

A-MAZE-ING INVENTIONS

Simple?
Rube Goldberg didn't know the word. The master of madcap machinery made his living being goofy.

Rube Goldberg invented more gadgets than anyone else in history. No inventor—not Thomas Edison, Robert Fulton, Samuel Morse or any other—even came close.

Rube who? you might ask.

Reuben Lucius Goldberg, if you want to be formal. He created more than 3,000 contraptions in 66 years. They were published worldwide, making Goldberg famous.

He actually was more popular than most *real* inventors.

Big Machines for Small Jobs

No, Rube Goldberg can't be called a *real* inventor. He never created anything as useful as the light bulb, steamboat or telegraph.

He created cartoons. Specifically, cartoons of fantastically complex devices, zany as they come, for getting the simplest things done.

Ever play the game "Mousetrap"? That wacky mix of mechanical gadgets is based on Goldberg's work.

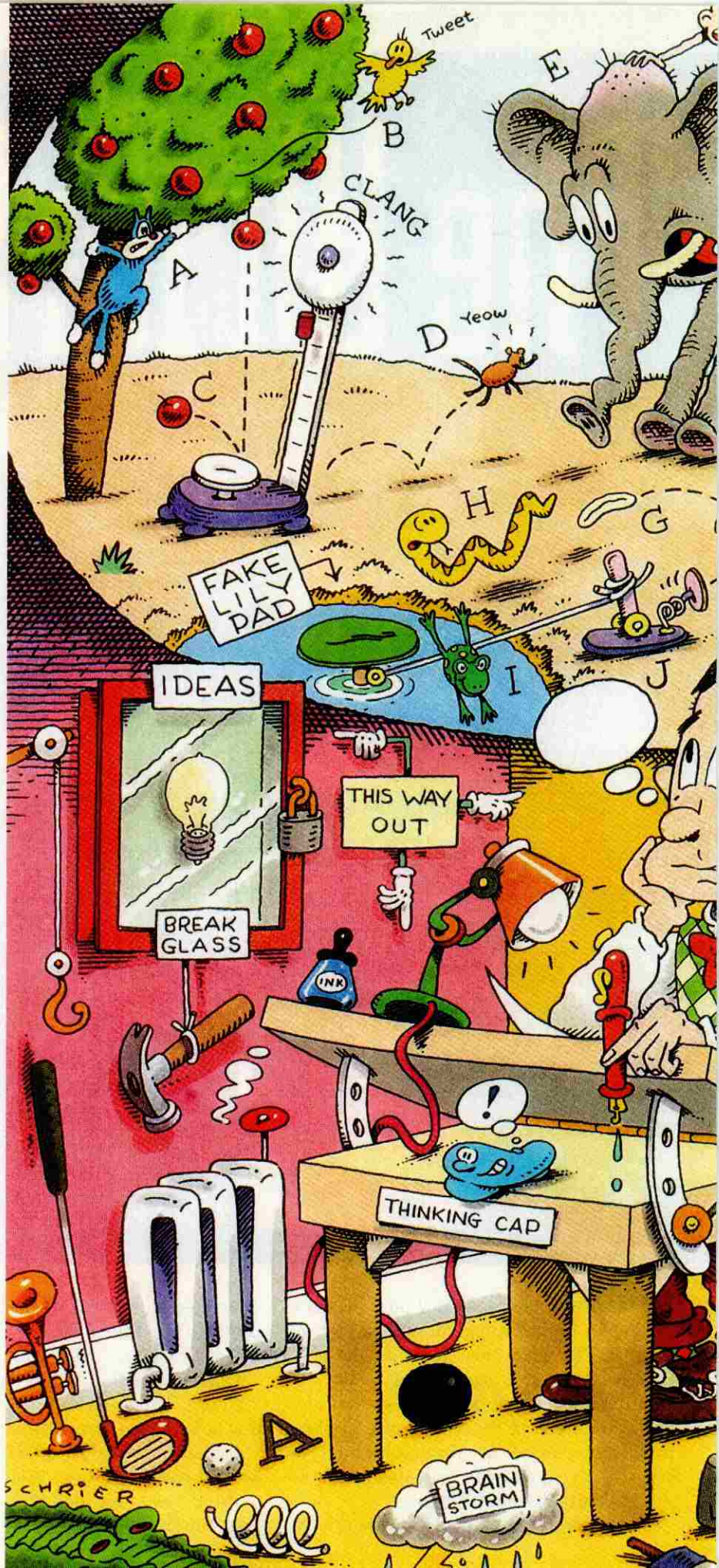
Here's an example of his crazy stuff: Suppose a terrible singer keeps warbling on and on. Sure, you could just get a big ol' hook and yank him off the stage. But Goldberg concocted a "better" way—in just eight easy steps.

