

The Last Word™

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This is what ruined vacations look like

Keek! Ruin!

There's not much going on in our summer except the rain, so it's only fitting that we kick off another ish with more stories of vacations getting ruined!

I've never had a road trip that was *completely* without redeeming value, but I can think of a few that didn't have any notable incidents—good or bad—or where weather spoiled much of the vacation. Bad weather became common enough that eventually we had to just *assume* it would happen on each trip. Cleveland in 1992 just popped into my head, and I even remember fellow guests at an amusement park lamenting that summer's unrelenting precip. I also remember the year some of my college pals bragged that they were going on spring break on the sunny, sandy beaches of Panama City, Florida—and the city ended up having one of its worst blizzards in history.

The public Internet has yielded yet more stories about demolished vacays. Many of these are *real* ruined trips—not storefront flower displays being too big or ESPN going out.

Recently, a woman posted that she went on a cruise with 2 other women, and they spoiled the trip when they kept waking her up by letting a smartphone ring at 2 AM for frivolous calls and setting their alarms to go off too early.

Another woman said she and her husband went on vacation at an unspecified park, and this park actually had a security guard who illegally searched their luggage and found all their sex toys.

One commenter said they went on a trip to Iceland, and flooding rains forced them to spend most of their 5-day outing washing towels that were used to sop up the mess at their hotel. One person said that on their trip to Italy, a drunken man peed all over the floor of their hostel. The man then became enraged because he overslept and missed breakfast. A commenter said a company laptop was stolen from them on a 2021 European tour—forcing them to cut the trip short. Another said their cousin missed a family wedding in Thailand because an airline arbitrarily changed the time of her flight.

A woman flew all the way across the country to Portland, Oregon, to see her boyfriend. First, a man shit in their parked rental car. The boyfriend then took the woman to a local winery. While they were there, they happened to encounter his other girlfriend. The only reason he wanted to visit the winery was so he could scout it out as a place to propose to this other girlfriend. Oops! After that, the first woman found the man who shit in the car shitting on the front door of her hotel.

A college student who booked a cruise for this past spring break said the flight there was delayed because the airline didn't even have a plane at the airport. Then this commenter missed the flight because of not being notified when it finally left. After arriving in Florida on a later flight, the vacationer rented an electric car to drive the rest of the way, but the only charging station was closed. When the car ran out of power, the commenter had to call a tow truck, which had a 2-hour wait and charged \$300. Hertz placed the commenter on hold for an hour—which completely ran down the phone battery. When the tow truck couldn't tow the car, there was another hour-long wait with Hertz, and another hour-long wait for another tow truck. Then this truck couldn't tow the car because it needed a wheel lift. Yet another call to Hertz resulted in another 90 minutes on hold.

Needless to say, this tourist missed their cruise and just flew back home—and accrued an extra \$1,000 in expenses.



A commenter said that when she was 18, she absolutely pulverized a family trip to California when she forgot her purse, which contained her ID. This caused the family to miss their flight. (Even though it was a domestic flight, the TSA required an ID, which wasn't the case before George W. Bush stole the election.) The whole vacay was canceled.

Another commenter said a high school trip was wasted when a student got drunk on vodka and vomited everywhere. This caused the teachers to lock everyone in their hotel rooms for the rest of the trip. One commenter said a family friend went along on a big family trip to Las Vegas. The man invited a much younger woman, who got drunk and threw up all over the commenter's cousin's shoes and inside the van. This "ruined the vibe." Yep, I'd say so.

A couple recently spent \$5,555 on a trip to Scotland that was canceled. (This is like when my 8th grade homeroom teacher warned me not to scratch or break a record he had because it had cost \$5.55. More on that later.) They had planned the trip for months. Their first flight of this trip was delayed for 2 hours because of the airline's incompetence. This caused them to miss their connecting flight. The next flight they could get wasn't until days later, when their vacation would have been over anyway. They could not get a refund for their 5-star hotel room, so they spent thousands on a trip that the airline ruined.

A teenage girl said her little brother destroyed a Disney World trip with his "lack of manners." Another commenter said they took their partner on a very expensive vacation to the Dominican Republic for their anniversary, but at the airport on the way there, she threw a public tantrum and said she didn't want the trip and wanted to go to Iowa instead. She spent the whole vacation in the hotel room.

