

Quick Hits 2023

December 27, 2023

- BIC added a hole in the top of the pen cap in 1991 to prevent it from obstructing an airway if it were swallowed.
- An Italian vase that was bought for \$4 at a garage sale was auctioned off for \$107k.
- Damar Hamlin was the most googled pro athlete in 2023.
- December 25, 26, and January 1 have the most cardiac arrests of the year.
- The 49ers have played five bird teams in a row.
- New York state is looking to require fast food restaurants that have concessions on highway rest stops to be open seven days a week.

December 20, 2023

- MLB phenom Shohei Ohtani selected LA over San Francisco partly because of the deterioration of San Francisco the city (according to his agent).
- Ohtani also has a “key man” escape clause. If the principal owner or president of the club leave, Ohtani can opt out of his contract.
- Scorigami! The Raiders demolishing of the Chargers 63-21 is the 1083rd unique final score in NFL History.
- Falcons, the birds, are issued passports in the UAE and elsewhere in the Middle East.
- A bull, a literal bull, was spotted running down the train tracks in Penn Station.
- The academic “research” that claimed Hamas shorted the Israeli stock market has been completely debunked.
- Billionaire Bill Ackman gave Harvard \$10mm in some pre-IPO stock. He also gave Harvard a Put option on the stock at \$10mm. If the pre-IPO stock collapsed, Harvard would still get its \$10mm. So, Harvard had all the upside and zero upside. Instead, Harvard decided to sell the stock in the pre-IPO market at the same \$10mm...thus giving away the upside. When the stock was listed publicly, it was worth \$85mm.

December 13, 2023

- Two academicians have written a paper declaring that there was insider trading before the Hamas attack on Israel.
- The former CEO of Charter Communications, who is still on the board, sold \$100mm of stock two weeks before the company reported crappy earnings.
- After the band KISS hangs it up at the end of their current tour, their avatar images will keep touring. ABBA has done this and makes \$2mm a week.
- Bitcoin mining uses more water in a year than New York City.
- The US government is suing a moving company for age discrimination. It needs to hire more old people and fewer college students, apparently.
- When NBC acquired NFL rights from ABC, Al Michaels was stuck in his contract with the latter. The two networks struck a deal for Michaels to move to

NBC. ABC would get Ryder Cup coverage, increased Olympics highlights, and the rights to Oswald the Lucky Rabbit.

December 6, 2023

- Iowa's state lottery mistakenly announced the wrong winning numbers. If you were quick enough to collect on your winning ticket during the seven hours until the numbers were corrected, you got to keep your bounty.
- The CEO of Broadcom paid \$40k to sit with Xi Jinping at that San Francisco dinner.
- American Airlines is reducing its "carbon footprint" by paying to have sawdust and tree bark compressed and buried.
- Academy Sports and Outdoors was born out of six Army-Navy Surplus stores back in 1938.
- We recently mentioned a fake press release on WeWork for a classic pump & dump attempt. But the press release was not published until after the close on a Friday. And then the company declared bankruptcy over the weekend. The plan was up in smoke. Matt Levine of Bloomberg reports that the fake press release was not published in time because it was formatted incorrectly. If you are gonna be a criminal, don't be a moron (or just don't be a criminal).
- The Cowboys and Seahawks played the fifth NFL game without a punt.
- Scorigami! We missed last week's Denver 29 – Cleveland 12 final score. This is the 1081st unique score in NFL history.
- Scorigami! The Dolphins scalping the Skins 45-15 is the 1082nd unique final score in NFL history.
- The UAE, the host of the latest global warming summit, is the 7th largest oil producer in the world. About 33% of its government revenues come from the oil industry. Yeah, snort, it's about the money.
- The NYT has a bi-weekly segment entitled "Living Small." Last week it featured a \$7.2mm, 6,000 sq ft house on Cape Cod.
- GameStop can now invest in other public equities. The CEO can invest in the same stocks as the company. This same CEO pumped and dumped Bed Bath & Beyond before it went bankrupt.
- "Ghost apples" are ice shells that have formed around an apple on a tree. If the apple rots, it falls out the bottom leaving just a shell of ice in the shape of an apple.
- The IRS assessed \$1.8b in penalties for underpayment of estimated taxes in 2022.
- Charlie Munger graduated from Harvard Law. He did not have an undergraduate degree.
- Total and Kazakhstan plan on building a \$1.4b wind farm which will supply electricity for over 1mm people. (We'll take the over and the under, respectively.)

