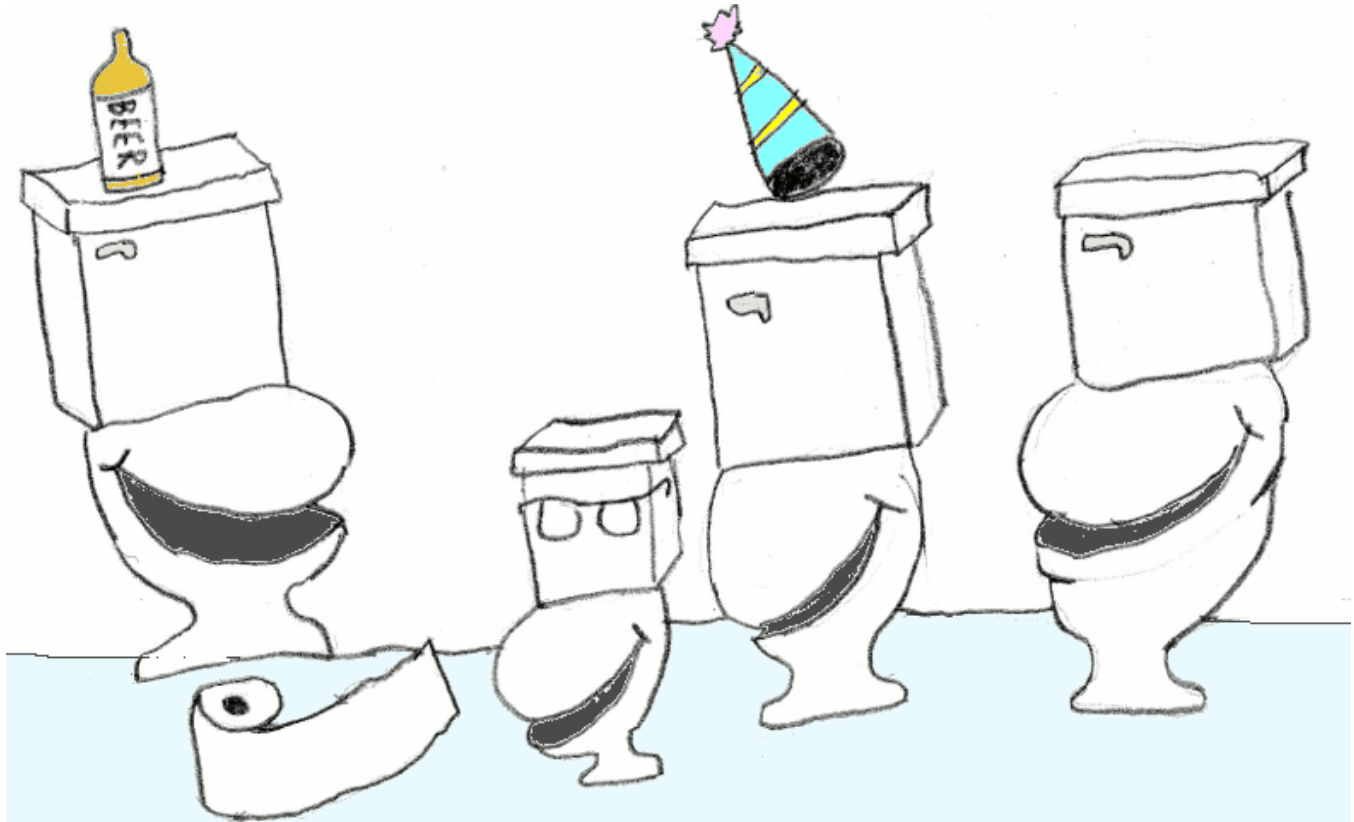


The Last word™

Issue #561

July 2021

People put the wind in Wind Cave!



Summer! It turns me upside-down! Summer, summer, summer! It's like a merry-go-round!

As the Northern Hemisphere was gearing up for summer, what better way to prepare than by going on a fact-finding mission to Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota? This mish lasted from June 6 to 12, and was it ever a beaut! It included a couple nights of camping, and it proved once again that the Plains are anything but plain!

The heat was stifling during most of the trip, with temperatures reaching triple digits, but a monster hailstorm at the park (keek!) ruined many of my belongings, as water seeped up through the floor of my tent. That was all the more reason to take a dip in some motel pools on the way home. That included an inn in Mitchell, South Dakota, where an elderly couple brang beer into the pool area, thus violating an Allowed Cloud.

