

Perspective

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Sledding is a pain

So there I am... at the top of a small snow-covered hill surrounded by about a dozen elementary school kids and their parents. The kids rocket down the hill in a bunch of different-colored sleds and discs while my two grandkids stand idly by, watching the fun.

My wife and I had come to the hill later than my grandkids and they apparently have had all the enjoyment they can stand. The 8-year-old's face is severely scratched from her forehead to her chin after her inner tube had ended up in a tunnel of thorn bushes. The 3-year-old is covered in snow from head to foot and he is complaining about the snow caked on his face. They seem content to watch other kids have all the fun.

I try to convince them to join me for another trip down the hill, but they act as if I am asking them to sign-up for another tour in Vietnam. I also notice that not one parent has joined their children in sledding down the hill. I find this to be curious since they all appear to be decades younger than me, yet no one has even volunteered to ride down the slopes with a child on their lap. After unsuccessfully trying to assure my grandchildren that it would be fun to propel themselves down the hill in the safety of Papa's lap, I decide to go it alone.

I take the over-inflated inner-tube with handles on each side and push off. I immediately find myself traveling at an ungodly speed, swooshing

past terrified tots who scramble out of the way as they drag their sleds up the hill.

I thought things were going well as I successfully avoided the thorn bushes, yet my good fortune changed rapidly. The tiny tykes watched wide-eyed as I sped past the thorn bushes at a speed approaching 100 miles-per-hour (or at least that's the speed it seemed like) toward a cyclone fence which I never really paid attention to before.

Fortunately, (or maybe not so fortunately) a concrete drainage ditch covered in ice and mud was located several yards in front of the fence. This is another obstacle I had not observed before going on this adventure and I attribute my ignorance to the fact that

So there I was

By Pete Buckley

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none of the little kids who had preceded me had slid so far.

Maybe this was because I outweighed these grade school minions by 100 pounds or more; or maybe my oversized inner-tube was sleeker and could defy gravity better than their little plastic sleds; what-

ever the case, disaster awaited as I plunged into the ditch, breaking through the ice and mud.

The inner-tube upended, as did I, and my soon-to-be 67-year-old body churned through the ditch like clothes in a washing machine. Far away, at the top of the hill, I

could hear both laughter ("That was awesome!" was one phrase used) followed by voices of concern, "Are you OK?"

After my tumbling ceased, I conducted a quick medical assessment... are all body parts attached?... yes... is there any blood gushing from my body... no... can I stand up and assure the crowd that I am alive?... doubtful... yet, I power through the pain of having my right thumb suddenly being twice the size of my left thumb and the discs in my lower back being more compressed than ever before, and slowly push myself into an upright position to much applause. After a quick bow to the audience I trudge back up the hill... never to return.

Where are the flying cars?

I know I'm still considered "young" since there are two generations alive that are older than me. But I'm old enough to remember all the dreams and hopes of the 90s. We were so sure that we'd have flying cars by the year 2000. And before you start telling me about the one-off prototype that hovers 3 feet off the ground, that's NOT what the future promised us Gen X and Y-ers. I'm talking about the life in the clouds, zooming past each other like jet planes.

Instead, there's a whole host of experiences I never imagined in my wildest daydreams.

You'd have a hard time convincing me that in the year 2022

Margie's Mess

By Margie Carter

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I would be spitting into a tube weekly in order to be allowed into my work building. I'd laugh in your face if you added that I would learn to speak with a mouth full of spit so that I could get through the line quicker.

Yes, it's as disgusting as it sounds.

There's an even longer list of luxuries that we've yet to make a reality.

Why don't we have self-drying clothes yet? Or at the very least, self-tying shoes! Nowadays I get excited when I see a pair of boots that have a zipper on the side so that my risk of

fainting goes down from bending over to put my shoes on.

Whoever pitched the name Hoverboards for these 2-wheeled deathtraps was obviously not born before 1999. These were not our promised mode of transportation for the future. I tried one time to simply stand on one of those and only got one foot on it before my life flashed before my eyes. They could have at the very least made something that would actually work on water this time.