November 29, 2023

- A research study in Australia concludes that "taking selfies" poses a "public health problem" because idiots fall off cliffs and do other dumb things (seriously).
- 60% of MMA fighters sustain injuries. If a loser is injured, it is a concussion 17% of the time. (These numbers seem very low to us.)

- The Census Bureau wants to spend \$10mm to figure how to best ask questions about “gender identity.”
- CNBC reports that the lack of EV charging infrastructure (locations and speed) is an impediment to consumers. Generalissimo Franco...dead.
- Georgia is the first team to go 8-0 in SEC conference play for three straight years.
- Crazy Cathie Wood, aka the Woodchipper, reiterated her \$1mm price target on Bitcoin.
- A hacker contacted the SEC to file a whistleblower complaint. The hacker’s victim had not disclosed the hack within the four-day window that the SEC suggests (and will soon mandate).
- New York state’s lowest level of state court is called the New York Supreme Court.
- Environmental groups are suing the UK government for its fuzzy accounting of “carbon capture” and reducing “emissions.” The government agency thinks that burning wood creates negative emissions.
- The Chiefs – Eagles Monday Night Football game was the most watched TV show of the year. (We find this stat misleading because it excludes specials like the Super Bowl.)
- Until the Cowboys whooped the Redskins on Thanksgiving. That was the third most watched regular season game ever.
- The NFL does not play games on Friday night or Saturdays (in the fall) because of a law passed in 1961.
- The new president of Argentina thinks human organ trading should be legal.
- Thanksgiving Sunday was the busiest air travel day ever in the US. Seven of the 10 busiest days have been this year.
- One of Charlie Munger’s best lines, “Never tell anyone about your problems. 90% of the people do not care. And the other 10% are glad you have them.”

November 15, 2023

- In response to the idea that the carcass of FTX might be sold and revitalized, the chairman of the SEC, Gary Gensler, said, “it could operate successfully provided it adhered to the law.” What would we do without him.
- Multiple attendees of ApeFest, a Bored Ape Yacht Club NFT event held in Hong Kong last week, have been diagnosed with photokeratitis. The festival tried to replicate the “laser eyes” associated with NFTs and crypto holders on Twitter. The lesson: don’t stare at UV laser lights at Ape festivals.
- The media reported “ChatGPT eats away at Google search’s dominance.” Google traffic fell 0.4% and its market share remains flat at 91.6%. “Eats away...”
- The coffee bean futures market is making a rule change. In the past, one could only keep coffee at the exchange warehouse for a fixed amount of time. After all, the exchange had to ensure the freshness of the beans it was obligated to deliver. But one could remove the old coffee beans and resubmit them for “certification.” They were instantly fresh all over again!

- UK cabinet members must be a baron to serve if they are not an elected MP (member of parliament).
- The Rutgers football team takes the field to the Soprano's theme song.
- Crocs is making a series of Grimace clogs.
- K-Mart Australia was selling a refrigerator bag for Christmas hams. K-Mart is no longer selling this product after it was pointed out that the bags read, "Merry Ham-Mas."
- California Governor Newsom on Chinese communist leader XI's visit to San Francisco: "I know folks say, 'Oh, they're just cleaning up this place because all those fancy leaders are coming into town.' That's true because it's true."

November 8, 2023

- The American Ornithological Society is going to change the names of 80 birds that were named after humans.
- 66% of US households own a pet.
- There has been an increase in disability claims from workers refusing to go back to working in the office. These "employees" are citing anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder.
- The Panama Canal is cutting its available "slots for transits" in half this winter because of drought conditions.
- Over 25,000 people died during the 32 years it took to build the Panama Canal.
- The CIA, through secret funding, used the works of Jackson Pollack, De Kooning, and other American modern artists ("abstract expressionists") as cultural weapons during the Cold War.
- Guyana is the world's fastest growing economy.
- It took the Houston Astros 55 years to win their first World Series. It only took the Rangers 52 years.
- Arlington, TX had more fans at the Rangers parade than residents of the city.
- Scorigami! Houston beat Tampa Bay 39-37. This is the 1080th unique final score in NFL history.
- There were 280k car jackings in South Africa last year.
- Citigroup has been ordered to pay a \$26mm fine for discriminating against Armenians in Glendale, California that were applying for credit cards. \$1.5mm will go to the consumers. The other \$24.5m will go to the government.