One commenter said she cut a family trip short because her preschool daughter threw tantrums throughout the entire vacation. Somebody replied saying she went on a trip and her 2-year-old expelled diarrhea all over the "lovely" sheets at an Airbnb at 4 AM. In addition, this commenter's husband vomited all over the unit.

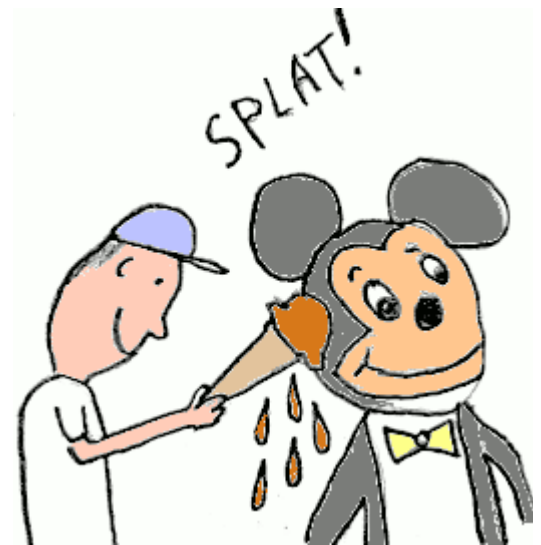
A man took his wife on a big vacation for their 10-year anniversary. Before the trip, he bought a new suit, got tickets for a play, got her some jewelry as a surprise gift, made dinner reservations at a fancy restaurant, and did all sorts of schnazzy poo. But on the evening of the big dinner and the play, the wife dawdled so much at 3 different bars beforehand that they missed both events. After she ruined these "special plans", she threw a drunken tantrum in their hotel room and passed out. Granted, there may be another side of the story, but I'm going by what I read on the public Internet.

Another commenter said their mother-in-law ruined a trip to San Diego by spending a ridiculous amount of money renting a beach umbrella and complaining that the sand on the beach was "too lumpy." Another had their vacation reduced to shambles when the airline changed the time of their flight and didn't tell them. It took 2 days to find another flight, forcing most of the trip to be canceled. The airline and the travel insurance company refused to pay for the lost expenses.

A man said his girlfriend ruined their trip to New York by not letting him attend a rare series of Yankees vs. Mets games that he had waited his whole life for. He "wasted money on tickets to three baseball games" that he never got to see.

Just a few days ago, Channel 5 ran a story about a local family whose big birthday cruise that took a year to plan was decimated when Delta Airlines needlessly canceled a flight. Channel 5 even emblazoned the screen with the words "FAMILY VACATION RUINED."

Ranger Rick it is not.



The toonies 'r' good enough

Springtime in Cincinnati in 1983. That meant lots of rain—and lots of good cartoons on TV. In other words, it was just like Cincinnati in 2023—except with good cartoons. And no lockdowns.

To battle the relentless downpours and the overall lack of recreation around here, I tried not to

miss the block of cartoons on Channel 19 each weekday after school. The exact schedule in that era changed frequently, but *Tom & Jerry* was a constant. *Looney Tunes* and some later superhero cartoons appeared as well. Some timeslots were periodically filled not with toonies but old sitcoms like *The Brady Bunch* and *Gilligan's Island*.

My 4th grade pals loved the cartoons. During lunch each day, that was all we talked about. So we came up with an idea: cartoon reviews!

I knew that if I lived in a different place or time, I might instead be using each afternoon to help plant the crops or milk the cows—tasks that were less fun than cartoons but more important than school. But we didn't have a farm, and it would have gotten flooded if we did. So we blasted ahead with our cartoon reviews. I'd review each day's toonies and give the reviews to my school chums. Life wasn't easy, but at least we watched cartoons.

I think I rated each cartoon on a scale of 0 to 10. Some series may have received a 10 for every installment. But I don't remember which episode was the best of all or what other information I included with my reviews. I do remember what was hands-down the worst. There was one segment that must have filled 15 minutes of what was supposedly a *Tom & Jerry* episode but had nothing to do with the madcap cat-and-mouse duo or any other popular characters. I believe I'd seen it before at a school event—which is not a plus. This installment was not funny, interesting, exciting, or in any way entertaining. The narrator mumbled throughout like Charlie Brown's teacher so you couldn't understand him.

Unintelligible speech can be used for comedic effect in cartoons. Charlie's teacher or the man who angrily babbled in some 1960s *Tom & Jerry* shorts are great uses of this technique. But it's different when a segment stinks overall.

