrity or company to add a thick outer cover that folded out to advertise their latest product, causing the magazine to get caught in the sorting machine, but that usually wasn't the case.

Magazines continued to get wasted in the lost decade! I found an Internet thread from 2007 titled “The USPS Mangles my Magazines!” The complainant said that there were at least 3 issues of *Threads* that year that arrived in shambles. It was “all torn up AGAIN”, and the previous ish arrived a month late “in accordion folds!” They urged *Threads* to send its issues out in plastic wrappers so they could “get crumple free magazines.”

Someone suspected that somebody at the post office was taking the magazines home to read them and that they were getting ruined in the process. They suggested complaining to the post office, but the original commenter said they already did that, and the magazines kept on getting ru. As they relocated repeatedly, it happened at 3 different post offices. Another person replied saying they complained to their local postmaster, and

the postmaster hung up. Another said they knew a young man who worked at their city's main post office and kept seeing magazines that were supposed to be delivered all strewn about the break room.

Someone on Quora asked, "Why do my magazines always come ripped in the mail?" A Postal Service employee replied that this is because magazines are shipped in bundles of 30 or 40 tied together with plastic ties, and that the knives used to cut the ties ruin the magazines all up.

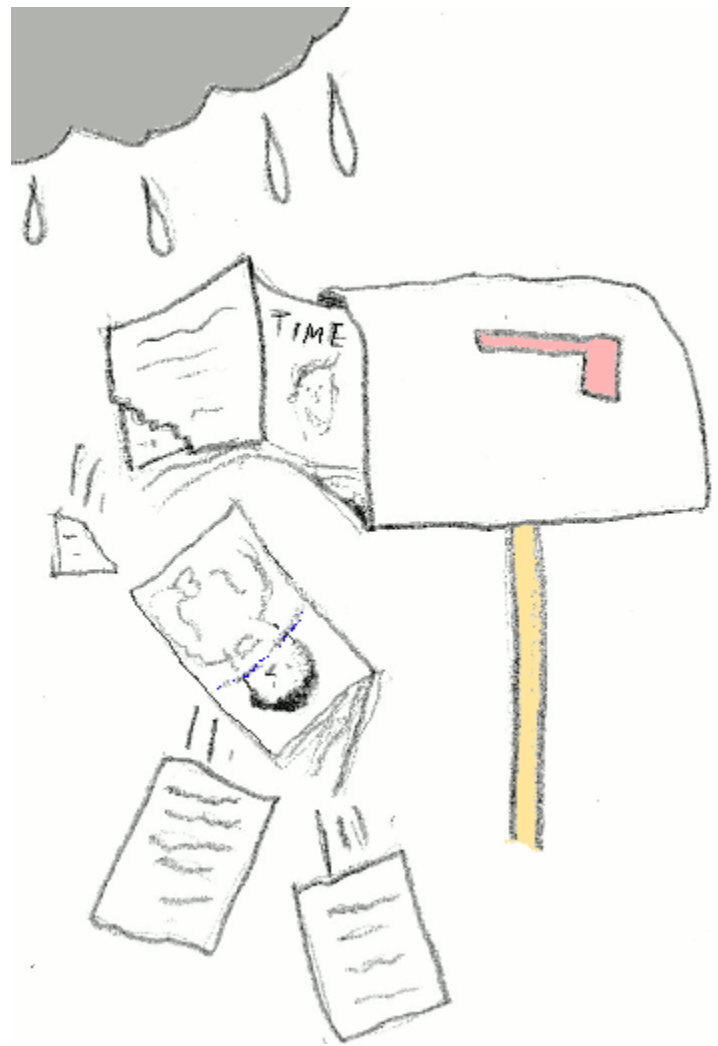
In a 2008 thread, someone reported that the Postal Service kept losing copies of several different magazines. The post office then blamed the publisher, even though the periodicals were from different publishers. A woman replied saying she had a subscription to *Ms.*, and every issue arrived covered with muddy footprints as if someone had moonwalked on it.

