

The Last Word™

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Magic kidney shouldn't disappear

I recycle! And when I say I recycle everything, I mean *everything!*

After a series of medical visits in recent weeks confirmed worsened kidney damage, I have to think of what should happen to my kidney lest it must be removed. The kidney is too unhealthy to be transplanted.

I thought back on something neat I saw when I was about 6 or 7. One evening, I went with my family to Homearama—an event where a subdivision full of new luxury houses is showcased to folks who will never be able to afford these homes. Somebody had set up a shed there that featured little amusements. One of them was a “magic faucet.” It was a faucet that somehow emitted a stream of water even though it didn't seem to be hooked up to anything. The faucet appeared to be floating in the air.

I propose using a real kidney to make a “magic kidney.” Once my kidney is removed, it should be pickled in a jar and displayed at a supermarket—perhaps a favorite like the Bellevue Kroger. Preferably, it should be placed up high so it can't be tampered with by prying young hands. The kidney should be set up so it can pee to help sell healthy foods that are good for kidneys.

When a person grabs a healthy foodstuff off the shelf, it would release a switch that activates the kidney so it pees. We all know that everybody will want to see it pee. So this will encourage people to buy healthier foods.

The jar could even spin around. It would be like a water park where water shoots out of the sprinklers and you try to dodge it.

The \$98.26 question is, where would the pee come from? When I saw the “magic faucet” at Homearama, I came back later and found that it had been shut off. I saw that there was a pipe coming out of the faucet. It had been hidden earlier by the water gushing out. I figured out that the faucet must have pumped the agua up through the pipe. Pee will have to be pumped into the kidney somehow.

Magic is a word that is often misused. When we talk about magic shows or the “magic faucet”, it's actually only illusions, not really magic. The word is abused even more by amusement parks in their ads, yet somehow even adults lap it up. You may remember being very young and thinking that everything seemed magical, but I outgrew that when I was about 6 and figured out it was impossible for Santa Claus to visit all those homes on Christmas. It was also around the same time I stopped watching *Sesame Street*.

At least it's just a “magic kidney” and not “magic intestines”!

More oaptag got ru

If there's one moment of my schooling I'd like to relive, it may be my 5th grade teacher lecturing two pupils because they took the school's expensive posterboard, drew Mr. T and He-Man and G.I. Joe on it, wadded it up, and stuffed it in their desks. One of the main points of the teacher's protracted reprimand was that she was making the students pay for the oaptag they wasted and had looked up in a catalog to see how much it cost. This uproarious incident would have been impossible under the iron thumb of remote schooling.

Lately, the trend among oaptag companies is to place labels featuring their logo or a UPC bar code directly on the sheets of oaptag they sell—which ruins it. People find the sticker is impossible to remove. And reviewers on several retail websites have ripped the oaptag industry a new one over it.

For one thing, oaptag really is almost as expensive as my 5th grade teacher said. This prompted a reviewer—a teacher—to title her review “Yikes, So Much Expensive Ruined Paper!” The magic word! She said *every* sheet of oaptag in the pack had a sticker that “tears the surface of the posterboard”, creating “a ruined section on the front” of every poster made with it.



Another reviewer titled his comment “UPC Sticker Ruins Everything.” This wasn’t the same item, but again, *every* sheet had a sticker. This time, it was right in the middle of the sheet instead of near a corner.

A reviewer of another product said he thought he was ordering oaptag but it turned out to be construction paper. He also said it was spoiled by boot prints all over the package. For another product, a reviewer said the box looked like it had been trampled, and every sheet was wrinkled. Other reviewers of this product said it arrived waterlogged or covered with water stains (but it sounded more like pee). For yet another item, a reviewer posted a photo that looked as if someone had kicked a hole in each sheet of oaptag.

It’s like if somebody spilled pancake batter all over the copy of *How To Fall Down Airplane Steps* at the Gerald Ford Presidential Library.

One reviewer said the product description had 5 sheets of different bright colors, but she received only one sheet. Actually, the description had 25 sheets—not just 5. She paid for 25 sheets and got only one!