November 1, 2023

- The Cowboys win over the Rams was a Scorigami. A game had never finished 43-20 before. This was the 1079th unique score in NFL history.
- Monday was the only day of the year on which all four pro sports leagues played a game. This has happened 30 times.

October 25, 2023

- United is going to start boarding passengers by seat (window-middle-aisle) instead of row.
- We are now being told that one "has obesity" instead of "being obese."

- Here's another fat headline in Elemental (whatever that is): "The Bizarre and Racist History of the BMI (body mass index)."
- Burger King is being sued for allegedly misrepresenting the size of its burgers in advertisements. The same plaintiffs had a suit against Wendy's dismissed last month.
- An Amazon employee was fired (and might be investigated by the FBI) for claiming \$350k of food & beverage expenses during virtual employee events.

October 18, 2023

- We were once invited to join the Screen Actors Guild. The union dues were more than our "acting" income.
- A gambler in a California casino is suing MGM for losing \$2mm after being drugged with a horse tranquilizer (allegedly).
- Used luxury watches have fallen in value by 35% in the last 18 months.
- Approximately 25% of all drug prescriptions in the US are never filled.
- Best Buy blamed slower sales on Taylor Swift.
- The Millennium bridge in London has a bale of hay hanging from it to warn boats about the low clearance. This is mandated by law.
- An analyst downgraded Colgate because of the GLP-1 drugs. Skinny people will not brush their teeth as much...apparently?

October 11, 2023

- A Pittsburgh firefighter has been arrested for arson. He must not have finished Backdraft.
- Pakistan is limiting gas for home fuel to eight hours a day come wintertime.
- Al Michaels, the great sports broadcaster, has never knowingly eaten a vegetable in his life.
- The Sphere in Las Vegas adds a 23% service charge to all tabs. Guests assume it is a tip. It is not.
- Facebook is allegedly paying Snoop Dog \$1mm for a few hours work. Snoop will be one of the faces of Facebook's chatbots (Tom Cruise and Paris Hilton are also rumored to be getting this effortless windfall.)
- Peeps and red velvet cake are illegal in California now.

October 4, 2023

- China owns all the pandas in the world.
- New Jersey Senator Menendez spent over \$300k at Morton's Steakhouse in DC from 2003 to 2021.
- Curaleaf, a Canadian marijuana company (enough said), on Tuesday stated it would not be seeking to raise capital in this market environment. On Thursday, Curaleaf announced it would be raising capital.
- The brokerage Wedbush wrote that GameStop "will continue its path to oblivion with its new and unimpressive leadership" which happens to be the once-savior Ryan Cohen.
- Applebee's is selling a \$1 margarita.

- In the antitrust trial against Google, the CEO of Microsoft testified that, “you get up in the morning, you brush your teeth, and you search on Google.” Microsoft has spent over \$100b on its Bing search engine.
- The word “moron” was created because some people were offended by the term “feeble minded.”
- 41% of France is in favor of limiting everyone to four flights in their lifetime.
- The St. Louis Fed compiled some research showing that more males are janitors, and more females are maids. Generalissimo Franco...dead!
- An EV battery plant in Kansas has successfully lobbied a local government agency to keep a nearby coal plant open so its energy needs can be met.
- The financial regulator in the UK (the FCA) is running ads in movie theaters in which the GameStop movie is playing. The idea is to warn people that buying meme stocks can be risky (if not dumb).
- There will be a college or NFL football game on TV every day from today until November 22.

September 27, 2023

- There is a proposal in the UN to create veto power for the body over the Security Council. The Security Council must approve this change.
- 17 prominent authors are suing Chat GPT for having their work stolen. (We have been saying for a while that this AI/Chat/Bard stuff is just anonymously curated, unattributable search...the last thing anyone should want.)
- The last time Syracuse football started consecutive seasons 3-0 was 1959.
- Dollar General had a bird infestation in a store. Its remedy was for the employees to take home and wash the pillows that had been riddled with bird droppings.
- The Savannah Bananas’s regular opponent, the Savannah Party Animals, has more Tik Tok followers than the New York Yankees.
- Giant mutual fund company Blackrock is no longer using the term ESG (environmental, social, governance) because it has become too politicized (by Blackrock, we might add).
- A \$10,000 bill from 1934 recently sold for \$480k. Salmon Chase is featured on it.
- \$10k is the highest circulated currency in US history. There has been a \$100k bill created for banks to transact with the Federal Reserve.
- The Dolphins’s thumping of the Broncos 70-20 was a Scorigami (first time that score has happened). It is the 1077th unique score in NFL history. It was also the first time a team has scored at least 70 points since 1966.
- The Eagles winning 25-11 over Tampa was also a Scorigami.
- The last time there were two Scorigamis in the same week was 1920.
- Lionel Messi, the Argentine soccer star now playing in Miami, is getting a cut of the broadcast revenue from Apple’s MLS Season Pass.
- The Canadian parliament invited a WWII veteran to appear in the House of Commons during which he received a rousing standing ovation. The 98-year-old Ukrainian fought for the Nazis.

