

The Day of the Bubble

by James A. Smith

Once there was a boy named Homer. He lived on the top of a hill overlooking the town of Sleepy Hollow. He lived with his Uncle Henry in an old, ramshackle house.

All day long Homer helped his Uncle Henry with the chores on their small farm. But, as soon as supper was over, Homer sat with his Uncle Henry on the front porch and played at his favorite hobby.

His hobby was blowing bubbles. Now Homer's bubbles were not just ordinary bubbles. No, sir! Homer had worked for years on making extra big bubbles. And his bubbles lasted and lasted. The reason that they lasted was that Homer used a special kind of mixture to make them. He didn't use just water and soap like most people did. Homer was a scientist. He experimented with the mixture to try to make bubbles that would last.

First to the water and soap he added a little glue, but that was too thick. So one night he got the idea that maybe he could thin the glue with kerosene. That was better. Then, another night he tried adding soap powder. That night he made a bubble three feet across that floated five minutes before it hit Uncle Henry on the nose and burst!

Homer was excited. He thought a little shampoo might help. It did. Then he added rubber cement and a little molasses. And the bubbles got bigger and bigger and lasted longer and longer.

Uncle Henry, who was always getting hit by Homer's bubbles would say, "Homer, some day you're going to get into trouble with those big bubbles! It just ain't natural for bubbles to be so big and to last so long!"

But Homer was a scientist. He couldn't help it. He went on experimenting and experimenting.

One night after supper, Homer and Uncle Henry were sitting on the porch on the house on the hill. Homer had just mixed up a batch of his bubble mix. This time he added just a wee bit of tar, which he had found on the newly paved road.

Uncle Henry looked up from lighting his pipe. "Homer," he said, "some day you're going to get into trouble with those big bubbles! It just isn't natural for bubbles to be so big and to last so long!"

But Homer was a scientist. He had to experiment. So he ran into the house and got his old faithful bubble pipe and began to blow.

It was hard to blow at first. But then the bubble began to come, and blowing became easier and easier. Homer took a deep breath and blew and blew and the bubble got bigger and bigger. Soon it was the biggest bubble he had ever blown. And it was getting bigger and bigger! Homer could no longer see the town, or the yard, or even Uncle Henry.

Somewhere in the background he heard Uncle Henry saying, "Now, Homer you watch it there! Some day you're going to get into trouble - it just isn't natural - "

But Homer couldn't hear any more. The bubble was so big he had to keep it from scraping the ground. Slowly he blew and blew! He was all out of breath from blowing! But still the bubble grew and grew!

Homer moved carefully to the edge of the porch so the bubble could hang over. Ten feet, eleven feet, twelve feet - and still the bubble grew. Thirteen feet, fourteen feet - and all Homer could hear was Uncle Henry saying, " Holy Mackerel!"

Just about then there was an enormous POP, and the bubble broke away from the bubble pipe. For a moment it shook and quivered. But it did not break. Instead it began to roll, slowly at first, and then faster and faster down the hill. Uncle Henry was on his feet. "Homer," he said, "didn't I tell you that someday - " But Homer heard no more. He was off down the hill chasing his enormous bubble.

Coming up the hill was old Bessie, the cow. She looked up from the grass she was chewing and bellowed, "Moo," and then the bubble hit! It was so sticky it just picked up Bessie and on it rolled.

Clem Thompson was bringing Uncle Henry some eggs when he looked up and saw the bubble. Before he could even holler "Help," the bubble had picked him up and he was rolling back down the hill towards Sleepy Hollow.

Prissy, the cat was following old Clem. In a second's time she was in the bubble rolling on toward the town. After it ran Homer, and after him came Uncle Henry crying, "Homer, I told you! "

Before long the bubble came to the highway. Mr. Arnold, the grocer, was driving his horse towards Sleepy Hollow at a slow, easy pace. He was almost asleep. Daisy, his horse, knew how to get home without his help. Before he knew what had happened to him, the bubble hit, and the horse, carriage, and groceries and Mr. Arnold went rolling down toward Main Street.

By now the horse was neighing, the cat was meowing, the cow was mooing. Clem Thompson was screaming, and Mr. Arnold was hollering, "Help!"

Everyone on Main Street turned to see what was making such a racket. They stopped in amazement to see an enormous bubble start down the street with arms, legs and animals sticking out of it. Before they could run for shelter, the bubble hit!

First, it picked up an automobile that was parked outside Dr. Parson's office. Then it gathered up old Miss Annie Jones who was sitting on a park bench knitting. A group of girls who were playing hopscotch disappeared right off the sidewalk.

Two dogs who were chasing each other were scooped up in no time at all. Everybody and everything that was on Main Street that wasn't fastened down was rolled up into that enormous, sticky bubble.

By now Homer and Uncle Henry were entering Main Street. They stood horrified as they watched the bubble roll through the town, picking up everything in its path.

"Uncle Henry, Uncle Henry," cried Homer, "How will I stop it - what will I do?"

And all Uncle Henry was able to say was, "Homer, I told you someday - "

At the end of Main Street stood the church. It was a pretty little church, and the people in Sleepy Hollow were very proud of it because it had a tall, pointed steeple. Now, as the bubble rolled on down Main Street, full of people and animals and things, it was headed directly for the little old church.

"Oh, dear," cried Homer, "everyone will be killed and it's all my fault."

By now the bubble was going so fast that it was bouncing. And what a noise! Everyone was screaming and crying and the animals were all bellowing. Just before the bubble hit it church it gave one big bounce - and landed smack up against the steeple! For a minute it stood still, and then with a great sigh and a sissing noise which was all of Homer's breath escaping, the bubble died!

Such a mess! It spilled people, cars, animals, carts, benches and groceries all over the end of Main Street - all sitting there in a gooey, sticky mess.

It took four weeks to clean up the town after Homer's bubble broke. There had never been anything like it! For a year after, people were cleaning Homer's scientific experiment out of their clothes and hair. No one in Sleepy Hollow ever forgot the day of the bubble.

As for Homer, they took up a collection and sent him off to college where he could continue his scientific experiments without damaging the whole town.

Uncle Henry missed Homer. Every night after supper he would sit on the porch, and light his pipe. "That Homer," he would say, "I knew some day he'd make good with all those scientific experiments!"