Thick paper can also decimate other items. Someone on the public Internet claimed he “ruined” the

feed mechanism of an expensive color laser printer by printing on cardstock. Even very thin paper can pulverize things. A commenter on a gardening website somehow demolished a paper shredder by shredding newspapers: “I ruined my paper shredder running newspaper through it.” The magic word again! Somebody replied, “I’ve ruined more than one home shredder by overheating it.” The magic word again and again!

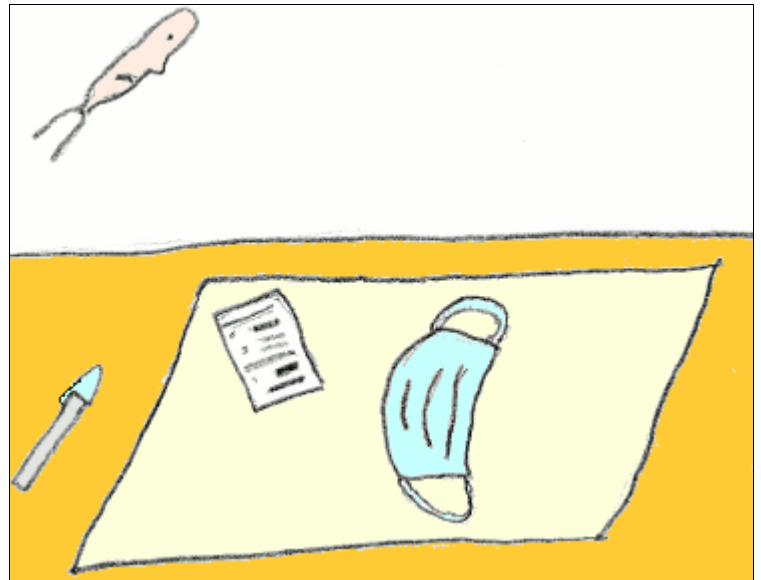
For a long time, I hoped that when I die, I would spend the afterlife viewing a compilation of all of life’s best moments. The oaptag lecture would be a shoo-in for inclusion. If this compilation was available on DVD, the menu would have the option of jumping right to the oaptag speech. It’s hard to think of any event more deserving. Even the “Look at this dummy!” incident pales in comparison, because it was sort of anticlimactic. In that event, a high school classmate suddenly approached a man at a department store and slapped him on the back, thinking he was a mannequin. There wasn’t much of a suspenseful buildup to this magic moment. But the oaptag lecture was epic. It kept getting funnier and funnier as the teacher used more and more big words. One of few things that might rival it is the tirade that resulted at another school when a schoolmate shit on the toilet seat.