- Two years ago, we laughed when a rather unscrupulous artist took his \$86k museum commission and turned in a blank canvas entitled “Take the Money and Run.” This week, a court in Denmark ordered him to repay the bulk of the ill-gotten sum.
- Sports betting platforms have 3x the “hold” (how much/often they win) on parlay bets. PSA: Do not bet parlays.
- Target is closing nine stores because of theft and violence. They are in New York City, Seattle, Portland, and San Francisco.
- Lululemon announced it was discontinuing its Mirror fitness product. Lulu paid \$500mm for the idiotic Mirror in 2020.

September 20, 2023

- Lyft agreed to pay a \$10mm fine because of some slippery action by one of its directors before it went public. This director “received millions of dollars in compensation” as he arranged for the sale of pre-IPO shares from one investor to another. The buying investor was a Special Purpose Vehicle he set up acting as an investment advisor.
- Property insurance in Louisiana is about 3x as expensive as the national average. Some blame global warming. (We suspect corruption plays a role.)
- The Colorado-Colrado State football game on Saturday night was ESPN’s most watched late primetime game ever.

September 14, 2023

- The Biden admin is trying to get more women in construction jobs which stem from recent inflation spending. One of the tools to attract women to construction sites is the implementation of “lactation pods.”
- The presence of women on construction sites has increased about 50% since 2010. No word on pod growth.
- Academic and industry research tells us that food labels are worthless if not misleading. We have been saying this for years!
- A reporter in Chicago was robbed while doing a report on robbery.
- India wants to rename itself Bharat or Hindustan.
- Baltimore beat Houstin 25-9. This was the first time an NFL game ended with this score.
- There have been 1076 unique scores in NFL history.
- Pocket billiards is colloquially called “pool” because of the pool of money bet on the game.
- India shut down the internet 84 times in 2022. There are 700mm internet users in India.
- There are more Fiat dealerships in the US than Fiat cars sold in 2Q2023 (300 vs 144).
- When we bought our Jeep in 2011 in NYC, the car salesman was going to give us a Fiat for free if we bought the Jeep and a Charger.

September 6, 2023

- The governor of New Jersey, Phil Murphy, who campaigned on turning the state into a “sanctuary state,” has refused to accept federal immigrants from NYC.
- Over half of the college quarterbacks in Power 5 conferences are transfers.
- 3,284 college football players entered the transfer portal this past off season.
- Jimmy Buffet wrote Margaritaville in a Mexican food joint in Austin.
- Axon, a taser company, used to tase its employees for kicks (not product testing).
- 24% of all summer flights in the US were delayed. The average delay is 55 minutes. Delta had the fewest delays (20%). Frontier had the most (35%).

August 31, 2023

- In arguing its case that buying Spirit Airlines will increase competition and reduce airfares, JetBlue’s lawyers accidentally released some documents detailing JetBlue’s plans to increase prices by around 40%.
- Heineken sold its Russian business for \$1.
- ING bought Barings for \$1 back in 1998.
- El Paso is bigger than Boston.
- Mesa (Arizona) is bigger than Atlanta.
- Michele Obama spoke at the US Open tennis championship. She implored equal pay for men and women in the sport. The men’s and women’s champion will each earn \$3mm.
- The University of Nebraska volleyball game had 92k fans. The team has sold out 306 straight games.
- The average annual premium for the average home-owners insurance policy is up 20% in three years.
- 12% of American home-owners do not have home-owners insurance.
- Tokyo has the largest fire department in the world.