This roadtrip is known as the Hawaiian Punch trip, because early in the outing, my thermos full of Hawaiian Punch exploded in the car. As we trekked through Illinois on the first day, Gov. Flintstone nearly spoiled the day by closing a rest area where we had planned to devour a picnic lunch. (I guess the hypocrite got bored with suing constituents for opposing his draconian COVID measures.) Also, when we stopped for din-din at a truck stop in far southwestern Iowa, we noticed the eatery was closed because of "mechanical issues." Were the seats actually mechanical bulls or something?

We saw Carhenge in Alliance, Nebraska, and not far from Wind Cave, we stopped by Jewel Cave. Jewel Cave was not named for singer Jewel. You may recall when someone stuck bubble gum on a Jewel poster at NKU, making it appear as if she was blowing a bubble, but a short film at Jewel Cave revealed that the cave can bubble: The cave has hydromagnesite balloons, which according to a National Park Service website "are some of the rarest speleothems to exist."

Back at the campground at Wind Cave, people put the wind in the Wind Cave by repeatedly letting loose with a backdoor breeze. Each night, I heard loud-and-proud bunker blasts crackling through the air.

We also visited the National Presidential Wax Museum, which has wax likenesses of every President from George Washington through Donald Trump, with a Joe Biden exhibit coming soon. The museum showed a video detailing how they created the Trump sculpture. I thought it was absolutely hilarious, and YouTube has it...

The only thing that would have made it funnier is if it used that “dinga ding ding *clap!* ding ding ding” background music that radio commercials and chamber of commerce videos from 1988 always used.

Meanwhile, back at the campground, toilet funniness abounded. I went into the men’s room and noticed there was gobs of dry toilet paper draped across the toilet seat and all over the floor. Later, I was told that this dry toilet paper had somehow morphed into wet toilet paper—like that I saw covering the floor of a gas station restroom on the way home. From my campsite all the way across the campground, I saw a maintenance man inspect the lavatory. Another maintenance man pulled up, and I could hear one of the men say that “some son of a bitch” had laid hulk to this crapper. The destruction was apparently so radical that a ranger had to be called in too. I saw a ranger pull up in his truck to talk to the men.

But few things can beat Wind Cave itself. We went on an hour-long guided tour of this marvelous cave! About 30 of us crammed together in each room of the cave, and everyone smiled their asses off as they crept along!

Even a restaurant in Sac City, Iowa, where a woman sounded like she was about to cough up a lung couldn’t rival the rest of this trip!

Our fourth overnight roadtrip since the middle of 2020 was a smashing success!

Holy Stone, Batman!

Things break! But usually not quite so spectacularly.

As a celebratory end-of-pandemic gift, I received a brand new \$200 drone. The drone is a Holy Stone, but it ought to be Holy something else, because that’s what you say when you see it break!

I set up the drone precisely according to the instructions, and it lasted all of 10 seconds. During setup, it was supposed to rise 5 feet in the air and loom there until you told it to descend back to the ground. Instead, it decided to grow a mind of its own, quickly fly away, and smash into a building—breaking one of the wings.

The benefactor of this defective device couldn’t return it, because it had been purchased more than a month earlier. In response to a Facebook post I had made asking if there were any local laws on drones, she replied, “There should be a law against breaking drones on your first flight!” So at least she was a good sport about it, like Jewel laughing when Nikki Glaser told crooked teeth jokes, or Drew Carey when the *Price Is Right* train plowed into an expensive coffee maker and shattered it. Since we couldn’t return the drone, I did the next best thing. I consulted my old pal Elmer and glued the wing back on.

The next morning, after the glue dried, I wanted to see if the drone still worked at all. I took it down by the new Manhattan Harbor luxury homes. If a building there got damaged, I wouldn’t care, because they shouldn’t have built luxury houses and condos there. Even with a wing held together with Elmer’s glue, the drone soared hundreds of feet into the sky! It hovered there for the whole wide world to ogle (beep).

After a few minutes of this test run, I tried bringing the drone back to base. But it was so unstable that it kept trying to attack me and then finally crashed into a bench—breaking the wing again.

I was determined to take this broken wing and learn to fly again (as Mr. Mister would say). So out came the duct tape!