Also, a review is not an academic analysis. The long and short of it is that standards change, and there probably wasn't any deeper intended message in some of these cartoons than what was apparent then.

I remember that some of the superhero cartoons had brief segments about different subjects thrown in. I remember one in which a tennis player cut his finger opening a can of tennis balls. I also recall another that showed how to make a piggy bank out of an empty milk carton. I was warned not to do this, because the dried milk would stink.

I didn't do my reviews for very long, because Channel 19 preempted my toonies so much. My cartoons were often taken off for new animated specials that were either infomercials for shitty toys or right-wing propaganda. Another hazard was power outages. Outages have become almost a weekly occurrence since Duke Energy took over CG&E, but even before this takeover, outages did fry a good TV set every now and then. The preemptions also prompted my battle cry, "I'll go back to *Sesame Street*!" I kept threatening to start watching *Sesame Street* again over on Channel 54, as it was rarely preempted.



It's also hard to pinpoint the best and worst commercials that aired during my cartoons, but I know what the most overplayed were. The most overplayed were for a record album of songs from Disney cartoons and for a *Star Wars* electronic game that included some sort of special goggles and headset. These ads prompted me to switch over to *Sesame Street* for a couple minutes. I had to do this secretly with the volume almost all the way down, because I might have gotten yelled at for watching *Sesame Street* while I was too old for it. Whenever I did this, I always snickered to myself uncontrollably.

They should have showed the Nature Valley ads more: "Strawberry! Raspberry! Red apple!"

Know what I have to say about that?

"Ronald Reagan got reelected. Know what I have to say about that? **BRRRAAAAAPPP!!!!!!**"

"I'm being forced to attend St. Joe's for another year. Know what I have to say about that? **BRRRAAAAAPPP!!!!!!**"

“ ‘Hangin’ Tough’ hit #1 on the countdown this week. Know what I have to say about that? **BRRRAAAAAPPP!!!!!!**”

“They’re predicting rain for our bonfire. Know what I have to say about that? **BRRRAAAAAPPP!!!!!!**”

“Channel 19 is preempting a brand new episode of *The Simpsons* with a basketball game again. Know what I have to say about that? **BRRRAAAAAPPP!!!!!!**”

It’s hilarious when people fart. A big, loud, stinky bunker blast is the not-safe-for-TV version of the *Price Is Right* losing horns. But some of the things that flatulence is issued in response to aren’t so comical.

Some years back, it was common to greet bad news with this special salute. A backdoor breeze was often released in response to news that was unfortunate but entirely predicted. Sometimes it was in reply to a pop culture nuisance but it was more often because of some new policy or rule. The trouser trumpet was released after all your arguments were exhausted and people still refused to listen to common sense.

It worked like this: Somebody might tell you, “They said on the news that there’s a new law that says you have to submit all your elementary school report cards to qualify for retirement benefits.” In reply, you’d say, “Know what I have to say about that?” Then you’d fart really loud.

And some of the new policies that were enacted around that time really were about as ridiculous as that. A lot of it was driven by politicians’ malice—just like it is now. Never attribute to stupidity that which is adequately explained by both stupidity *and* malice.

At least flatulence was a more reasonable editorial than most of what the media has today.

The whole era was an extended fart joke. In high school, someone once released a loud-and-proud odorama, and somebody said, “Thanks for the news, Dan Rather.”

Farting is funny.

Occupy Bubble Gum

Remember the Occupy Wall Street movement? It ruled! This zine was not active in 2012-13, because I was busy with my work with Occupy Cincinnati. Occupy helped set the stage for that great decade of do-it-yourself and free spaces—which are now a distant memory.

People occasionally bubbled at Occupy marches. Most people in Occupy were working-class folks, who have lots of bubble gum busting know-how. They weren’t like the stale astroturfed groups of today like the misnamed People’s CDC—which is a mob of highly paid academics, race-baiters, and think tank hacks, not workers and people of normal means. (The People’s CDC accused the Biden administration of practicing eugenics by having COVID policies that