August 16, 2023

- Yellow, the bankrupt trucking company, has borrowed \$142mm to keep the lights on while it tries to sell its assets to pay back its previous debt. The new debt carries a 17% interest rate.
- TopGolf Calloway blamed its earnings miss on smoke from the Canadian fires.
- The Barstool Sports founder, Dave Portnoy, is buying back his company from Penn Gaming. He sold it to Penn for \$550mm. He is buying it back for \$0.
- Portnoy has a long way to go to catch the all-time king in this department, Adam Newmann of We Work. He bagged \$2.1b from the about-to-be bankrupt company. (This is an unfair comparison for Portnoy as Barstool was never a sham given cover by the idiots at Softbank. Perhaps distasteful, but not a sham.)
- Brinks, the security company with armored trucks, missed earnings because of a robbery.
- The Women’s World Cup has \$300mm in TV sponsorships. The men’s tournament had \$1.7b.
- Phil Mickelson’s long time betting partner says Phil bet over \$1b during a 10-year stretch and lost \$100mm.

- 1956 Masters Champion, Jackie Burke, once bet Mickelson \$10k that Phil could not make 100 two-foot putts in a row. Phil missed his second attempt. Burke told us this story at his Champions golf club in Houston.
- A job recruiter in the UK says Gen Z “workers” (mid to late 20’s) are looking for jobs with high salaries, low stress, and more flexibility that leads to a better work-life balance. Good luck.
- Dallas/Fort Worth experienced a record 380 hours in a row of temperatures above 80 degrees.
- DFW’s recent 21 straight days of high temperatures over 100 degrees was only the sixth longest streak.
- Cable and Broadcast market share (combined) dipped below 50% for the first time (49.6%). 20% of all TV viewing is still done via the traditional “Broadcast” without cable.
- Some of the co-conspirators in Georgie’s indictment of Trump include Kanye’s publicist, a bail bondsman, and ex-MMA fighter.

August 7, 2023

- Europe’s unemployment rate is at a record low: 6.4%. That is a record?
- California has a new law mandating that pigs be given 24 square feet of pen space.
- There is an estimated 172k homeless in California which is 30% of our country’s homeless. At least the pigs have nice homes.
- The number of foreign visitors to China is down 75% from 2019.
- Incandescent light bulbs are now illegal to manufacture or sell.
- According to the Pig Lobby, flickering lights increase stress levels in pigs. LED lights have a higher flicker rate than traditional pig lighting.
- Michigan is the second largest producer of carrots in the US.
- The highest survival from a fall without a parachute is over 33k feet.
- Research in the Netherlands reports that health care workers that picked their noses were more susceptible to Covid.
- Remember when Oberlin College lost a \$36mm lawsuit to a local bakery it had defamed as racist (all because the bakery owner tried to stop a black student from stealing wine)? Oberlin is now suing its insurance companies because they are refusing to cover the losses under their umbrella policies.
- China is trying to figure out ways to boost consumption. One of the ideas is to host festivals. We should send them Billy McFarland.
- Zoom is forcing its employees to return to the office.

July 19, 2023

- In order to conserve energy, Finland is encouraging residents to only take saunas when the wind is blowing.
- Taylor Swift has four albums in the Billboard top 10 currently. Prince holds the record with five albums in the top 10 back in 2016 (after his death).
- Taylor Swift has had 12 number 1 albums. This is the most by a female. The Beatles hold the record with 19.

- Crazy Cathie Wood's (aka The Woodchipper) ARK has written down its private investment in Twitter by 47%.

July 12, 2023

- A man in Delhi, India stayed at the Roseate House hotel for 603 days and then just left without paying.
- Oregon's Multnomah County is suing Big Oil for \$51b over climate change.
- A woman arrested for killing her husband is suing his estate to break his will.
- Mattel is suing Burberry for using a new brand BRBY. The former thinks this is too close to the "Barbie" brand.
- Managed Care (health) companies are citing pickleball as a contributor to increased injuries.
- Justin Bieber allegedly bought one of the now infamous "Bored Ape" NFTs in January 2022 for \$1.3mm. It is now supposedly worth \$59k.
- McDonald's has a wedding catering package in Indonesia.
- The New York Times and LA Times have both fired the bulk of their sports departments.
- The Chinese communists asked its local banks to respond to negative research on the Chinese economy written by Goldman.
- Republican presidential candidate Doug Burgum is offering \$20 gift cards to the first 50k donors to his campaign. A \$1 donation qualifies.
- Vivek Ramaswamy, another Republican presidential candidate, is offering 10% commissions to people that get others to donate to his campaign.
- Saudi Aramco has wormed its way into ESG inclusion (Environmental, Social, and Governance investing...which we have long labeled an outright scam) by setting up shell companies that "trick" investors into buying the company's securities. Blackrock, the holier-than-thou investment giant that purports to know what is good for you and the world, has engineered this scheme.