A few days later, I brang the wasted drone—with the wing held together with duct tape—back down to Manhattan Fubar. This time, the drone would only ascend about 10 feet in the air, and it would fly for only a few seconds before crashing to the ground. There it would flail like a high school bully who finally got decked.

Looks like this Gerber don’t gerb.

I guess the duct tape weighted it down. You can buy a replacement wing for about \$35, but I balk at doing so, because it’ll probably just break again. Maybe we should just chalk this up as one of my rare failed experiments. Instead of being a long-running success like the Peace Bike, the drone has been more like the Sea Monkeys. I’m reminded of what happened on a computer bulletin board system in the late ‘80s. On this BBS, when the new messages were coming in, you could press any key to abort. (Cincinnati Bell was so primitive that line noise would often abort it.) One day, the sysop changed the message to “ABORTED BY YOURS TRUELY.”



The misspelling was his. This was mocked so much that it lasted about a day before he changed it again.
Our drone misadventures are deserving and worthy of ridicule.

People put the gum in Wind Cave too!

When we took a guided tour of Wind Cave, it occurred to us that the cave can probably bubble if you use enough gum.

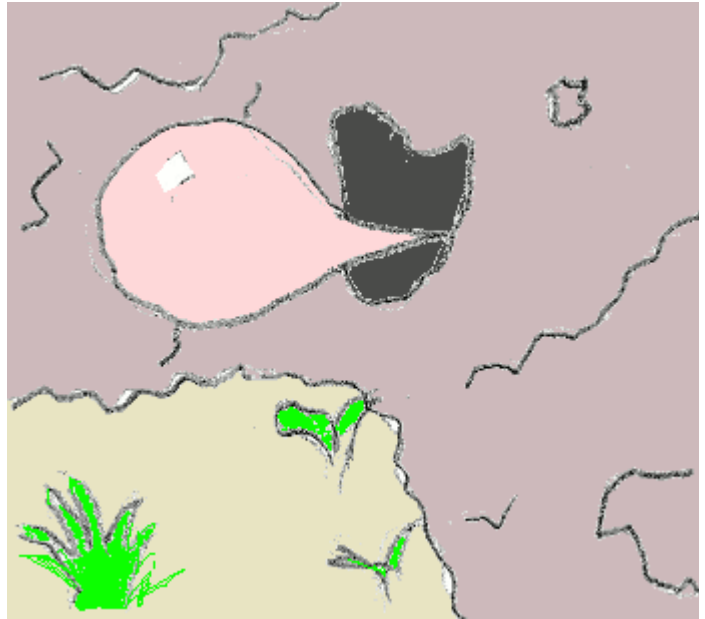
In addition to the entrance built by people, the cave has an 18-inch-wide natural entrance that “breathes.” Wind sometimes blows out of this opening. You can probably stretch out a big wad of beegum, place it over this entrance, and watch it blow a bodacious bubble! Sometimes the cave sucks air in—and would likely do the same with bubble gum if it had the chance, in much the same way a person rids themselves of a bub before it gets too big. The “breathing” is how the cave maintains air pressure.

I can’t actually encourage placing gum over the entrance, because that would be like the commercial where the ranger poured Metamucil into Old Faithful. I’m sure the National Park Service would have something to say about it.

But did you know that people chomped gee inside the cave in violation of an Allowed Cloud? Indeed they did. At the start of our tour, the ranger warned all of us that food and drink were prohibited on the tour—and that specifically included gum. Yet I noticed a few people gumming during the tour.

As we gathered under the shelter before the tour, some woman who was probably in her thirties was really going to town with some bubble gum. It appeared as if she kept trying to blow a bubble but didn’t know how. You could tell she was singularly focused on that important task. At the end of the tour, she appeared to be stretching her gum out of her mouth and twirling it around on her finger. This used to be a common sight, but I hadn’t seen anyone do this in public in about 15 years. But it turned out that this wasn’t gum. It was actually the drawstring of her jacket. When she noticed everyone staring, she abruptly stopped.

How professional!



Water complaint is all wet

Something rather whimsical if not downright hilarious happened a few weeks ago.

The principal of a local Catholic school posted surveillance photos on Facebook of about a half-dozen children playing on the school’s parking lot. The kids were smiling widely and having a mighty fine time, yep (as the cough drop commercial would say)! The complainant asked folks to identify the children, who apparently were not students at the school.

