

# Features

## Dave Barry: Brain sludge, a little dab'll do ya

**Dave Barry**  
Syndicated Columnist

Today, as part of our series, "The Human Brain, So To Speak," we explore the phenomenon of Brain Sludge.

"Brain Sludge" is a term coined by leading scientists to describe the vast collection of moronic things that your brain chooses to remember instead of useful information.

For example: Take any group of 100 average Americans, and sing to them, "Come and listen to my story 'bout a man named Jed." At least 97 of them will immediately sing, "A poor mountaineer, barely kept his family fed." They still sing this even if they are attending a funeral. They can't help it.

This particular wad of sludge — known to scientists as "The Beverly Hillbillies Theme Song Wad" — is so firmly lodged in the standard American brain lobe that it has become part of our national DNA, along with the "Gilligan's Island" wad. If a newborn American infant were abandoned in the wilderness and raised by wolves without any human contact or language, there would nevertheless come a day when he or she would blurt out, without having any idea what it meant: "A THREE-hour tour!" And the wolves would sing along. That's how pervasive brain sludge is.

What is the root of this problem? Like most human defects, such as thigh fat, the original cause is your

parents. Soon after you were born, your parents noticed that you were, functionally, an idiot, as evidenced by the fact that you spent most of your waking hours trying to eat your own feet. So they decided to put something into your brain. But instead of information you'd actually NEED later — for example, the PIN number to your ATM card — they sang drivel to you, the same drivel that parents have been dumping into their children's brains since the Middle Ages, such as "Pop Goes The Weasel," "Itsy Bitsy Spider" and "Jeremiah Was A Bullfrog." Your parents thought they were stimulating your mind, but in fact they were starting the sludge-buildup process, not realizing that every cretinous word they put into your brain would stay there FOREVER, so that decades later you'd find yourself waking up in the middle of the night wondering: "Why? WHY did she cut off their tails with a carving knife?"

But your parents aren't the real problem. The REAL problem, the nuclear generation of brain sludge, is television. Here's a little test for those readers out there who are approximately 48 years old. How many of you know what the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution says? Let's see those hands... one...two...OK, I count nine people. Now how many of you remember the theme song of the 1950s TV show "Robin Hood"? Thousands of you! Me, too! Everybody join in:

"Robin Hood, Robin Hood riding through the glen!

Robin Hood, Robin Hood, with his band of men!

Feared by the bad! Loved by the good!

Robin Hood! Robin Hood! Robin Hood!"

My brain also contains theme songs to early TV shows about Daniel Boone ("Daniel Boone was a man, yes a BIG man!"); ZORRO ("The fox so cunning and free! He makes the sign of the Z!") and Bat Masterson ("he wore a cane and derby hat! They called him Bat!")

I am not proud of this, but I can name only five Supreme Court justices (one of whom sticks in my mind solely because of the term "pubic hair"); whereas I can name six Mouseketeers.

Of course, the densest layer of sludge consists of commercial jungles for products that no longer exists. Your brain assigns the highest priority to these. That's why, although I honestly cannot name the current secretary of defense, I can sing:

"Pamper, Pamper, new shampoo! Gentle as a lamb, so right for you! Gentle as a lamb? yes, ma'am!

Pamper, Pamper, new shampoo!"

My brain also loves to remind me that my beer is Rheingold, the dry beer; think of Rheingold whenever you buy beer! Brush-a, brush-a, brush-a! new Ipana toothpaste! With the brand-new flavor! It's dandy for your teeeeceth!

Here's how pathetic my brain is: If it FORGETS some worthless piece of brain sludge, it drops everything else and be so obsessed with RECALLING it. For example, right now my brain is devoting all available resources to remembering the name of the candy featured in the following jingle:

"(NAME OF CANDY) goes a long, long way! If you have one head, it lasts all day!"

This is currently my brain's Manhattan project; it will think of nothing else. A lot of people have this problem, and society pays a price for it:

CONTROL TOWER: Flight 8376, you're descending way too...

PILOT: Tower, could you settle something? Was it (singing) "Brylcreem, a little bit'll do ya"?

TOWER: No, it was (singing) "a

little dab'll do ya."

CO-PILOT: Hah! Told you so!

PILOT: Tower, are you sure?

TOWER: Definitely, "dab." Now, about your descent rate...Hello? Flight 8376?

HELLO?

Yes, brain sludge is a leading cause of needless tragedy, which is why I'm asking you to join in the fight against it.

How? Simple: Write a letter to senators and congresspersons DEMANDING that they appropriate \$500 million for a study to for, God's sake, find out what kind of candy lasts all day if you have one head. And if there is any money left over, we should hire professional assassins to track down whoever wrote:

"My bologna has a first name! It's... BANG. Thank you.

**Wear  
a  
Condom**  
(when you're having sex)

# FYI

For Your Information

march 21  
thru  
march 28

March is  
**Women's History  
Month.**  
Look for events  
and special programs  
in FYI each week.