- The theater manager hires a quartet, which sings a sad song at the side of the stage.

- A little man nearby weeps because he's so touched by the melody. His tears fall into a large flowerpot.

- The flower grows up, tickling the feet of a small child on a playground slide.

- The kid slides down and awak-



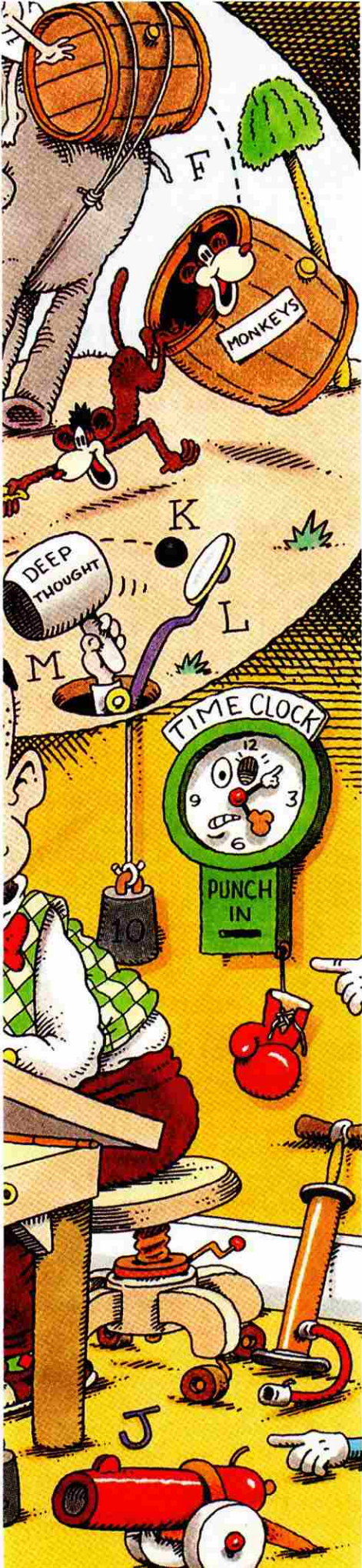


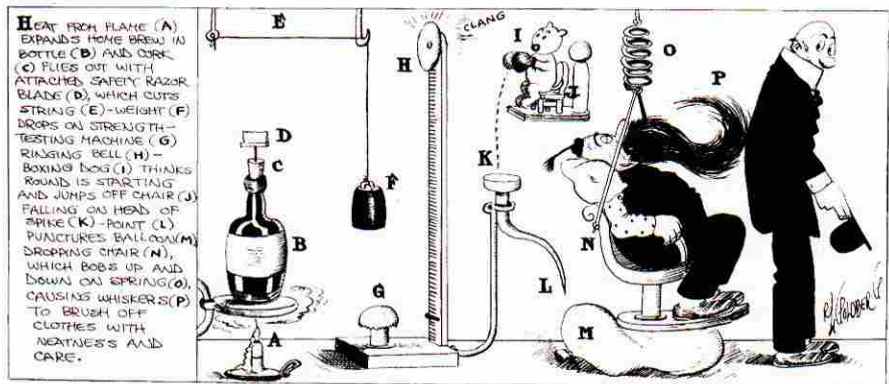
Illustration by Fred Schrier

- ens a bugler sleeping at the bottom.
- The bugler begins blowing reveille, the wake-up call, into the face of a second bugler.
- Bugler No. 2 catches a cold from the breeze and sneezes into a propeller.
- The propeller operates a machine that consists of two hands wielding a large broom.
- Finally, the broom sweeps the awful singer off the stage.