The big complaint was that the kids used the school’s water from a faucet on the outside of the building. They ran the wawa for 4 hours to fill water balloons. When they were done, they left garbage and burst balloons laying around.

Some criticized the principal for posting photos of children or commented that at least the kids weren’t out starting fights or committing real vandalism. The post was really just a complaint that the school’s wa got wosted—when the agua was actually put to good use.

Whither the Holidome?

Vacationing families of 40 years ago may be familiar with the Holidome—a feature of many Holiday Inn hotels. Folks fondly recall talking about how their inn “has a Holidoommmmmme” as they gestured with their hands in the shape of a dome over family members’ heads—which inevitably prompted them to yell, **“CUT IT OUT!!!”**

What indeed was a Holidome? That’s a question any child may ask you. But it is not a childish question. A Holidome was a climate-controlled indoor recreation space that included a swimming pool and maybe other amenities like a basketball court, arcade, or miniature golf course. It was a huge atrium that was almost like a small indoor amusement park contained within the hotel. It was like a covered courtyard surrounded by the

guests' rooms. The rooms on the upper floors were often surrounded by a loft overlooking the atrium. Despite the name, the roof usually was not rounded. Holidomes were used not just by vacationers but also for proms and reunions.

Holidomes first appeared in regions like North Dakota where it was too cold for outdoor pools most of the year, but they became popular in places like Florida too. One historian told CNN that Holidomes were like "travel insurance" because "there's nothing worse than taking your kids on vacation in Florida and it rains for the whole week." I can think of a few things that are worse, like Brossart. But that's a whole other matter.

As appealing as Holidomes were, they were so costly to maintain that Holiday Inn operators largely abandoned them. The pools produced humidity that ruined the ceilings. By the 2000s, very few Holidomes remained. One in Perrysburg, Ohio, managed to hang on until 2019. Fewer than 5 may have lasted past then, though apparently a couple Holiday Inns in St. Louis and in Spearfish, South Dakota, still have one. That doesn't count those where the hotel has left the Holiday Inn chain but the Holidome has remained.

In 2011, a former Holiday Inn in Fort Mitchell was shut down by the city as a "chronic nuisance." News reports at the time said the hotel once had a Holidome—though the hotel had left the Holiday Inn chain by then. Also, *nuisance* is a funny word.

Folks who grew up in my day may remember the old Holiday Inn directories—with the glossy page near the front with the small photo of the green Holiday Inn sign glowing in the twilight. If you're *really* old like me, you may remember when the maps in it were blue rather than green. You may also remember the later directories with the Bugs Bunny promotion. These booklets were also one of very few places I ever heard of a telex machine other than the Boomtown Rats song.

But do they have a *Holidoommmmmme*?

I've got a nickel...I've got a nickel...

They're shocking! They're rapid fire! They'll have you coming back for more (as Ratt would say)! Can you guess what they are? Why, they're another set of stories of expensive or irreplaceable things getting roodledy-doodledy! Whenever you read these installments, think of all the cherished memories that came crashing down with them or the expense to various companies!

One online commenter says that when they were a teenager, they shoved a nickel into the grooves of one of the steps of an escalator at a mall. It got caught under the metal panel at the bottom of the escalator, and it screeched to a halt. The escalator was closed for days. Some of you may recall that I did the same thing at a department store once, except I used a metal hook instead of a nickel. (I'm frugal.)

Another commenter said that when they were 13, they accidentally left their freezer door open overnight, and all the food in it was "wasted." This resulted in their dad launching an angry harangue. Someone else said they did the same thing when they worked at TCBY, causing the floor to be covered with melted ice cream. Another said they did this when they worked at some sort of eating place—which wosted \$2,000 worth of food. But that was mostly caused by the boss not fixing the freezer door after being informed many times it wouldn't close properly.

Another respondent said they "ruined" a \$175,000 silicon carbide tube and smashed a \$100,000 quartz ring boat at a semiconductor lab they worked for. Another worked at an IMAX theater and spoiled a \$100,000 copy of *Inception*. Their boss ruined a very expensive IMAX print of a Harry Potter film by putting it in the projector all wrong. Another commenter worked at a movie theater and completely destroyed a top-of-the-line popcorn popper.