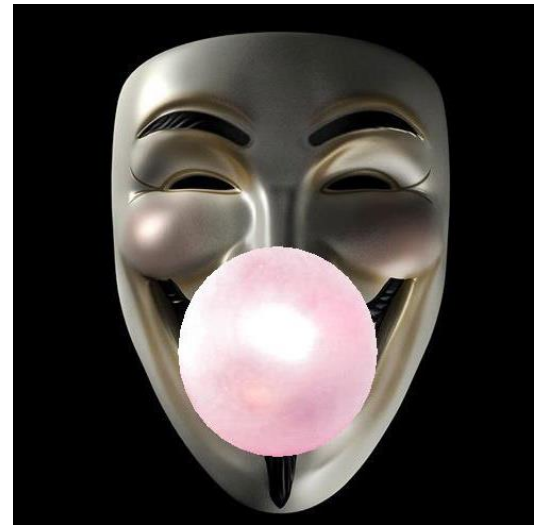
were too lax—even though the hard lockdowns that People’s CDC members supported were largely inspired by eugenics. I discussed the People’s CDC on Reddit, and somebody replied, “I’d take my chances in a room with Ted Bundy or Pol Pot over these drooling lunatics.”)

If a People’s CDC member saw someone blowing a bub, they’d probably faint—or at least their monocle would fall out. They likely consider bubbling to be beneath them. Their mentality is shaped by vested interests. These narcissistic bullies also derive all their joy and meaning in life from their COVID catastrophism and will do anything to again feel the way they did in 2020-21—when they were having the best times of their otherwise empty lives because they felt important.

But at least a People’s CDC event would lack one hazard that I once dealt with at Occupy Cincinnati. One day, I showed up at Piatt Park for an Occupy march. Only a few other people had arrived yet, but someone must have been gumming. When I sat down on the wall, I felt myself sticking to the ledge. When I got up, one of the other Occupy peeps pointed out that there was something stuck to the seat of my pants.

Why, it was bubble gum and a force to be reckoned with!

That doesn’t mean the beegie had been deposited on the ledge by an Occupier. It could have



been someone else who gummed. But nobody in the People's CDC would have placed the gum there, because they're terrified of the stuff. People's CDC members are just a human skin stretched over a monster—a very wimpy monster, like the ones in *Dungeons & Dragons* that die when you burst a balloon near them.

The Tea Party lives—except now it's called the People's CDC. If the jackboot fits, wear it.

A person bunkeroed at Bush's inaugural luncheon (a poopysm)

This is like the time Nancy Reagan bizarrely displayed a look of horror during one of Ronnie's inauguration speeches (the same pose later associated with *Home Alone*), or the time Rick Perry bubbled during a prayer at Trump's speech.

Back in 2005, after George W. Bush was allowed to steal a second presidential election, inaugural festivities for his second term were televised as national TV crews cooed over how great they thought he was. Something uproarious happened during the event. I wrote on my personal blog at the time, "Someday this is gonna be a poopysm!"

At the end of the luncheon, Trent "Sheets" Lott was speaking at a podium. As he was introducing a painting, someone let loose with a loud clap of flatulence.

Lott then presented the Bushes and Cheneys with fancy crystal "hurricane shades" (whatever that is). As the First and Second Families gathered around these works, several loud, squeaky bunker blasts were heard.

A loud air biscuit was clearly heard during a speech by admitted child molester Dennis Hastert.

Bush himself seemed to notice the rock snakes emerging from the audience. As Bush spoke, he praised "distinguished members of the Congress." After yet another pooteroony was heard, Bush paused and added, "Some who aren't quite so distinguished."

For some inexplicable, insane reason, I had the TV on during this idiotic spectacle. By the time it was over, I was doubled over on the floor in uncontrollable laughter!

Reeling in movie censorship

You learned from our previous ish that the original version of *Star Wars* has become almost impossible to find. But the memory hole seems to be gaping enough to also swallow many more cinematic gems from that era.

I've decided I might want to put together a small movie library for my own amusement and to entertain other cool people who might drop by. I can think of a few major films from the '70s and '80s that were deemed edgy and hilarious at the time and are still considered standouts. There is no way to cheaply view them online or download them, so it's better to shell out \$7 to 18 for the DVD, which might have bonus content.

Guess what? According to reviews, some of the DVD's are butchered. Imagine that!

I can understand the *existence* of a TV version of a movie, because the FCC and American TV networks and stations are so ridiculously stodgy regarding content. But some of the edits I've seen on TV seem too drastic even for TV's conservative standards. More importantly, what I'm talking about in this article is the DVD versions being edited at least as badly, often for unknown reasons.

Numerous reviewers have said that many of the sound effects from the original movies have been modified extensively on the DVD's—for no apparent reason. Other reviews say some classic scenes have been entirely cut from the DVD's. Others say some of the dialogue has been poorly dubbed with new lines.