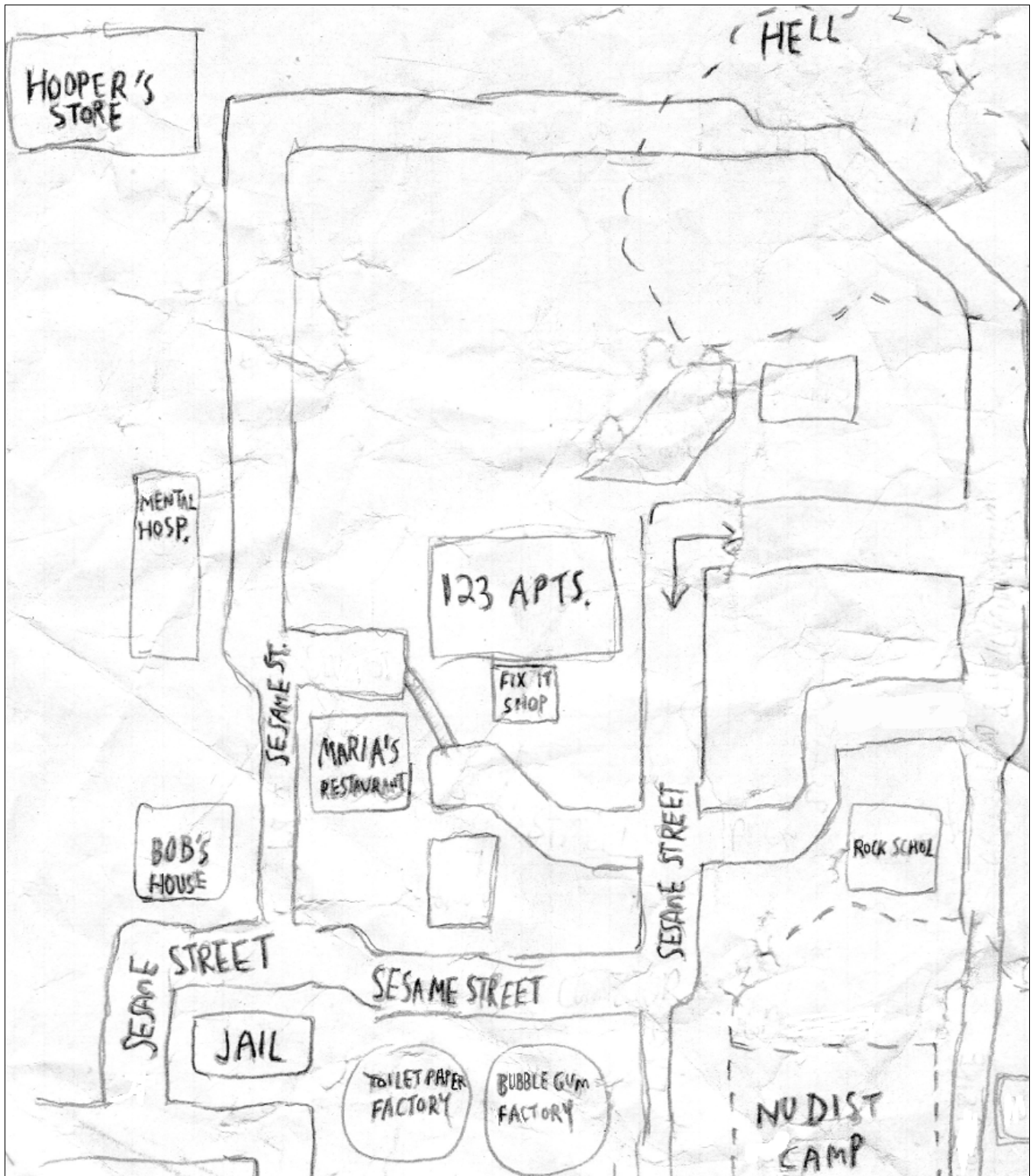
Map told how to get to Sesame Street

Everyone goes through a stage in life where they’re too old to watch *Sesame Street* but too young to have kids who watch it—so the show becomes a target of ridicule. Everybody from elementary school through early adulthood thinks the ol’ Ses is a whole new world just hankerin’ to be poked fun at.

Like everyone else, I was bitten by the bug of *Sesame Street* humor. I came up with sick, hilarious, elaborate stories involving Big Bird, Ernie, Bert, Oscar the Grouch, and other adorable partisans of the *Sesame Street* kick-ass crew. For a while, I even wrote down some background elements of the stories, amassing countless documents scattered about my room.

Recently, I issued an all-points bulletin for a lost book. As I searched my closet for the volume, I came across a box that I hadn’t gone through in over 35 years. I found something I made when I was about 10 and had forgotten about completely...





That's a simple map I made of the *Sesame Street* universe to be used with my stories. Notice how it's how the only neighborhood where every street has the same name. This map includes Maria's X-rated restaurant, Luis's Fix-It Shop that was more like a Fux-It-Up-Worse Shop, and something called Rock School. I came up with that after hearing a song called "Rock School" on MTV. The toilet paper factory was owned by Bert.

My map was in such tatters when I found it that I had to spend some time straightening it out. I think my dog gnawed on it once.

I don't know whether this was before or after I came up with the storyline about Men At Work visiting the show and using Grover as a drum while they performed a special version of "Overkill" called "Groverkill", or the storyline about Luis starting a pirate TV station that showed porn.

I don't know why *Sesame Street* needed a nudist camp, since so many characters bopped around in their birthday suits anyway. They had fur or feathers that did the job of clothes.

How is it that two factories together are only slightly bigger than the 123 Apartments or Hooper's Store? We know why one of the factories is round: It was shaped like a giant roll of toilet paper standing on one of its flat

ends. But why is the other round?