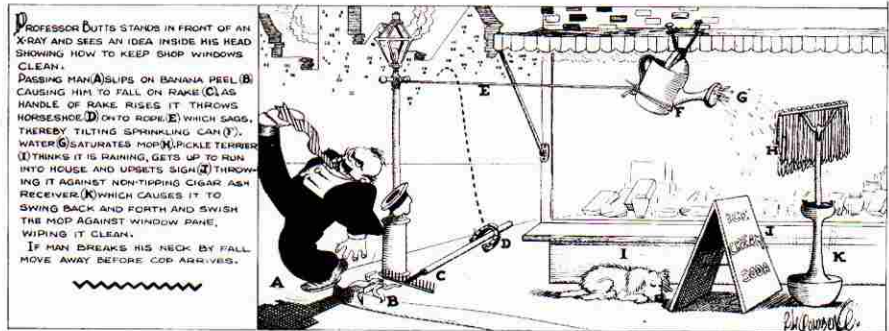
blade is attached. The blade cuts a string, which drops a weight on a machine, clanging a bell.

Then...

A dog wearing boxing gloves, thinking a round is starting, jumps off his chair and falls on the head of a giant spike, which punctures a large balloon. A bearded man is in a chair, which sits atop the balloon. Because of its suddenly deflated support, the chair bobs up and down on



Heat from flame (A) expands home brew (B) bottle (C) and cork (C) flies out with attached safety razor blade (D), which cuts string (E)—weight (F) drops on strength-testing machine (G) ringing bell (H)—boxing dog (I) thinks round is starting and jumps off chair (J) falling on head of spike (K)—point (L) punctures balloon (M) dropping chair (N), which bobs up and down on spring (O), causing whiskers (P) to brush off clothes with nextness and care.



Professor Butts stands in front of an X-ray and sees an idea inside his head showing how to keep shop windows clean. Passing man (A) slips on banana peel (B) causing him to fall on rake (C) handle of rake rises (D) throws horse shoe (E) on to roof (E) which sags, thereby tilting sprinkling can (F). Water (G) saturates mop (H) pickle twister (I) thinks it is raining, gets up to run into house and upsets sign (J) throwing it against non-tipping cigar ash receiver (K) which causes it to swing back and forth and swish the mop against window pane, wiping it clean. If man breaks his neck by fall move away before cop arrives.

Rube Goldberg (M) is the property of Rube Goldberg Inc. and is made available by United Media.

Thanks to Goldberg, brushing a suit (top) or cleaning a window has never been easier!

“Could anything be simpler?” Goldberg asked.

Rube’s Little Helpers

You name it; Goldberg used them all to reach his goals. Little people, circus strong men, small dogs, watering cans, polo ponies, golfers, fleas and elephants all helped out.

The more steps required, the better. He dreamed up 10 to wipe a person’s face after eating spaghetti, 11 to find a lost button, 16 to brush a suit of clothes and 18 to swat a fly.

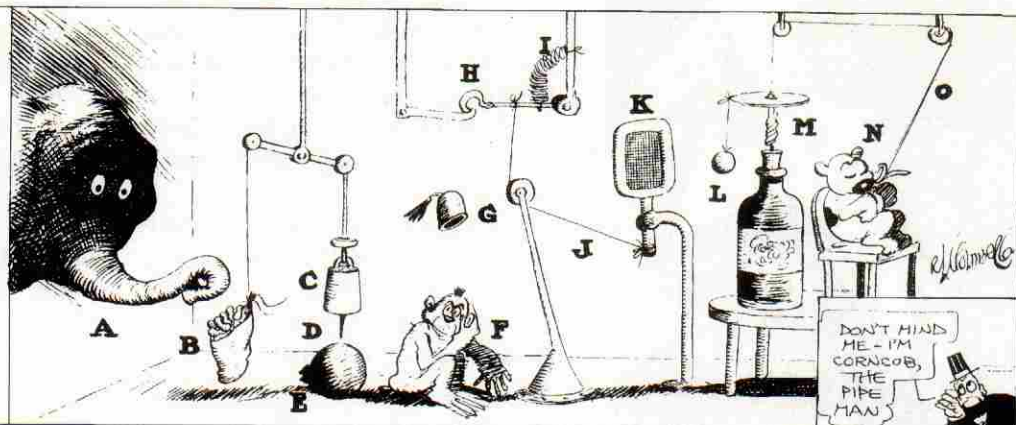
A ‘Simple’ Suit Brusher

Goldberg was especially fond of his handy-dandy clothes brush. The wacky, improbable device called for a flame to be applied to a bottle of liquid, causing the contents to expand and expel a cork, to which a

SERIOUSLY, THESE WERE REAL CLINKERS

Rube Goldberg was a master inventor—of the most useless, complicated machines ever. But as a serious inventor, Goldberg was a huge flop. “Boy,” he said, “did I get off some clinkers.” Take his attempt to build a “music turner.” It was to be a machine that a piano player could operate with his feet, allowing him to turn the pages of his music book without removing his hands from the piano. The thing never did work.