Recently, a Chattanooga newspaper said many area residents reported receiving "ruined packages." A woman said she mailed a book to a Nashville library, but it never arrived. And in 2014, hundreds of copies of a magazine put out by a civic association in Queens were lost or destroyed by the local post office. A newspaper reported that many copies of this magazine were "badly mangled", and in some cases, only the cover was delivered—after the post office placed it in a plastic bag with a "We care" sticker on it. Civic association members were kicked out of the post office when they went there to complain.

It's not always the Postal Service that seems to be to blame. In a 2019 post, an Amazon seller said they sent "a valuable National Geographic magazine" to a buyer, and it was in perfect shape. The buyer then returned it saying it was damaged and possibly a counterfeit and demanding a refund. Someone replied to this thread saying they think the buyer tried to scam the seller by sending back a damaged copy they already had and keeping the good copy.

Another respondent said a buyer pulled the same stunt with them, only it involved a record the buyer broke. This commenter said they consulted "experts" about the "physics of vinyl" to determine the buyer broke it. Another said someone sent back a Santa Claus sweater after getting food all over it. This respondent also said someone returned cosmetics after shoving their fingers into it: "Item is now trash and must be disposed of."

Whatever the weather, stuff got ru.



I wish the Bengals had won the Super Bowl

This article could just as easily be called "Why The Last Word is populist and the major media is elitist."

Instead of stovepiping Chinese Communist Party propaganda like CNN does, we keep it real. I didn't declare myself a progressive and start this project so I could practice vulture signaling and follow news outlets without questioning their Social Credit System. Remember, some media outlets pushed Ritalin even before I started this zine in 1993, so anything these sources have said for the past 28 years at least needs outside verification. Given their support for Big Pharma, endless wars, and right-wing economic theories, it's laughable that anyone claiming to be progressive would trust them without question.

Some news organizations are so dishonest that the wool they pull over everyone's eyes is 80% polyester.

And the media has not shown me the science—even on masks, which they're obsessed with. As long as they keep talking about masks, I'm going to keep joyfully lauding others' maskless events. If the media stops, I stop. This exchange is important for understanding the matter...

https://www.reddit.com/r/LockdownCriticalLeft/comments/leg516/what_are_your_thoughts_on_masks

If stay-at-home orders, nonstop maskage, and months of social distancing worked worth a damn, you'd see *more* people clamoring for more of it—not *fewer*.

This brings us to Super Bowl LV, which took place recently in Tampa. Throughout the football season, the

NFL had been making a big fuss about masks. The league fined coaches \$100,000 for failing to wear one, but coaches would often remove it when lecturing players right to their face. One coach was seen chomping a big wad of bubble gum under a mask, which looked ridiculous. But he probably bubbled! At least one team lost a draft pick because the players were seen celebrating without masks. Fans were menaced too. Very few spectators were even allowed into stadiums all season, and the NFL decreed that any fans who were would be compelled to wear a mask unless eating or drinking. Photos revealed that a significant percentage of fans violated this Allowed Cloud. After all, who wants to pay money for a recreational activity like going to a football game if they're forced to wear a mask?

I shouldn't even have to be saying this, but sports can safely be held with unmasked spectators. Evidently, a minor league baseball team in our area had games way back last summer where nobody had to wear a mask when relaxing in the stands. Many college games have been as unmasky as anything else lately, as was the Australian Open (until spectators were banned altogether when Victoria issued its zillionth lockdown).

I didn't watch Super Bowl LV, but as it got under way, I felt comforted to see someone posting on Reddit that large numbers of fans within the stadium were maskless. Somebody actually grumbled on Twitter that people in commercials didn't have masks, but most folks had run out of patience with such complaints. Here's something just as silly: The CDC demanded that fans at the game "stomp, clap, or bring hand-held noisemakers" instead of cheering or chanting. You're a joke, CDC.

The next day, a lengthy—*lengthy*—article appeared on some website that nobody reads that rambled about the lack of masks and social distancing by fans. It was like the piece whose writer blamed Bubble Yum for her crooked teeth, in that the website was less important than it thought it was. Photos with the article confirmed the barefaced fans, as the mask rule went "out the window."