To think that all of this started because I saw a Bert and Ernie puzzle in a waiting room.

Why would I want anyone to tell me how to get to Sesame Street? That map makes it look like a dreadful place!

I like the time-out room, baby...

Something funny happened in 1st grade. Imagine that!

Kids acted up in class all the time. They traded their life for a newspaper headline! We had these phonics records you would put in a machine with a screen, which I've

never seen anywhere else. As I sat at my cubicle that had this machine, I would make a funny burping sound that had about 10 syllables and went on for several seconds. One day, I kept making this noise, and the teacher didn't know who it was. "Who is that?" she asked the class. I would also stab the styrofoam walls of the cubicle with a pencil until it was full of holes.

First graders do cool stuff like that. Always did, always will—I hope.

There was a room down the hall called the time-out room. It was actually a walled-off portion of a larger room. It was a very small area with no furnishings whatsoever and a floor with a checkerboard pattern. When kids misbehaved, the teacher would often take them to the time-out room. The boredom of this room was agonizing.

It seems like sending kids to the time-out room occurred at least daily, maybe more. When the teacher took a kid to the time-out room, she often said, "Let's go."

If you know me, you know roughly when I was in 1st grade, and you can see right away where this story is going.

One of the biggest songs in the land back then was "Let's Go" by the Cars. So—predictably—whenever the teacher said, "Let's go," somebody would always start singing, "I like the nightlife, baby!"

It couldn't have been me who came up with that, because I didn't hear this song on the radio very much—as my parents' Horizon only had an AM radio, and our local AM band was in one of its periodic stupors at the time. Even if we had an AM station at the time that regularly played the Cars, the oldsters would have instead opted for a station that only played music that was slower than 30 beats per minute or the airport information station.

Pokémon cards got ru

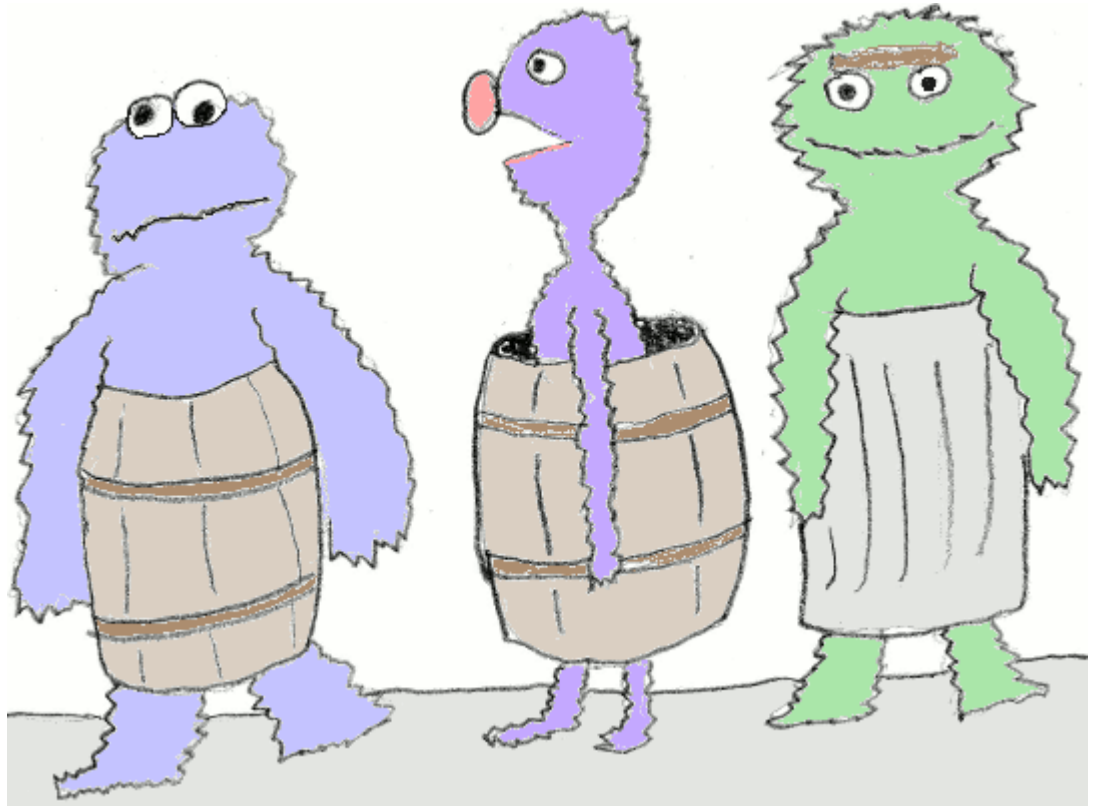
A couple years back, I kept finding stories on the unabashedly public Internet about collectible Magic: The Gathering cards getting wasted. But now I've found a story about valuable Pokémon cards getting ru too.