A commenter said their parents spent a fortune on "really nice white carpet", but this commenter wasted the brand new carpeting by covering it with pasta sauce, red paint, and marker. Another said that when they were 8, their family visited some friends, and the commenter ate so much red licorice that they vomited all over their white carpeting. All of the carpeting throughout the house had to be replaced, because the commenter ran through the house while throwing up.

Another dropped a \$1.9 million power supply module for the International Space Station and demolished it. Another broke a ceiling fan at a friend's house with a toy light saber. Another broke a 16th century stained glass window that was a priceless family heirloom. Another ruined a MacBook Pro by getting oatmeal all over it.



Another said they worked at Best Buy, and a guy who also worked there tried lugging a huge stereo up a ladder and ended up dropping it through the screen of a \$2,000 plasma TV.

One commenter said they babysat for a wealthy couple. They lit candles on the couple's glass shelves—which melted the shelves and caused them to cave in and smash thousands of dollars' worth of crystal animals. Another said they worked construction at a microchip factory, and one guy sneezed and dropped an \$18.3 million machine, breaking it completely. One person said they had a gold-plated glass candy dish that belonged to their great-great-grandmother that was an irreplaceable family heirloom. But they held a party where some idiot got drunk and shattered it by trying to sit on the glass table it was on.

Another commenter said that back before their parents were married, their dad accidentally shattered a jar from the Tang dynasty from about 800 A.D. at his future in-laws' house. The future in-laws had just purchased it for \$48,000. One person said that when they were about 8, they tried retrieving their Pokémon cards from the entertainment center, but the cards were high enough that they had to climb up onto one of the shelves. This caused the entertainment center to fall over completely and break the glass doors and numerous trinkets. Another person spilled milk all over a \$10,000 Persian rug. Another once punctured their neighbors' pool with an arrow. Another worked at Home Depot and dropped 60 boxes of light bulbs 30 feet.

One person said their parents had loads of fragile antiques. One day, this commenter had a pillow fight with their brother while watching *Spy Kids*, and a couch cushion flew into a table full of these antiques. One of them was from the 19th century and was completely shattered. It was part of a set worth at least \$15,000. Another said that when they were 5, they threw a tantrum in which they hit a \$2,000 vase with a shoe—demolishing it. One couple tried moving their 50-inch plasma TV from their bedroom to their living room while drunk—and smashed it. Another person ruined their stepdad's Babe Ruth autographed baseball by giving it to a dog.

One commenter said that when they were 12, they knocked over an antique glass bowl at a Paris art museum. That same day, they also broke a glass artwork at the famous Louvre. Another said they wrote numbers all over the ivory keys of their grandmother's grand piano with a permanent marker. (Reminds me of the Scribble Pad episode.) Another spit out Sprite all over a friend's MacBook. Another ruined a \$3,000 granite table by leaving a piping hot pizza tray on it.

Club MTV it is not.

Feet don't fail me now

Everything *isn't* A-OK in the world of *Sesame Street* sores!

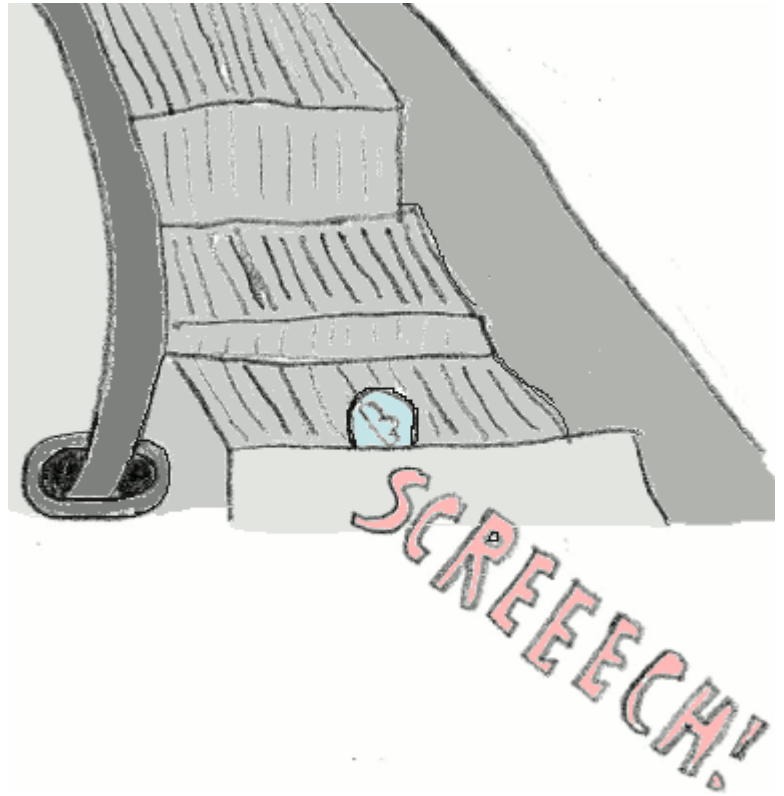
When I was about 4, I developed a severe deformity in my right foot. I first noticed it while I was sitting on the floor watching *Sesame Street*, so I called it a *Sesame Street* sore. It looked like a huge callous, but I think it was actually a form of hyperkeratosis.

