**Silliness**

**Seriously Silly: We aren’t the only animals to make fools of ourselves mugging and cooing for infants. Scientists at the National Institutes of Health say rhesus macaques interact with babies in a similar fashion, smacking their lips and making prolonged eye contact. Goofy or exaggerated expressions may serve a similar purpose in monkeys and people: helping the young learn to communicate. (T. A. Frail, in Smithsonian magazine)**

**Mix a little foolishness with your serious plans: it's lovely to be silly at the right moment. (Horace, Roman poet)**

**Only those who are capable of silliness can be called truly intelligent. (Christopher Isherwood)**

**If we're really being observed by people from outer space, why don't we hear them giggling? *(Orben's Comedy Fillers)***

**If people did not sometimes do silly things, nothing intelligent would ever get done. *(Ludwig Wittgenstein, philosopher)***

**At General Electric, in 1944, one of the engineers working with the silicon experiments was James Wright. One day he was running a test on silicon oil where he added boric acid to the oil. At the end of the test the result was a gooey blob that bounced. Unfortunately, this blob had no real use. Samples of it were sent to engineers all over the world, but no one could find any use for it, so it was forgotten about. Four years after the war ended, in 1949, a man by the name of Peter Hodgson thought of a use. The goo could stretch and bounce and if you pressed it against the newspaper comics, it picked up the pictures and letters. Peter decided the goo made a great toy, so he borrowed $147 to start his business, placed the goo into plastic eggs and called it “Silly Putty.” At first he started selling it to adults, then after several years to children. It was one of the first “fad” toys, like the hula-hoop, Beanie Babies, and Pokemon, but after 40 years it is still amazing. It’s a toy with only one moving part and it still costs so little that almost anyone can afford it. (Tidbits)**

**More than 80,000 cans of Silly String are headed for Iraq, but their purpose is serious business. After months of frustration, a mother of a soldier in Iraq has found someone to ship the Silly String to the troops, who use the foamy substance to detect trip wires on bombs. Soldiers can shoot the substance, which travels about 10 to 12 feet, across a room before entering. If it hangs in the air, that indicates a possible trip wire. *(Rebecca Santana, in Rocky Mountain News, October 16, 2007)***

**The word “silly” comes from the German “selig” which means “holy.” It originally referred to people who were pure and innocent, later to people who were gullible, and finally to those who are foolish and simple-minded. (Paul Stirling Hagerman, in It's a Weird World , p. 27)**

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