A Reddit commenter posted on several groups about what happened when her boyfriend won some Pokémon cards at an auction. They were advertised as just the cards. But it turned out they were actually glued to a sheet of posterboard—also known as oaptag—and the commenter needed to remove them without tearing them up. "We ruined Squirtle already," she lamented.

Hear that, everyone? Ruined! They ruined the card all up!

She received dozens of replies. One said, "I'm sorry but they are all ruined." Several said that they couldn't understand why anyone thought it was a good idea to glue the cards to posterboard. One even said of whoever glued them to the oaptag, "What a monster who the fuck would do this."

The original commenter later said that her research revealed each card was worth over \$150.



Another Redditer posted that his sister “ruined a 150\$ pokemon card.” A photo of the spoiled card was provided. It was wrinkled and dogeared. Somebody replied saying their entire Pokémon collection got stolen in elementary school. The cards would be worth hundreds—maybe thousands—of dollars now. Another said their nephew threw their autographed Nolan Ryan baseball into a swimming pool. Another said they gave away a mint condition Pokémon card to a friend but later discovered it was worth hundreds. They tried to get it back but found it under his dresser, “torn in two pieces and crumpled up.”

Another said she used to cut a tiny square off the corner of her cards so they wouldn’t be mixed up with her brother’s cards: “I kick myself now as a grown woman, thinking of my ruined Pokemon cards.” Another respondent said their 10-year-old brother tore a Michael Jordan card in half that was already worth \$45 in the mid-’90s.

One person posted on a website about destroying a now-rare Pokémon card in a YMCA swimming pool.

Maddeningly, someone recently posted that they bought a rare Pokémon card online and that it was ripped to shreds by the Postal Service. After wasting the card, the Postal Service put it in a plastic “We Care” bag. From the photo, it looked like somebody took a butane torch to it. A mailman replied to this post saying the sender should have spent an extra 20 cents on postage so it wouldn’t have had to go through the machines. Uh, it shouldn’t have needed extra postage. Another respondent said they saw a mail truck run over a package containing an irreplaceable Nicolas Cage mug.

All those cards are rooned.

A person crinkled a candy bag at a play

I have appreciation for the arts, but that’s not the same thing as regularly patronizing the arts. People should have access to the arts, but my populism usually extends to my entertainment tastes. I can’t even remember the last time I went to see a play, as most plays attract a more highbrow crowd. Back in April, I went to the concert by NKU’s orchestra at Sawyer Point—I posted a photo of myself on Twitter smiling my ass off there—but Sawyer Point is the people’s park. That was the concert where I confiscated a laughable social distancing flag from the lawn.

The fact that plays seem to have a rather upscale audience makes this story even hilariously. It’s like when a dignified judge or school principal mentions toilets.

Recently, I was browsing Snap Map in the hopes of finding more college beer drinking. I found no beering, but I did find an amusing bit from a theater on a large Midwestern campus.

Apparently, the theater was hosting a popular play. There were a few photos from the play on Snap Map. One of them had a caption that mentioned spending \$90 on a ticket to this play just to sit behind unruly children who were loudly singing.

There was a second caption just below it that was just as funny. It said something like, “I didn’t drive 150 miles to hear a candy bag wrinkle for 3 hours!” Evidently, someone brang a big poke of sweets to the play. To eat? To eat! It appears they loudly crinkled and crumpled the sack throughout the play as they stuffed their face.