For decades, nobody outside my immediate family knew about it, because it was concealed by socks and shoes. But in recent years, I've written about how cool it is. One day when I was probably a teenager, I poked it with a needle or thumbtack just to see what would happen, and it hurt far worse than poking any other patch of skin (or at least *most* patches of skin).

A few weeks ago, disaster struck. I noticed my *Sesame Street* sore had mysteriously disappeared. There's no trace of it except some mild discoloration. Over 40 years of hard work swirled down the poopot. Gone. Gone into thin air.

People insisted it must have fallen off. They said motels along my recent roadtrip route should see if it's floating in the pool. But it wasn't a detachable body part like a pair of glasses. It was an unusually thick, smooth patch of skin with a rough edge.

The establishment narrative is that feet aren't supposed to have *Sesame Street* sores. But the cool people



narrative is that *Sesame Street* sores aren't supposed to just mysteriously vanish. Having feet that aren't deformed is just creepy. My feet don't look right if they're not deformed. Deformed is in! But I'm worried that if my *Sesame Street* sore grows back, the official story will be that no other medical condition exists, and I'll be legally required to have it removed.

Think. Do. Be.

Bubble Gum Rail Trail pops up in South Carolina

A Southern town built a trail and named it after bubble gum, which is automatically funny because it has to do with bubble gum.

Joggers and cyclists in Belton, South Carolina, have been tracking the progress over the past few years of the construction of a new trail. In May, this 3-mile trail that follows an old rail line was finally completed. That was also when a local nonprofit decided to give the trail a name: Bubble Gum Rail Trail. The name was unveiled at a dedication ceremony to mark the trail's completion.

The trail got its name because a book once described a "bubble gum train" that sped through Belton in 1944. In this book, the engineer on the train would always throw bubble gum to a little girl who always watched the train pass by. It was sort of like our local Memorial Day parade.

It's possible that people bubbled at the ceremony, or that people have bubbled while walking or biking on the Bubble Gum Rail Trail since its recent completion. Who wouldn't? Ronald Reagan?

The naming of the trail will likely cause local politicians to say "bubble gum."

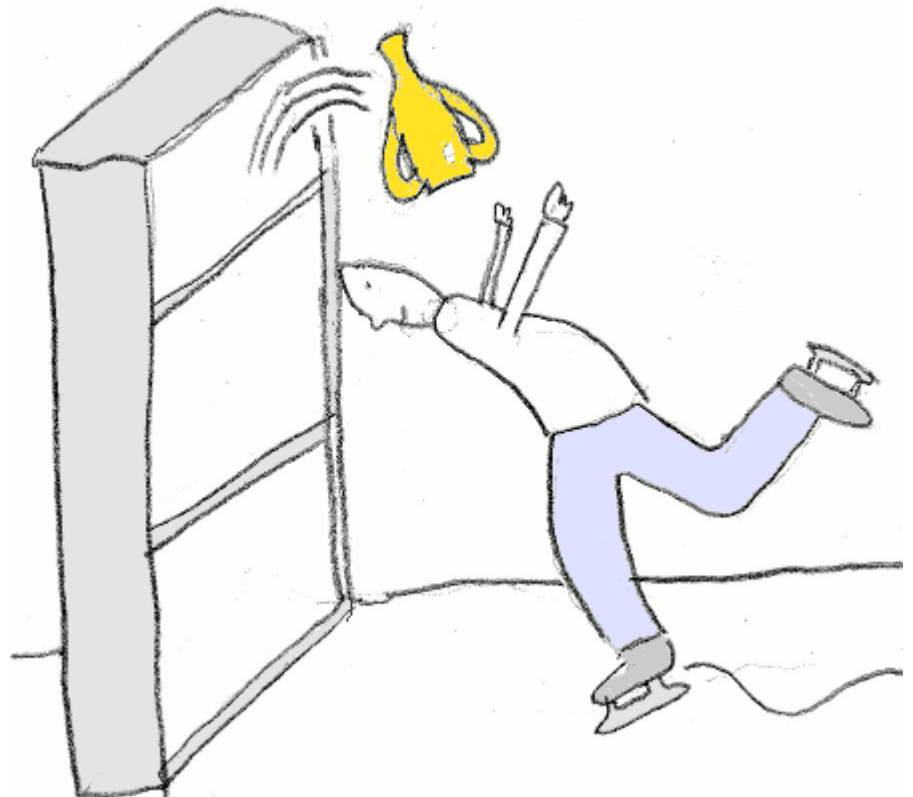
She was born the queen of the broken chess set...