Gnawingly, many of the movies seem to have been bowdlerized to eliminate almost all actions and sayings that might be even remotely offensive. While the actions and lines that were removed might be questionable or unacceptable in real life, these are movie characters—not real people. They can't reach out of the screen and punch us in the face. It's called *acting* for a reason.

Censors took it upon themselves to remove our choice as to what to watch. What does this teach? I learned early in life that—compared to more privileged contemporaries—I'm subjected to a very narrow window as to what is considered acceptable behavior. In other words, life is hard. For me, it always has been. Thus, works like movies shouldn't be sugarcoated. Let's all grow a spine.

I have no idea why inoffensive sound effects were changed, but I have a theory on why the raw stuff was removed or modified. I think it's because the censors saw a little bit of themselves in film characters who had mostly negative characteristics. Censoring movies was easier than looking in the mirror and mending their own ways. It's not as if they truly wanted to mend their ways though. It appears as if many of these edits were made about 10 or 15 years ago, when they saw the world slipping away from them. Their unyielding grip on society was at stake.

Other reviewers have blasted some of these DVD's for having a set of commercials at the beginning that can't be skipped over. One of the reasons people buy DVD's is so they don't have to be menaced by rank commercialism. Why *pay* to have "buy, buy, buy" smashed pie-like in your face? Congress and the Federal Trade Commission have refused to act. If you visit a beach or have a Thanksgiving get-together within 3 years after the start of a pandemic, it's treated like a capital offense, yet there's no regulation whatsoever on ads filling what is supposed to be an ad-free medium. This falls under failure to disclose.

One website writer said he encountered a DVD with a full 16 minutes of ads at the beginning that could not be skipped. Somebody replied saying that whenever he rented a movie from Netflix that had ads at the beginning, he broke the DVD in two and sent it back as defective. Another commenter said they rented a DVD with *25 minutes* of commercials at the beginning that could not be skipped.

There's still not enough censorship to appease some. Some of the reviews criticized any toilet humor that managed to escape the censors' soiled talons. But I'm sure many bathroom jokes were removed too. I don't understand why someone would *spend money* on a DVD and expect it to be censored even more than it already is.

Censorship is something that really ought to poop its pants.

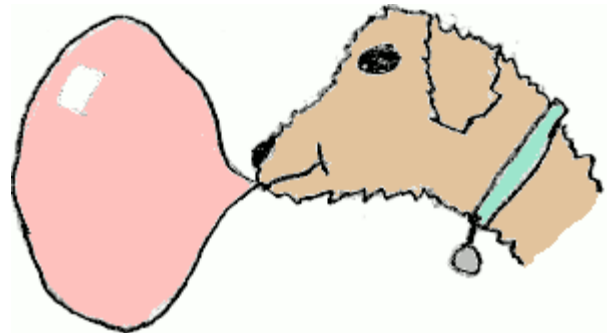
They don't make bubble gum forums like they used to

Remember when there were a gabillion online forums about bubble gum and people used them mostly just to argue? That was funny.

There aren't nearly as many of these boards as there used to be, and they're not nearly as busy. And the quality and utility of posts on these forums has deteriorated even more. That's even funnier.

I figured Reddit might have a bubble gum board. Sure enough, it does. But it's mostly been abandoned. The most recent new thread is from over a year ago. The title: "it would be funny if a dog somehow blew a super huge bubble."

Never saw that one coming, did you?



Court is a wonderful thing...Make you smile through the pouring rain... (a poopysism)

After Michael Bolton's popularity declined from its peak, people started laughing each time his voice came across the radio. I think I heard "Steel Bars" on my Pensacola trip. The song was years old then, and the resulting guffaws didn't subside until we overheard a woman at a gas station lecturing her kids about chewing bubble gum in her car, so we could laugh about that instead. Bolton wasn't the worst recording artist around, but he became an easy target in part because his popularity fell off so spectacularly.

In the early 1990s, the Isley Brothers accused Michael Bolton of plagiarizing his hit "Love Is A Wonderful Thing" from their song of the same name. The Isleys promptly filed a copyright infringement suit. The case dragged on for years before a jury ruled in favor of the R&B group from Cincinnati. Bolton and his publisher were ordered to turn over \$5.4 million in royalties—the biggest music plagiarism award ever. Bolton later said the ruling "ruined my life." The magic word!