Because this is a zine for the working poor, we usually don't concern ourselves with the doings of those who are financially secure. Other than healthcare workers who got free tickets, most Super Bowl attendees had to have been somewhat opulent, because tickets can't be cheap. But what about revelers who partied in the streets but didn't attend the game? Most were presumably of average means. This was the first Super Bowl where the stadium was the home of one of the teams that was playing, and when the Tampa Bay Buccaneers blasted to victory, folks all over the area celebrated. Despite attempts to require masks *outdoors* in Tampa—just to stop these celebrations—an overpowering majority of partygoers were maskless.

Even if the idea of masks outdoors wasn't thoroughly laughable, how does a mayor get to unilaterally issue proclamations like this, with no legislative or judicial review? In the George W. Bush era, many folks rightly raked Bush's "unitary executive theory" through cess, but don't expect today's Democrats to criticize it, because so many Democrats today were Republicans 15 years ago. They didn't drop their support for totalitarians when they switched parties. Plus, the Associated Press contradicted itself, calling the mask order "largely voluntary", while noting in the same paragraph that violators could be fined.

Now you know why I wish the Bengals had gone all the way to the Super Bowl and won. The game would have been in Tampa no matter what, but at least I could have stampeded down to the 'Nati and partied in the street! A decade ago, ESPN ranked the Bengals as the worst of more than 100 major North American sports teams in terms of how much the fans get in return for what they put into supporting the team. Later, some local politicians took the rare step of voicing support for the Bengals leaving town, because the public got such a raw deal. Since then, however, the Democrats have begun supporting the Republicans' sales tax hike that was enacted in 1996 to build the stadiums. A tax that was supposed to last 20 years has now lasted 25. But, as bad as this scam was, the Bengals still needed to win the Super Bowl!

If there's one thing to take away from this article, it's this, so pay close attention: The "new normal" will likely end when people call its bluff—not from governments and corporations easing the rules first. We know from experience that when our rulers get power, they hang on to it for dear life. The fact that America has less regard for civil liberties than it used to is beyond dispute. Even on online forums that were dominated by coronavirus gloom a few months ago, users are now saying that it's unrealistic for us to sit around and wait for the rules to be lifted. The general feeling there is that people should treat rules that are in force for an unreasonably long time the same way we treat the co-worker who constantly whines because they have to do their job like everyone else. Workers like that are given a cubicle off to the side and ignored. That's how these commenters are fighting "new normal" rules—by acting like they're not even there. It's not just that the end of "new normal" gaslighting *has to* come from the people, but that it's *going to*. It appears inevitable. When authorities realize they can't enforce the rules, they'll give up.

The power is with the people! A Reddit user said, "This ends when the people say it ends."



My pants got ruined by green bubble gum

This is yet another story from the abyss of Cline Middle School!

This was during that brief era when you used to see fluorescent green bubble gum. It was entirely possible to see someone pumping up a bright green bub that threatened to demolish their glasses—which, given the era, were likely to be that style that looked like they were upside-down and had big lenses. One thing is for sure: Green gum clashes with gray pants.

I learned this the hard way one day when I was eating lunch in the cafeteria. It had been an ordinary lunch period. Milk was flying. Fruit cocktail was being flung. Flatus was wafting.

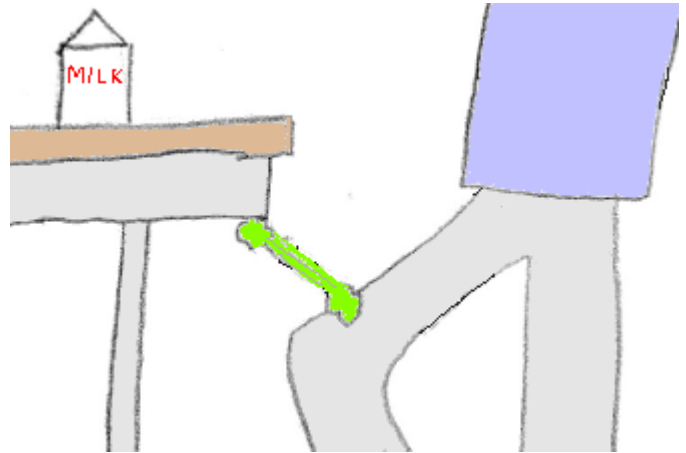
But it only took one wad of beegee to transform a regular day into a bubble gum catastrophe.