Like the macho superman I am, I'm regaling you with yet another rapid-fire account of stuff getting ru! Many of the spoiled items had lasted since as far back as the Iran-Contra scandal, Watergate, Bozo the Clown getting cussed out on live TV, World War II, the Great Depression, the American Revolution, or Christopher Columbus's voyages. And now they're gone. One person with butterfingers was all it took to dash centuries of history!

One online commenter apparently served in or worked for the military. They said they destroyed \$120,000 worth of fin kits for the GBU-12, a type of bomb. The kits fell over when they were trying to lift them with a forklift. Another said they were in the Navy and ruined a jet engine that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Another person said they worked at an Outback Steakhouse, and they tried grabbing a tea container off a top shelf—knocking over a TV, a computer, and all the bread plates. The TV, computer, and about 100 plates broke. Another said they went on a class trip to Greece, where they visited a glass workshop. This commenter broke a glass globe.

A commenter said that when they were 10, they inexplicably threw a bag of rocks into a tree. The bag then fell onto a car's windshield, costing them their allowance for 18 months. Another spilled water all over a priceless reel-to-reel tape used on the Beatles' *Abbey Road* album. Another spilled a soft drink all over a friend's brand new \$3,000 laptop. Another worked for a subsidiary of Universal Music Group and ruined the master copy of a Leona Lewis album by not covering it when the record pressing machine broke down and sprayed oil everywhere. Another knocked over a huge display of glass bottles of olive oil at work. Another was goofing off at an ice rink and knocked over a glass display case that contained their school's curling trophy—destructing both the case and the



trophy. Another broke their biology teacher's telescope when they swung a bag over their shoulder and knocked it over.

One commenter said he broke a one-of-a-kind \$7,000 vase while jumping out of the way to avoid getting hit in the nuts. Another broke a queen from a "gorgeous" all-marble chess set. Another accidentally dropped their brand new smartphone in the toilet. Another smashed a designer chandelier while playing with a Wii. Another knocked a rare antique plate off their living room wall with a football and broke it. Another said a friend tripped over a cord and smashed a \$3,000 Fabergé egg. Another broke a \$4 million spectrometer at a lab where they worked. Another said they were horsing around with their brother and broke a brand new glass cabinet that cost thousands of dollars.

Another commenter said they put their elbow through a very expensive painting while helping someone move. Another broke a brand new TV while setting it up by tripping over something and putting their foot through the screen. Another worked at a copper smelter and dropped 13 tons of copper bars, valued at \$60,000—ruining them. Another wrecked an elevator in an office building by throwing a glass pane into the shaft—just for laughs!

Another went on a school field trip to a national park. The visitor center had an eagle that had been stuffed and put on display. This commenter grabbed the eagle and threw it at another student while making bird sounds. The eagle was destroyed.

The MTV Top 20 Video Countdown it is not.

Dubble Bubble bus

If you're reading this on another dreary day, let a ripped-up TANK schedule from 1979 be your umbrella, as I regale you with something rather comical. Like several other articles in this ish, it's about gum, so it's funny.