ELEPHANT (A) EATS PEANUTS (B)—AS BAG GETS LIGHTER WEIGHT (C) DROPS AND SPIKE (D) PUNCTURES BALLOON (E)—EXPLOSION SCARES MONKEY (F)—HIS HAT (G) FLIES OFF AND RELEASES HOOL (H), CAUSING SPRING (I) TO PULL STRING (J), WHICH TILTS TENNIS RACKET (K)—RACKET HITS BALL (L), MAKING IT SPIN AROUND ON ATTACHED STRING, THEREBY SCREWING CORKSCREW INTO CORK (M)—BALL HITS SLEEPING DOG (N) WHO JUMPS AND PULLS CORK OUT OF BOTTLE WITH STRING (O)—MY, HOW SIMPLE!



Rube Goldberg even figured out a "simple" way to remove a cork from a bottle. All you need is an elephant, a monkey, a sleeping dog....

springs. And then...

The flowing whiskers of the man in the bobbing chair neatly brush dirt off the suit of a man standing at the end of the machine.

Easy Answers to Problems

Goldberg found solutions for all kinds of everyday problems. A few:

- In case a person with lots of hair or a hat sits in front of you at a movie, Goldberg suggests you take along an alligator that will bite off the part blocking your view. (O.K., maybe that's not such a good idea!)
- People who walk on city streets should have cameras attached to their heads. Then, if they are hit by cars, the camera can snap photographs of the license plate numbers. (Or you could just look both ways before crossing the street!)
- If guests won't go home no matter how late it's getting, push a button and a long rod emerges from a closet. Attached is a pair of hands that holds the guest's hat and coat. Then a record player starts playing a good-night tune. (You'd better

hope your guests can take a hint!)

The Earth-Weighing Machine

Goldberg was born in 1883 in San Francisco, Calif. As a young man, he decided he wanted to be a mining engineer.

He enrolled at the University of California, graduating in 1907, but Goldberg never became an engineer. He did find an amazing career, however.

And that story is just as wacky as any of his inventions.

Goldberg once tried to enter a classroom but could hardly squeeze inside. It seems the professor had rigged up a huge apparatus that almost filled the room.

"It was an awesome thing, with all sorts of wheels within wheels, pipes, instruments, gauges, springs and scales," Goldberg said. "The guy had spent years building it. Then I discovered what it was for and nearly fell over.

"It was intended to calculate the weight of the Earth!"

A few years later, that wacky,

good-for-almost-nothing device sparked Goldberg's life's work.

How It All Began

Forgetting about engineering, Goldberg got a job at a newspaper, the San Francisco Chronicle. All his life he had dabbled in cartooning, never dreaming the skill would come in handy.

But it did. He drifted into sports cartooning, drawing pictures of the athletic events and heroes of the time.

One dull day, Goldberg had no idea what to draw for the next day's paper. His mind flitted back to that Earth-weighing machine. "If that fellow could work so hard and so long to get a ridiculous result," he asked, "why can't I do the same?"

So one after the other, the inventions began popping out.

Rube's Legacy

In addition to his "inventions," Goldberg drew one of the most popular cartoon comic strips of his time, "Boob McNutt." Boob always got into big messes, none of them his fault, and somehow managed to get out and find others.

Goldberg's fame also made him a big hit on the stage. He traveled the country, cracking jokes, spinning yarns and drawing cartoons.

He became so famous that anything considered too complex is still referred to as a "Rube Goldberg."

Goldberg died in 1970, but he left a legacy that lives on. He showed us there could be laughter in the serious high-tech age. ★

—Lester David

WANTED: NEW RUBES

For the past dozen years, engineering students at Purdue University in Indiana have held contests for the wildest inventions that perform the simplest tasks. Naturally, it's called the National Rube Goldberg Machine contest.

One competition called for a device of at least 20 steps that would screw a bulb into a socket. The winner was the 27-step entry from Hofstra University in Long Island, N.Y., which used the Addams Family (of TV and movie fame) as a theme.

The complex device ended when Thing—that mysterious, well, thing, consisting of just a wrist and a hand—rotated clockwise, screwing a bulb into Uncle Fester's mouth.