As I concluded my lunchage, I got up from my table. As it so happened, my knee hit the bottom of the table. There just happened to be a huge chaw of a fluorescent green goo stuck there. Why, it was gum of the bubble variety!

I pulled away from the table, and a big strand of this scrumptious beegee stretched a foot or two, linking the knee of my pants with the bottom of the table. As I broke free, the janitor saw what was up, and he brang out his trusty cleaning chemicals. This is the same janitor who caught kids red-handed peeing on the restroom floor and throwing wet toilet paper at the ceiling and said, “It ain’t a damn bit funny!” But the chemicals were no match for the green gum.

I had no choice but to walk around school the rest of the day with a wad of green gee stuck to the knee of my pants. Nobody else seemed to notice. But when I got home, I had to tell the entire embarrassing story. Best all, those pants were practically brand new.

Needless to say, that brand new pair of trousers was wasted.



Hockey cards on thin ice

Sports cards are gonna get ru! Can you guess how they get ru? Can you?
Peep this vid...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdjeki1W4A4&>

That clip is 26 minutes long, so let’s dig in when it gets exciting! In that video, a feller unwraps packs of hockey cards from 1989-90. He really, *really* wants a Trevor Linden card—more than anything else in the whole wide world!

What came with trading cards back then? Here’s a hint: You could blow bubbles with it. Anyhow, let’s fast-forward to 14:20. Through much of the vid, the narrator notes that the top card in each pack is often caked with the stick of bubble gum from 1990 that came with it—often destructing the card. He often calls it the “gum card.” Lo and behold, when he unwraps a pack, he discovers the Trevor Linden card he had wanted for years is the “gum card.” It’s ru. A big hunk of beegee is stuck to the card. The narrator declares, “Awww, damn!” It’s the one he wanted, and it’s wasted! “It’s wrecked,” he says.

At 16:20, we find another favorite card demolished by beegee. This time, it’s a Joe Sakic card. The narrator laments, “Two of the best rookies in my opinion—ruined by the gum!” The magic word! When he unwraps the next pack he says, “Another Hab ruined by the gum.” The magic word is used at least twice more before the video ends.

TLDR: A man wanted 2 specific hockey cards more than anything else, but out of dozens of unopened cards in a box, those 2 cards were ruined perhaps worse than any of the rest.

Internet insults, ‘90s style

People attacked each other online in the decade of incoherence—the 1990s!

When this blast from the past took place, it was probably the year Sing & Snore Scissors competed with

Teenage Mutant Cancel Forgers for most popular toy on holiday gift lists. We know we can't trust Google's archive worth a damn because of forged posts that made it look like I posted a bunch of off-topic insults.

Don't get me wrong, some of the insults were uproarious. But it wasn't me who posted them. Just because it's funny doesn't mean it was me!

Recently, I was thinking about one of the funniest comebacks ever posted in that era. I don't remember the exact words, but it went something like this. Somebody said to another commenter, "You invented that word." Then the person being addressed replied, "You invented shitting your pants."

Pure comedy gold!

We can go wrong

In the '90s, I bought stacks and stacks of used records, and I never found any that were snapped right in half. It does seem like I ended up with WCLU's copy of a 45 RPM single once, as it had a scratch right in the same spot, but never anything that was utterly smashed in two.

But *ordering* records can be risky business...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZzK0oVvnYc>

In that video, a man talks about how he ordered rare Cover Girls and Janet Jackson records and how they arrived in smithereens. He had them shipped all the way from Japan. One record cost \$42, the other \$100. He said both discs are "near impossible to find."