### academic notices

- Advising for summer and fall • 3/25-4/5
- UNCA Undergraduate Research Journal papers due • 4/1

### athletics (ext. 6459)

- Men's & Women's Tennis vs. Winthrop, 2 p.m., JC Courts • 3/22
- Baseball vs. Liberty, 3 p.m., GF • 3/22 & 1 p.m. • 3/23
- Men's & Women's Tennis vs. UNC-Greensboro, 1 p.m., JC Courts • 3/23
- Baseball vs. WCU, 3 p.m., GF • 3/27

### concerts/live entertainment

- Suns of Another Planet with Wayne Kirby & Greg Olsen, 8 p.m., LH 018 (ext. 6432) • 3/22
- "Nine Spys," rock & roll, 9 p.m., HC Lounge (ext. 6675) • 3/22
- "Cinderfella," comedy tale in nine acts, 8 p.m., LH Aud., \$5 (ext. 6671) • 3/23
- Asheville Symphony Orchestra (3/23), student discount tickets available through UP, sign up in HC 44 (ext. 6244)
- Urban Bush Women, modern dance performance, 8 p.m., Diana Wortham Theatre, \$5 (ext. 6584) • 3/26
- UNCA Faculty Brass Quintet, 8 p.m., LH Aud. (ext. 6432) • 3/28

### etc.

- Graduate Salute Days, HC (ext. 6416), 10 a.m.-4 p.m. • 3/21
- Admissions Open House, 10 a.m., LH Aud. (ext. 6481) • 3/23
- Murder Mystery Dinner & Event, sign up in Housing Office, HR (ext. 6700) • 3/24-3/25
- Chancellor's Student Open Meeting, 2:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m., PH (ext. 6500) • 3/27
- Organizational funding request forms for the 1996-97 academic year are now available in HC 50

### exhibits

- Jennifer Costa Exhibition, Owen Gallery, 1st Floor (ext. 6559) • 3/22-4/10
- Patricia Von Glahn Exhibition, Owen Gallery, 2nd Floor (ext. 6559) • 3/22-4/10
- Primitive African Artifacts Opening Reception, 3-5 p.m., RL • 3/24; exhibit on display, RL • 3/24-4/21

### films

- "Raising Arizona" and "Miller's Crossing," 9 p.m., HC Lounge (ext. 6675) • 3/23

### leadership opportunities

- Gay & Lesbian Leadership, 5 p.m., PDR (ext. 6588) • 3/27
- Student Activities Intern applications available in HC 27 (ext. 6584) • 3/22-4/5

### lectures

- "NATO: What Future Role in Europe?" by David Knisley, 7:30 p.m., OCC (ext. 6140) • 3/25
- "Anti-Jewish Propaganda in the Middle Ages & Modern Times: A Pictorial Review" by Dr. Walter Ziffer, 12:15 p.m., PDR (ext. 6669) • 3/28

### organizations

- "The importance of Science in a Liberal Arts Education" by Chancellor Patsy Reed, 12:15 p.m., sponsored by Society of Physics Students, LF • 3/23
- Historic Site Visits to President Andrew Johnson's Homes in Greenville, TN & Hot Springs, NC, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., sponsored by History Association & History Dept., \$10 (ext. 6415) • 3/24

### outdoor activities/recreation

- Hiking, canoeing, hot springs, \$10 (ext. 6244) • 3/22-3/24
- Table Tennis Tournament, sign up by 3/23 at HC Information Desk (ext. 6254)
- Kayaking, 8:30 p.m., JC Pool (ext. 6459) • 3/26

### women's history month events (ext. 6443)

- "Remarkable Women of Asheville" by Gwen Ashburn, 12:15 p.m., RL • 3/21
- "Sexual Harrassment: Building Awareness on Campus" by Cathy Mitchell & Debra Van Engelen, 4:15 p.m., LF • 3/21
- "Educated in Romance: Women, Achievement, & College Culture" by Mary Alm, 12:15 p.m., RL • 3/22
- "Medieval Japanese Women & Their Novels" by Cindy Ho, 12:15 p.m., RL • 3/25
- "Women & Self Esteem" by Susan Fazio, 1:40 p.m., LF • 3/26
- Urban Bush Women Modern Dance lecture & demonstration, 12:15-1:30 p.m., LH Aud.; performance, 8 p.m., Diana Wortham Theatre at Pack Place (ext. 6584) • 3/26
- "Special Women: The Records of Women's Lives in Ramsey Library's Special Collection" by Lisa Roberts, 12:15 p.m., RL • 3/27
- "Women in the Peace Movement" by Bettina Wolfe, 12:15 p.m., RL • 3/28
- (Workshop) "Discovering Your Own Story" led by Angelyn De Bord, 1:40-3 p.m., LF • 3/28
- Women's Empowerment Retreat-VRooooo!!! Call to reserve a space (ext. 6672) • 3/29-3/31