June 21, 2023

- California is in the process of passing a law that will criminalize parents that do not "affirm" the desired gender of their minor children. This will play a large part in custody battles, as well.
- LA Country Club's property in the heart of Beverly Hills is valued at \$8b.
- The CEO of the NASDAQ is described by the WSJ as "a second-degree black belt in taekwondo and a ferocious pickleball player."
- 60% of crude oil produced in the US is exported (either as crude or refined).
- The American Medical Association has deemed the Body Mass Index "racist."
- Americans think their monthly subscriptions total \$86. The actual number is \$219 per month.

June 14, 2023

- Salesforce is trying to woo employees back to the office by tying in-office attendance to the company's charitable giving. Alas, the company will make the same donation for each virtual attendance.
- Jeff Bezos pays \$600k in rent for his Malibu home. Kenny G is the owner.

- US imports from China (us buying their junk) recently hit a 16-year low. About 15% of all imports come from China now.
- Netflix is opening a pop-up restaurant in LA called Netflix Bites.
- Modelo Especial is the top selling beer in America.
- AB InBev, Bud's parent company, has increased its leading market share in the US to 40.4%.
- A former regional manager of Starbucks was awarded over \$25mm for being fired for being white.
- One analyst thinks the best use case for AI will be in government. We can only dream.

June 7, 2023

- A judge in the Disney/Florida lawsuit blasted DeSantis for “judge shopping” and “cherry-picking language from these cases (sited to show the judge was biased).” The judge then recused himself for a conflict of interest.
- Brazil's president Lula is appointing his personal attorney to the Brazil Supreme Court.
- California is trying to pass a law that prohibits shop workers from trying to prevent shoplifting.

June 1, 2023

- Retail Inventories are starting to increase at a slower pace. Wholesale Inventories are now negative.
- The U Michigan Consumer Sentiment in May ticked a couple of points higher
- Both Manufacturing PMIs from Markit and ISM remain in negative territory. The Dallas Fed Manufacturing Survey and the Chicago PMI both moved deeper into negative territory.
- Case Shiller and FHFA home price indices showed price gains. But both of these series are March data.
- Mortgage Applications are lower again
- Construction Spending bounced nicely in April. This is still led by multi-family housing while single-family housing is still negative. Oil & Gas drilling expenditures were the largest surprise on the upside.

May 25, 2023

- “Researchers” claim the IRS disproportionately audits black taxpayers. The IRS does not track filers by race. The research uses names and addresses for race proxies.
- “Salon makeovers” for goldendoodles can cost up to \$250 in Los Angeles.
- Bed Bath & Beyond's stock is accounting for almost 10% of all volume in the over-the-counter market. It is still bankrupt.
- One of the largest multifamily landlords with 7,000 units lost 3,000 to foreclosure in April.
- Ford is reversing course and will be installing AM radio in its EVs.

May 18, 2023

- New Jersey and Ohio did not ratify the 14th amendment to the US Constitution until 2003 (they had rescinded their initial ratifications).
- BCA Research thinks there is a 50% chance that AI will “wipe out humanity” by 2050. He likened it to the spread of the Virus (Fear).
- Peloton is recalling 2mm bikes for faulty seats.
- Silicon Valley Bank paid employee bonuses the day the bank failed.
- Sam Zell, the billionaire real estate investor who just died, made money in high school by selling used Playboy magazines.
- In its report on Zell’s death, Bloomberg highlights his biggest business failure. He sold his office real estate company for \$39b. He then bought The Tribune company for \$8b. He ultimately lost \$300mm when it filed for bankruptcy. And Bloomberg considers this a bad trade?

May 10, 2023

- 80% of the world’s gum arabic is produced in (the) Sudan. This acacia tree byproduct is used in Coke, chocolate, and red wine among other consumer products.
- The University of Alabama head baseball coach has been fired for allegedly betting against his team.
- A little league in New Jersey is forcing any unruly parents to be an umpire for three games if they wish to continue attending games.
- Carthusian monks created and are still the only ones that can produce the liqueur chartreuse (the recipe is a secret).
- The color chartreuse is named after the drink.
- Sony’s first product was a rice cooker.
- Foot traffic in US downtowns was down about 25% in April vs 2019.
- A record \$412mm was wagered on the Kentucky Derby (full program).
- The Wall Street Journal is the first public voice pointing out the absurdity of companies asking for tips at self-checkout machines.
- A Lehigh University professor who wrote a book on tipping says that tips collected by machines do not have to be 100% distributed to employees as otherwise would be the case in manually collected tips.
- Robert De Niro, 79 years old, has seven kids ranging in age from 51 to a new born.
- A plate of nachos (served four) in a suite at the Miami F1 Grand Prix cost \$275.