It's clear that somebody broke the records on purpose while they were in transit. That's not accidental damage. It looks like someone grabbed the records and smashed them over their knee. I don't know whether they broke them one by one or in a stack, but it was obviously intentional. And they probably knew the packages contained records. What else could they be?

When I was in college radio, people threw records, and they didn't break. It took a lot of force to break records even from that late era. Even in an environment where people liked to bust up shit, record breakage was rare. Whoever broke the records in this story was even more destructive than the people I went to school with—a difficult feat indeed!

Oaptag ruins pens

In 5th grade, oaptag was a type of very expensive posterboard. My teacher threatened to fine some kids \$60 for each sheet they wasted, and that was big money in the '80s.

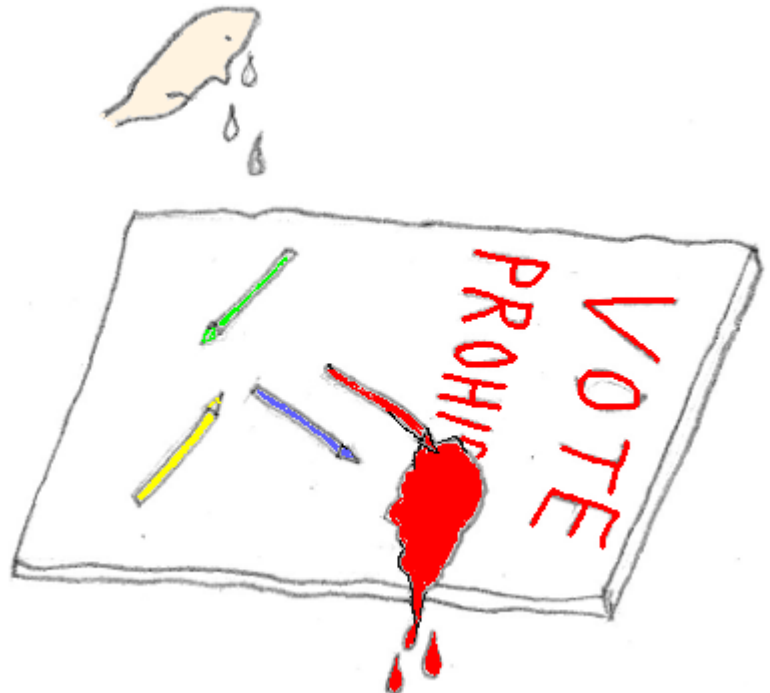
They still make oaptag, but I don't think anyone calls it that anymore. I saw some being sold on Amazon, and someone gave this particular kind a bad review, which reads in part...

"i don't know what you changed but this order contained boards covered in a film which prevented absorbing of the colored pens. Cost me a whole box of 25 useless boards and ruined s [sic] complete set of pens."

It was "covered in a film"? Was it *Star Wars*? Was it *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* or perhaps *Vulgar*?

But seriously. Notice the oaptag "ruined" a whole set of pens. The magic word! It's not known how it "ruined" them. If it started to ruin one, why let it ruin the rest? I guess it was like how libraries don't loan out reference books because they often come in a set, so if one book is lost, the whole set is in shambles.

Keek! Ruin!



The Reds bought a bunch of bubble gum

It's the Cincinnati Reds playin' basteball again, and when they do, they're gonna bubble!

Recently, players began reporting for spring training, and they made a special effort to make sure all their necessities got there before the team did. This equipment included balls, bats, hats, and 160 buckets of bubble gum. You know, that stuff you blow big bubs with.

I just made a factual statement. When I say you can blow bubbles with gum, it's not opinion. It's not falsehood. It's not speculation. It's a fact! You can buy that stuff, chew it, and puff out some mean bubs! There's a reason they call it bubble gum. It's a gummy substance and you can blow bubbles with it.

This story caused two news anchors at Channel 9 to mention bubble gum.

An online search revealed that this was at least the third year in a row that pretty much the exact same story was run by news outlets. Each year, the amount of gum is the same—160 buckets. It's like how when I went to Brossart, somebody would dump egg yolk in my locker at the same time each year. And what's the fixation on 160? It's like the Atari 800 being obsessed with the number 256—like how the devastating 2-line lockup bug kicked in whenever you deleted 256 bytes from a BASIC program you were working on.