To be honest, I was never convinced that we would be able to teleport from one place to another via suction tube, much less the Wonkavision method. It would definitely be nice to cut

down my commute to work and back but that's also my alone time so I can live with that.

While we're on transportation, did we just stop trying to make jetpacks work as efficient modes of getting from A to B? Maybe the fire hazard was a bit much for comfort, especially when in mid-flight. I'm also not sure how listening to music during travel would fit in with the roar of the engine.

I know I'm not the only person whose car started beeping a couple weeks ago when the temp dropped. It's 2022, and we still don't have tires that can adjust pressure based on the sensors that are already in them. That amber light is still glowing on my dash because

it's now too cold for me to brave checking and filling my tires back up.

Perhaps the most upsetting disappointment in our lack of technological advancement, in my non-professional and meaningless opinion, has to be that we have not yet figured out time travel. At this point, I'd settle for just going back a couple years to give myself a reassuring warning and some financial advice about buying stocks in video conferencing companies. Back in the mid-90s though, I would have said I'd go back to medieval times, my favorite era for reasons other than the black plague. The irony in that does not escape me.

Watching real men doing real work

I had a double treat last week when two work crews appeared in front of my house. I planted myself in front of the picture window and shamelessly watched them work in freezing weather, as enthralled as a toddler.

In fact, two toddlers across the street got bundled up and came outside presumably also to watch the men work.

There's something about watching real men doing real

work that captures the imagination. The oversized equipment, the harmony of teamwork, the selfless sacrifice that hard work in inclement weather requires. I'm in awe of it. I don't want to do it myself, and that adds to the admiration I have for those who do.

I don't mean to sound misogynistic. There are women who also do difficult, physical labor, and I admire them, too.

The first crew was boring for fiber optic cables in my neighborhood. The allure for me was the equipment. The workers mainly sat in the truck while the machinery did the work.

There were two large spools of thick, orange tubing that automatically fed into the ground. The spools were stopped while the boring took place, then they would slowly turn to feed more of the tubing into the ground. I

don't know how it works, but it was mesmerizing to watch.

I wasn't sure what was going on. I thought maybe it had something to do with plumbing. Since we've had some problems with our plumbing, I called city hall to ask what was going on. I don't normally bother the city with such questions, but since there were two trucks parked in my yard, I thought I had a right to know.

Ramblin' Man

By David Porter

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Angela at city hall explained what it was but asked about my plumbing problem. She said she'd send a crew out to check the sewer. I told her it wasn't urgent. I hadn't intended to create a work order.

Mere minutes later, a city crew pulled up with a backhoe and started digging up the street. They literally busted up the pavement and dug down to a manhole.

It was amazing. There were no markers to show where the manhole was; they obviously have some kind of GPS system that led them right to it.

Three workers quickly cleared the hole, moving together like gears on a clock. They cleared out some debris and then all jumped back in unison as the drain opened up and belched. They replaced the manhole cover and packed the dirt back down.

They hadn't even cleared the scene when my phone rang and it was Angela telling me they had found a clog and fixed it. Fifteen minutes after their arrival, they were gone. The efficiency was mind boggling.

Not long after the city crew left, the other workers packed up and moved to their next

spot. The excitement was over and the toddlers went back inside.

My job isn't hard. As my friend Duff likes to say, at least we're not outside turning big rocks into little rocks. Indeed, but if it weren't for the people who do the difficult, dirty work, I wouldn't be able to have the cushy lifestyle that I do.

I have a respect and admiration for those rugged individuals who clear drains, build houses, fight fires, fix cars and the like. It doesn't make me want to be one of them, but I'm glad we have them.

I've dipped my toe in the physical labor pool. We had rental properties when I was growing up and we did all of our own work. I've hammered enough nails to know that I don't care to hammer any more.

I love to watch them work, though. Maybe it's the toddler in me.

© Copyright 2022 by David Porter who can be reached at porter@ramblinman.us. In the amount of time it took the city crew to dig a hole, fix a clog and patch the road, I'd still be tying my boot laces.