It is not known what kind of candy it was. Was it Reese’s Pieces? Junior Mints? Candy corns? Or could it have been...? *Could it have been...?* Hmm.

Could. It. Have. Been?

Beegee?!?!?!?

If only they had yelled, “The pee and the poo!” this story would be complete.



A Sarah Palin look-alike bubbled

“He needs to write about celebrity look-alikes.”

“No, he needs to write about bubble gum.”

“Nope! Celebrity look-alikes, I say!”

“Bubble gum!”

“Celebrity look-alikes!”

“Hey, here’s an idea! How about if he writes about a celebrity look-alike chewing bubble gum?”

“Say! That’s cooperation!”

Let’s travel back in time to about a dozen years ago. I’m sure I blogged about this series of events, but I don’t have enough patience to paw through my old blog for an exact timeline, so I’m going to recite the story from memory.

One afternoon, we went to the local Subway for lunch. As we were in the parking lot getting ready to leave, a woman exited the restaurant carrying a big bag of food. It was immediately pointed out that she bore a strong resemblance to Sarah Palin—the half-term Alaska governor who disastrously served as the Republicans’ vice-presidential nominee in 2008. She even had the same eyeglasses.

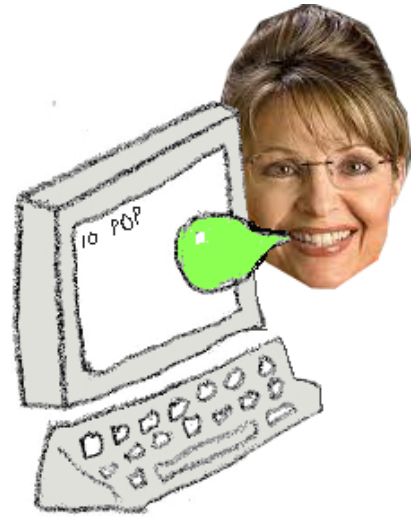
And she was chewin’ bubble gum! She even bubbled!

Not long after that, I had a doctor appointment. Guess who one of the receptionists was? I strolled into the waiting room and saw the familiar specs and beehive hairdo. Why, it was the same Failin’ Palin look-alike I saw at Subway!

The beegeeing was well under way by the time I was done with my doctor visit. When I went back out into the waiting room to schedule my next appointment, Sarah Palin was goin’ to town! As I waited at the desk, she was singularly focused on puffing out a big, bright green bubble as she looked at her computer screen. She didn’t seem to notice I was waiting. She slouched back in her chair to keep the bub from colliding with the screen.

She was so wrapped up in her bubbling that one of the other receptionists had to point out to her that I was waiting.

Make no mistake: We can safely say that a celebrity look-alike—assuming politicians are considered celebrities—bubbled in public. Two funny things are rolled into one story! If the Sarah Palin look-alike was wearing a *Sesame Street* shirt, it would have been even funnier!



A person cried because their gumball machine broke

I’m pretty sure I have stories I’ve hoarded since I was 19, because the carnival barkers manage to outstupid themselves almost daily. My patience ran out defending myself from media Goliaths that fought against us on *every single issue*, so I shifted towards humor pieces.

Here’s a humorous story I’ve stockpiled since about 2015 about a gumball machine’s poor quality. Nonprofits and stores operate gumball machines so customers can cram armloads of bubble gum into their piehole and blow some shameless bubs as they shop. But a few folks have their own gumball machine at home, and I can’t understand why. Why does anyone need anything coin-operated at home? It’s like the episode of *The Brady Bunch* where they got a pay phone. I knew some people had gumball machines though, because one time—decades ago—a local newspaper ran a photo in which a high school student had one in her home.

The story I hoarded also appeared to be about a teenager’s personal gumball machine. The teen posted on the public Internet about their machine’s unfortunate state, saying...

“I’d rather get my gumballs out of my dog. It’s made of plastic and it’s just a piece of garbage. It should never be used for gumballs and never put dimes in it cuz it will just get clogged. You would not be smart to get this. It made me mad and I cried.”

One gets an image in their mind of a dog crapping out gumballs.

These personal gumball machines seem to be for people who only bubble privately—instead of going to Kroger or a college classroom to blow bubbles like everybody else does.

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