Bubble today...Find 100 bubs...

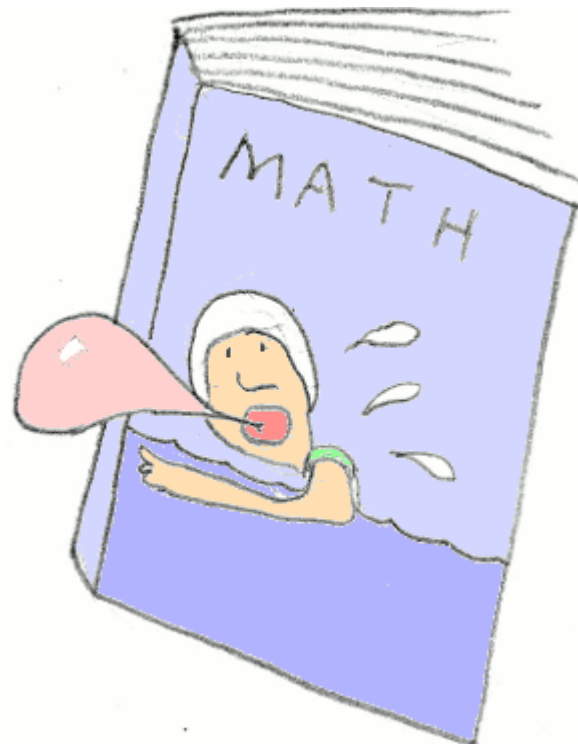
People are bustin' beegee far and wide! In some schools, it's not forbidden, and it's not merely tolerated—but encouraged!

In recent weeks, two public schools in the Pocatello, Idaho, district acted like bubble gum is the most hilarious substance ever invented. After all, it is. These schools held events centered on the number 100. At one school, it was the 100th day of instruction this school year. The other school was celebrating 100 years since it first opened. Students dressed in 1920s fashions because that was 100 years ago. They shot 100 basketball hoops. They got to run around the school 100 times.

And they blew 100 bubbles with bubble gum. It's unknown whether each student bubbled 100 times or if 100 was the total number of bubs blown by everyone—or if they all bubbled at the same time.

Imagine showing up at school and finding that you were expected to blow bubbles all day. You'd break out laughing because bubble gum is so uproarious!

At least these schools gave students something to be proud of. Schools rest on a continuum that ranges from average to very bad. Even some schools I attended that were terrible had a few positive aspects. So many people who lead American schools are barbarians, sociopaths, bullies, and narcissists who don't give a shit about young people. But even the worst schools had teachers who were knowledgeable and dedicated. I wouldn't have allowed any kid of mine anywhere near some of the people in our schools, but if some school somewhere screws up and makes school a positive experience for a change, more power to 'em!



Media less free

We like to think of society as more free than in past generations, but I can confirm firsthand this simply hasn't been true in my lifetime. Not only have basic civil liberties been chiseled away at, but censorship of the media is worse too.

Let's start with newspapers. Log on to the website of newspapers all over the country, and you'll see so many of them use the same layouts for their site. That's because so many newspapers are owned by so few corporations. This concentration of media ownership is detrimental to democracy and freedom of the press. By being commandeered by so few companies, these publications have the same out-of-touch perspective and have even spread some ideas that are flat-out false.

Radio and TV have become similarly concentrated. We no longer have most of the small, accessible stations that invested in community projects and aired diverse programming. Radio has become the domain of right-wing talk, phony preachers, and identical playlists. Over-the-air TV lately has become just as bad with its stream of pearl clutching over false targets. I frankly don't care to hear TV figures fuss about right-wing politicians after TV helped put these politicians in power. They can cry me a river. Also, the concept of city of license has become a complete joke.

Cable TV was once a wild frontier that grazed America's living rooms. Many folks remember the public

access shows, unedited movies, music videos, and more! Now it's as bad as regular TV, and a single big corporation often owns dozens of major channels.

