**The Encyclopedia of Ordinary Things**

**Ann, Raggedy**

A “rag” doll popular in the mid to late decades of the twentieth century. Made with buttons for eyes, and bright red yarn used for hair, Ms. Ann was often accompanied by her brother rag doll, Andy. Unfortunately, I decided it would be a good idea to dress as ANN instead of ANDY for Jamie O’Hara’s Halloween party when I was 5. In a dress, I proceeded to entertain the party with demonstrations of my sister throwing tantrums. Jamie’s mom told my mom what a hit the performance was. My mom was not happy.

**Wafers, Vanilla**

A round, blonde cookie made by Nabisco that can fit entirely in your mouth without making you feel like a pig. Said wafer was brought into my world when Sister Joseph Agnes (see Justin Thomas) allowed our second grade class to use these spherical treats to practice receiving the body of Christ (see Eucharist). Sister became a hero that day, and vanilla wafers became my favorite cookie. The endeavor somewhat backfired though, as the real Eucharist, made from unleavened bread, tasted like fried paper. Apologies to the Lord.

**Poky Little Puppy, The**

This became my favorite children’s book in first grade. It was given to me by a 7th grade safety who had accidentally ran into me while walking backwards, and knocked me down. She felt so bad that the following day she presented me with this book. It was completely unexpected, and I was taken aback by her kindness and concern.

**Champ, The**

A 1978 film starring John Voigt and Ricky Shroder (which was a remake of a film from the 1940s which starred Mickey Rooney). This was the saddest movie I had ever encountered up to that point (see second grade). My mother took me to see this film along with my brother Joe, as an attempt to cheer us up from bringing us to the funeral of a teenage girl in our neighborhood. We both sobbed at the funeral, and sobbed even louder at the end of the movie: “Wake up, Champ. Wake up.” This was my greatest tearjerker.

**Dandelions**

Groundcover (see weeds) that results from the pollination of wishes—not magical requests, but the name of the soft, white, feathery-topped stems that appear on lawns in early spring. Dandelions had a somber effect on me because kids used to pull them from the ground, place a thumb underneath the round, yellow top and flick it off into the air. This was done to the song/phrase: *Mama had a baby and her head popped off*. This act caused a sense of terror, then guilt within me. I would imagine headless babies covering the lawn. And when I partook in the massacre, I felt guilty for delighting in the slaughter. Note: This was also one of my first grammar questions, as I often debated others whether the baby’s head or mama’s did, in fact, dislodge from the body.

**Peanut Butter, Pickles and Cheese**

A random concoction placed on white bread. Invented by my brother Joe and me one Saturday morning when all hopped up on TV cartoons (see Banana Splits, Shazam). The trio became problematic due to the wetness of the pickles. In later elementary school years, the sandwich was reduced to peanut butter and cheese.

**Blakeley, Mrs.**

My sixth grade teacher. One of many I seemed to drive crazy. She did not enjoy me in class, and one day informed me that she never taught a Trainer she didn’t like (she had my 4 older siblings) UNTIL NOW! As a result of her gaining weight that year, students began to say that she must be pregnant. Believing she WAS pregnant, my mom congratulated her on back to school night. Then she really didn’t like me.

**Goddamn**

A curse; the act of taking the Lord’s name in vain; consider the ~~mother~~  father of all profanity. This epithet held particular significance because it was used in a phrase uttered by my friend John’s dad (see Caesar; see Caesar’s Palace) to describe me. At a sleepover at John’s, a bunch of us were recording ourselves on a tape player (see 70s recording devices). When John played back the tape, the volume was extremely high. This was met with Caesar yelling: “Turn that thing down!” To which, John did so, immediately. In the quiet that followed, the group could hear John’s dad, Caesar, complain to his wife: “That Trainer kid is so **goddamn** loud.” Since then, that term has held further damnation for my ears. I recall Caesar every time I hear it.