May 3, 2023

- Argentina hiked interest rates to 91%.
- New York state has a new law banning gas stoves in new buildings.
- Nordstrom is closing down its San Francisco stores after 35 years.
- During the Knicks-Heats broadcast, ABC showed footage of the NYC skyline. It had the twin towers still present. (This is not a conspiracy theory of any kind, we just are not sure why they would use such old, stock footage.)
- A catholic missionary who visited Houston in 1848 said, “Houston is a wretched little town...infested with Methodists and ants.”

- The DOJ won its first case of prosecuting insider trading on NFTs. (Remember Non Fungible Tokens? Another form of fake money. We do, however, believe they could serve a real purpose especially in the art world.)

April 26, 2023

- No Canadian hockey team has won the Stanley Cup in 30 years. Even the CBC cannot make up a stat to disguise 0-for-30.
- 16,000 Americans still live in (the) Sudan.
- On April 2, the NY Times said it would not pay Twitter for verified status. The NYT is now the sheepishly proud owner of a verified check mark.
- The Global Times, the communist-run media in China, has changed its Twitter description from “China’s national...newspaper” to “The largest newspaper in China.”
- The percentage of new cars that sell for under \$25k has dropped from 24% in 2018 to 4% today.
- California is proceeding with its plan to price utilities based on consumers’ income and not actual utility usage.
- Bed Bath & Beyond sold 622mm shares of common stock after warning the market that it might be bankrupt. After the legion of meme-fools bought this stock to which the proceeds explicitly went to pay down debt, the company officially filed bankruptcy. We will see if BBBY tries to sell stock now (Hertz tried and was shut down by the courts).
- Venezuelan oil auctions have been rigged for the last 15 years. In other news, dog bites man.
- The first player ever selected in the NFL draft decided to be a foam rubber salesman instead. (Not to be confused with being a latex salesman!)

April 19, 2023

- Budweiser had a perfect score on the “Corporate Equality Index” before this latest marketing campaign.
- The Texas Rangers are going to extend beer sales by an inning given the quick pace of games (after the 8th inning or after two and half hours of game time).
- A “tech executive” has been arrested for murdering the creator of Square’s Cash App in San Francisco. Apparently the two had shared a taxicab just before the murder.
- NPR is “quitting Twitter” because it objects to the label “government-funded media.”
- On the NPR website, it reads, “Federal funding is essential to public radio’s service to the American public.”
- The same man invented Cheetos and Fritos.
- McDonalds is changing their buns and grill tops.
- Netflix is still in the business of delivering DVDs by mail (until September of this year when it will cease).
- A US Appeals court has struck down Berkeley, California’s ban on new natural gas installations for houses.

- Germany shut down its last three nuclear reactors hours before Finland opened its latest nuclear power plant.
- EV car makers are going to stop putting AM radios in their cars.

April 12, 2023

- Chipotle successfully sued Sweetgreens to force it to change the name of its Chipotle Chicken Burrito Bowl.
- The BBC and NPR are protesting Twitter's labeling these media outlets as "state-affiliated" or "government funded."
- 1.3mm Americans have top-secret security clearance.
- One of the secrets to Chick Fil A is it uses much smaller birds than the traditional chicken sandwich places (4lbs birds vs almost 8lbs.).
- The average number of parking spaces per 1,000 sq feet of new US office construction has fallen by almost 40% in the last 20 years.
- Atlanta's airport is still the busiest in the world with a 28% lead in millions of passenger miles over #2 DFW.
- The Whole Foods in downtown San Francisco has been closed out of safety concerns for its workers.
- Walmart is closing four of its eight stores in Chicago because of "underperformance." None of the stores have ever turned a profit since they first opened 17 years ago.
- An insider trading scheme involving SPACs has been uncovered. The Alleged tipper was paid by the tippee with private jet flights and luxury vacations. These guys must have never seen Goodfellas.