Notice something lately about the rating label that appears on TV shows? It's gotten bigger. Now it blocks even more of the screen than before. It hasn't expanded so it stays on the screen throughout the entire show—a proposal that was like a '90s version of “zero COVID”—but it has grown in size. Until a quarter-century ago, neither over-the-air nor cable had rating labels, but now both do—under a congressional mandate. Yet *nobody* uses these ratings to determine what their kids are allowed to watch. Nobody uses the v-chip either, but you pay for a v-chip when you buy a TV. Even services like Hulu and Netflix have begun using these rating labels. Of course, commercials don't have to use the labels at all, because pumping “buy, buy, buy!” into our homes is considered too important.

Here's the real kick in the nuts. Those who support the policing of shows for content are usually those who oppose media ownership caps that would protect the public interest. It gets worse. While they require cable shows to carry labels, they argue that FCC rules designed to prevent distortion of news don't apply to cable. They use whatever argument suits the purpose at hand—and get it backwards.

“Alternative” newspapers have sold out so badly that they're now indistinguishable from what they're supposed to be an “alternative” to. Some of their “investigations” are nonstories, their reader polls show support for gentrification land grabs, and some of their articles repeat the propaganda spread by major media.

Magazines known for a progressive political stance have declined too, issuing full-throated endorsements for neoliberal authoritarians and accepting articles supporting policies diametrically opposed to progressive causes.

The Internet too was once a freewheeling frontier. You hear a lot now from the right about Big Tech censorship, and the right has every reason to complain if they truly believe they're the target of such online book burning. But now they know how the left feels after the left has been muzzled like this for 25 years. The Internet was portrayed to the public as an open, untamed wilderness that would promote the free flow of ideas and materials, but it wasn't long before the Internet became just another controlled medium. Not only were posts deleted for having the “wrong” views, but service providers and website hosting services were taken over by larger companies—the same sort of consolidation that helped deform newspapers, radio, and TV. Yahoo was even allowed to take over GeoCities. The blogging boom wasn't even safe, as blogging has been largely phased out in favor of Facebook's monopoly. People have to go on Facebook to read about things that a decade ago were available on blogs. Google used to be super for finding information on just about anything, but now any Google search yields nothing but articles from establishment news outlets. Google has denied manipulating search results like this, but one of Google's nobodies also admitted such manipulation, saying the company toyed with its algorithm “to help surface more authoritative pages and demote low-quality content.” So Big Tech censorship really *is* a thing.

Whether broadcast, print, or Internet, how can we stop this crap from hap? One of the most obvious solutions would be to restore ownership caps to limit the number of media outlets a company may own. We should also reinstate the Fairness Doctrine to help ensure balanced coverage of issues by over-the-air and cable outlets. And we should step up Net neutrality efforts to fight Big Tech censorship. One way to do this would be to classify social media sites as common carriers—holding them to the same standards that are supposed to govern utilities like phone companies. This would allow users to win civil judgments against social networking sites. Furthermore, this policy should be made retroactive to when these sites became monopolies. We should also unleash the Lanham Act's rules against false advertising to fight media falsehoods. Last but not least, American media companies should be required to divest themselves of interests in countries with hostile authoritarian regimes. Much of the propaganda they spread is designed to appease these governments to protect these interests.

The biggest threat to American democracy in my lifetime has been “government by Gannett.”

Health aide accused of stealing credit card to buy bubble gum

This story comes to us from Daytona Beach, Florida, and mentions bubble gum.

A home health aide has been arrested after being accused of stealing her elderly patient's credit card and medication. Authorities say the 35-year-old aide used the card to make more than \$1,000 in bogus purchases. She has been charged with a host of crimes.

But this arrest wasn't the bubble gum bust. It turns out that back in 2018 she was accused of pilfering a credit card from a neighbor. She allegedly went to Walmart and used the stolen card to buy beegum. However, the article did not state whether she bubbled.

Considering the story is from a Gannett newspaper, I'm surprised half the article isn't a big complaint about the woman not social distancing at Walmart even though the incident was 3 years ago.