Here's where it gets poopysitic. Michael Bolton began appealing this verdict. He dragged out the case for 7 more years—and lost on every appeal. Finally, he took it all the way to the Supreme

Court—yes, the U.S. Supreme Court. Bolton had hired Alan Dershowitz—of all people—as one of his attorneys.

The Supreme Court decided they weren't going to waste their time on this, so in 2001, they refused to hear Bolton's appeal. He did nothing but lose throughout the entire case. Ronald Isley told *Billboard* that Bolton even tried to lobby the Senate about the case.

Just before that, however, Bolton had tried to buy the entire Isley Brothers catalog. Evidently, this endeavor was thwarted by a bankruptcy judge.

It really was a fool's game!

A story about records that isn't up to scratch

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, our schools fucked up—*badly*. And they continue to do it.

You're not going to believe this, but 8th grade at St. Joe's was an unabated disaster. I'm not any happier about this school than you are. My homeroom teacher was a sick, sick man, and revelations about his conduct ended his career several years later.

He had this record that he kept on his desk. I don't even remember for certain what it was a record of, but it might have been an LP of 1970s political speeches. It was stored upright with some books and papers between bookends.

I don't know why he brang the record to school. I don't remember him ever playing it, and kids in that class broke stuff all the time. For some reason, he moved my desk right next to his. When he wasn't looking, I would always pull the record halfway out of its jacket. Somehow, the record would magically sit there with the top half exposed, as if it was held in place by the sides of the sleeve. Every time he saw his record like this, he would angrily push it back down into its sleeve.

This was also when the "fi out of fi" craze was getting under way. After the teacher discovered that I was the one who was pulling his record out of its jacket, he admonished, "Don't break that record. It cost me 5 dollars and 55 cents."

One day, the disc finally met its match. We were in the classroom for recess, and the teacher wasn't around. Some girl grabbed the record off the instructor's desk, removed it from its jacket, and promptly scratched it with her fingernail.

There was little doubt that the record was ru. After that, the teacher finally got the message and took the record home.

On the other hand, my schoolmate may have done the record a favor. If it was pressed on good vinyl, it might have had a fighting chance against the attempt to scratch it. So it might have been damaged less than if it had been played on one of the record players at school. One time in 7th grade, the record player in the music room was left spinning all weekend with the needle on the platter with no record.

Records got ru! Records got ru! Nerrrrr nerr nerr nerrrrr (late '70s high-pitched keyboard sound)! Records got ru! Records got ru!

When animals attack during the Channel 5 news

In the late 2010s, I slogged over to a few gatherings in Corryville for writers. Eventually, I decided I couldn't do it anymore, because I just didn't have the physical energy. At one of these little get-togethers, we got to write a short narrative about the animals that scared us the most.

Recently, I found the brief account I wrote based on this theme...

"The animal that scared me the most was my dog. He was afraid of everything—and I mean everything. Telescopes, Mountain Dew bottles, bubble gum, a John Denver album sleeve, you name it! But he was cool. But I was more afraid of him than he was of any of that stuff.



“One evening when I was about 12, we were laying on the couch watching the Channel 5 news. It was the same evening Jerry Springer gave his commentary about President Reagan’s surgery. I tried to lay my head down on a pillow, and my dog growled! He was being mean!

“My dog would also get mad if you approached him with a pair of scissors, because he was afraid you were going to cut dog-doo out of his fur.”

I guess he *liked* having dog-doo caked in his fur!

You’d think nobody except the People’s CDC and Mike Pence’s presidential campaign would go to such great lengths to wallow in shit, but I guess our animal friends aim to surprise.

When idiots take over professional Q&A sites

Are people getting dumber by the day?

Professional question-and-answer websites for QGIS used to be worthy of their reputation, but now they’re as much of a reeking poop pile as everything else is.

Over a year ago, someone posted an intelligent, reasonable question asking where to find an important feature in the latest QGIS version. This question has generated 3 replies but still not a single answer.

One reply gives a “solution” that doesn’t work. Another response merely says, “It was intentionally removed.” That’s not an answer. The question was not whether the feature was removed. It was about where to find it—not whether it was removed.

Cue the “You are an idiot” chant...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDIR3yEIS2M>

The other reply is a related question that’s pretty lucid and reasonable. Yet not one person has responded to that.

This is after more than a year.

Did Microsoft Community take over that site when nobody was looking?



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