Back when I was about 6 years old, I was riding in my parents' car, going southbound on U.S. 27 near the current site of the I-471 junction in Highland Heights. We were stuck behind a TANK bus. Remember, this was back when passengers could see out the rear window of the bus, and anyone outside the bus could see in. Nowadays they cover the windows with ads for bourbon, political candidates, and radio stations nobody listens to (which these days means *any* station).

One of the most common places for people to bubble is on a bus. It's like the Kroger of commuting. It's not so common on TANK these days, because hardly anyone rides TANK anymore, since they've been reduced to approximately 3 routes. But back when TANK was TANK, people bubbled with gusto!

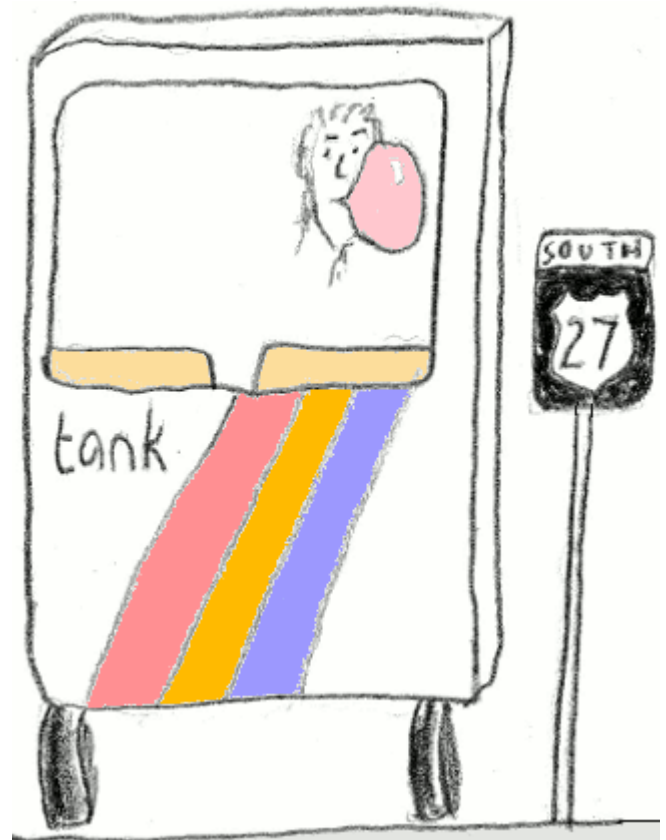
Anyway, when we were behind this bus, I saw something funny. A young woman was looking out the bus's rear window. Then she blew a bubble with bubble gum almost as big as her head! We had a full frontal view of this bub until the bus turned onto Nunn Drive.

I burst out laughing!

My mom apparently didn't notice, as she didn't know what I was laughing at. But how could anyone not notice?

One of few things funnier is pooping. There was another incident when I was probably 6 when we noticed a small dab of feces on one of the couch cushions. It was clearly from the dog, but accusations against human suspects sprang up immediately. It's hard to see how it could have been from a human, as the dog was the only one not wearing pants. The only way it could be from a human is if it was like the time a man in Maine crapped his pants at a federal courthouse and it somehow leaked all over the restroom—causing him to be jailed for creating a nuisance.

Someone suggested recently that commercials that show a person bubbling should include that two-note foghorn sound associated with a game show contestant giving a wrong answer to a question. It's sort of like the *Price Is Right* losing horns. You might also think this sound should accompany finding shit on the sofa. But it's actually not a fail, but a win, as it's so damn funny!



Dayton council minutes used magic word

Let's take a trip back to the rock 'n' roll year 2019! The beaches were bustling. The highways were gleaming. The toilets were flushing. And officials in Dayton, Kentucky, were talking about bulldozing abandoned houses—some of which had been neglected by real estate speculators waiting for them to appreciate in value because of gentrification manipulating property values.

The minutes for a city council meeting described the properties as “burnt out.” But it doesn't appear as if they had all been hit by fire. The dwellings were destroyed by investors' greed more than they were by fire. It was suggested however that houses on Ervin Terrace should be torn down before the infamous paving project got under way. The reason: “The heavy equipment will ruin the paving.”

Hear that, everyone? Ruin! The magic word!

Nobody ruined the paving more than the Manhattan Harbor construction trucks that whizzed down the road.

To make this story complete, it would be even funnier if the minutes said, “The heavy equipment will ruin the paving just like it is on Sesame Street.”

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