

THE OCEAN LAUGHING

The best thing I like about going to the beach is standing at the edge of the water with my toes dug in the cool wet sand and feeling the last little wavelet *wusshing* up over my feet in a big spatter of white foam around my ankles and then dribbling back into the ocean. I stand there and close my eyes and pretend I'm that last little wavelet and I think about where the big ocean takes me every day. Maybe I was on a beach in Japan this morning. Or lapping around the hull of a fishing boat in Mexico. Or maybe floating next to a penguin in Antarctica. Or tickling the toes of some kids on the coast of Morocco and making them laugh and then taking their laughter with me all around the world to share with other kids. (*Cups ear to listen.*) Hear it? It's the ocean, and it's laughing! Laughing along with the fish and the wind and the sea coral and the sun and clouds that make all the weather, until all the laughing becomes a song, a song of joy and wonder about the beautiful planet the ocean makes for us. I think this world would be a better place if more people stood on the beach and listened to the ocean laughing. Don't you?

BALLOON BASKETBALL

I invented a new game. It's called Balloon Basketball. It's just like regular basketball, except all the players are in hot-air balloons that drift very slowly around the gym. So when someone shoots the ball at the basket, they have to shoot past the other balloons. There would be more passing the ball and more teamwork since the balloons would be moving verrrrrrryyyyyy slowwwwwwwlyyyyyy and getting bumped all around here and there. I don't think as many points would be scored as regular basketball. And the players wouldn't get as much exercise running up and down the court. But you wouldn't have to be really tall to be really good. And wouldn't it be awesome to watch all the balloons floating around? It would be like playing basketball in your dreams!

I WANT TO BE A DENTIST

I want to be a dentist when I grow up. It would be fun! Exploring deep, dark caves in the center of the earth. Finding lost worlds where giant slimy plaque monsters lurk around every corner — just waiting to jump out and grab your fingers! But you'd be nimble and so very quick, and you'd zap out the cavity zombies with your laser ray and leave row upon row upon clean beautiful row of food-free molars and bicuspid gleaming like the sun! Being a dentist would be like playing a video game with a live tongue on the screen. Only you'd never be sure till the very last minute whether it was friend . . . or foe!

WELCOME TO THE FAMOUS PANCAKE MUSEUM

Welcome to the Famous Pancake Museum. This is where famous pancakes and famous pancake makers and eaters throughout the ages are given a place of honor and respect. Pancakes have been very important in world history. Did you know that Julius Caesar was a famous pancake maker? Just before a big battle, the Roman army ran out of flour, and the troops were starving. But Julius saved the day by inventing the Caesar Salad Pancake. Unfortunately, one of his men, Brutus, was allergic to the spicy Italian dressing in the pancake syrup and became very sick. When Brutus got back to Rome, he killed Caesar with a spatula. Then Marc Anthony gave a speech and said "We have come not to praise Caesar, but to bury his yucky pancake recipe." And that's why you won't find Caesar Salad Pancakes anywhere else — only here in the Famous Pancake Museum. Isn't history fun?

ONE SMART SLINKY

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My Slinky follows me everywhere. At least, I think it's my Slinky. One day I heard this funny noise, like a lot of little metal feet running really fast and going *woing-woing-woing-woing-WOINGGGGGGGG!* I looked behind me, and there was the Slinky, shaking and breathing hard like it had run a long way to catch up. It might have been somebody else's Slinky but got lost. Or maybe it didn't want to be with the kid who owned it and decided to follow me instead. You might not think a Slinky would care who it followed around. But if I were a Slinky, I'd want to make sure I had a good owner. An owner who kept me bright and shiny and correctly coiled. An owner who never left me out in the rain to rust. An owner who took time to teach me neat tricks. Like reciting *The Pledge of Allegiance*. And memorizing multiplication tables up to fourteen. And saying "Good morning!" in at least nine different languages. Sure, my Slinky can do all that. Doesn't yours?

SAVE THE MOON

(Pointing at ground.) Quick, get a rake! Or a shovel! Or a broom! Hurry! Don't you see? Look there! The moon fell into the swimming pool! We have to get it out before it drowns! What? *(Looks up.)* Well, sure that's *part* of the moon up in the sky. But there's still a lot of it stuck in the pond. Somebody get a lifeguard! Save the moon! Save the moooooooooon!

DINGLE-PUFFERS

(Laughs.) Ha-ha-ha! *(Stops.)* No, I wasn't laughing, ma'am. Really, I wasn't. Ha-ha-ha! No, please don't send me to the principal's office! It wasn't me laughing! It was the dingle-puffers! You've never heard of the dingle-puffers? Well, ma'am, just about everybody knows a dingle-puffer is a very small person about the size of your little finger's fingernail. And they live right behind your ear. Which is all right, I guess, except they get kind of bored, so they start peeking out to see what's going on and they get tickled by your hair and it makes them laugh. Sometimes — ha-ha-ha! — very loudly. No, I don't think dingle-puffers like detention. Ha-ha-ha! But they sure like laughing! Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Bad dingle-puffers, bad!

CLOUD BANK

(Pointing to sky.) See that? Way up there? The gray thing near the sun that looks like a big mushed-out pillow. It's a cloud bank. That's what my grandpa says. What? What do they keep in a cloud bank? Silly! Everybody knows they keep baby clouds in a cloud bank. Why? So the baby clouds can grow and collect interest. Then, when the baby clouds have become mature — that's a grown-up word that means "grown-up" — the cloud mothers and fathers take their baby clouds out of the cloud bank and send them to cloud school, which is like our school except with no desks or chairs or homework. In cloud school the young clouds learn to make rain and snow and how to shelter birds from airplanes that get too close and how to cover the sun so it never gets too hot. Oh, and they also learn to form themselves into shapes that spell letters when God wants to say something to people on Earth. Now that's something I wish we could learn in our school.

THE TOO TALL BOY

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My cousin has a friend who knows a boy whose mom is married to a man who has a nephew that is the tallest boy in the world. This boy grew so tall, his shadow couldn't keep up with him and just fell down around his knees. He grew so tall he had to climb up on a ladder to comb his hair in the morning. Just last week he grew so tall his head grew right up out of his hat, and his mom was really freaked out, and she went into kitchen and came out with a big can of lard and told him, "Quick, son, eat this!" "What's that for, Mom?" said the boy. And she said, "Shortening, son."

SUMMER IN A BOX

(Holding a small box or cassette case.) This is my summer box. That's right. Just before school started last fall, I put my whole summer in this box. Well, so I can carry summer around with me all year! On a cold, dark winter's day, I open the box and let out a bit of sunshine, maybe a little warm breeze, and always a fluffy white cloud or two — and I don't feel so cold anymore. And when I am in a sad mood and feeling a little lonely, I just look inside this box, and I see my friends and all the fun we had last summer. *(Opens box slightly and offers to audience.)* Listen . . . can you hear your favorite summer? You can if you try.