April 4, 2023

- Zimbabwe has run out of currency coins, so businesses are using handwritten notes and slices of cheese.
- Zimbabwe's annual CPI has "collapsed" in 2023 compared to 2020: from 850% to 230%.
- The average home renovation now takes 79 days up from 22 days in 2019.
- Stanford has 10,000 administrators for only 17,000 students (including 9,500 grad students).
- The head of Saudi National Bank has been shown the door after his bad investment in Credit Suisse went to zero (basically) thanks to his comments about not willing to put more money in the bank.
- The Ontario Mathematics Coordinators Association thinks the math truth " $2+2=4$ " to be an act of "covert white supremacy."
- March Madness Final Four ticket prices dropped 45% once Texas was eliminated. Some tickets for the championship game are going for \$75.
- Before Credit Suisse collapsed into UBS, it had plans to spin off its investment bank using the old name First Boston (we worked there for a short stint back in the day). CS was going to pay one of its directors \$175mm to combine his company with the CS investment company. This director even got a \$10mm advisory fee

for coming up with the deal. This is better than the owner of the ‘Skins getting paid \$10mm to put the team’s logo on his personal jet.

- The Swiss government is going to investigate the UBS takeover of CS which was put together by the Swiss government.
- McDonald’s is forcing all its corporate employees to work from home this week so it can execute layoffs virtually.

March 23, 2023

- A report by the Philadelphia Inquirer alleges that six longtime members of the Phillies baseball team died from cancer caused by the turf in the old Veterans Stadium.
- (The) Ukraine exported 190k tons of sunflower seeds in January vs 4k tons last January.
- In this week’s What Would We Do Without Academics, researchers have determined that using robots is bad for the employment of low-skilled workers.
- Stripe, one of the last remaining “unicorns” in the private market, recently raised \$3.5b to help pay off the tax burden incurred by its employees who have vested shares but are unable to sell them.
- The daughter of a sanctioned Syrian spy chief has been working in a UN office in Damascus.
- The WWE (wrestling) is in talks with state regulators (Colorado and Michigan) about allowing gambling on its fake/fixed matches.
- Crazy Cathie Wood, aka the Woodchipper, has collected more than \$300mm in fees while taking the chipper to \$10b in investor money.
- Here’s a WSJ headline: “Thomas Lee, Private Equity Pioneer, Struggled to Reprise Early Successes.” He died with a wealth estimated at over \$2b.
- Fannie Mae, which underwrites about 40% of all US residential mortgages, has a chief climate officer.
- A radioactive capsule weighing 55 pounds went missing in Thailand.
- Some of the nickel that JP Morgan owned in a LME vault turned out to be bags of worthless rocks.
- Failed Credit Suisse was the leader in originating “debt for nature swaps.” Third world countries can refinance some of their external sovereign debt in exchange for climate and nature pledges. What could go wrong.
- There are roughly \$17trillion worth of bank deposits in the US. Over \$10trillion of this is not insured. The FDIC has about \$130b in its coffers.

March 7, 2023

- Moderna explained that its Q4 revenues dropped 30% because of lower demand for its products. (Sounds like something Musk who mutter.)
- A morning newsletter from Bloomberg is sponsored by the country of Georgia’s tourism board.
- FedEx has warned its drivers not to draw “obscene or offensive markings” on packages.
- Punxsutawney Phil has a 39% success rate in predicting the duration of winter.

- The price for sending a shipping container box from China to Los Angeles has dropped from \$15,600 a year ago to \$1,238 now.
- The Dallas Jackals are a professional sports team.
- The owner of the Washington Redskins charged the team \$4.5mm to put the team logo on his private jet. It was deemed an “advertising fee.” The Skins have minority owners.
- There are two new ETFs that track Jim Cramer. One is long his recommendations. One is short his recommendations.
- Ford had a Model T in 1941 that was made of hemp and ran on biofuels.
- Cocaine, methamphetamine, and MDMA are now legal drugs in British Columbia, Canada.
- Four academics have published research telling us that long stretches of low interest rates can increase the odds of a financial crisis. Generalissimo Franco is, indeed, still dead.
- The cost of a monkey used in science has jumped from \$2,500 before the Virus Fear to over \$30,000 today.
- The media now refers to monkeys as “nonhuman primates.”

Feb 22, 2023

- The NBA dunk contest, which still somehow exists, had a G-league player participating.
- The dunk contest has not had a player from the all-star game participate in six years.
- The oldest restaurant in Fort Worth is closing because a judge invalidated a perpetual lease signed with the landlord.
- Monday’s holiday is officially named Washington’s Birthday not President’s Day.
- AbbVie is being sued in the Netherlands for “breaching human rights” over drug pricing.

Feb 15, 2023

- Webber (the grill maker) blamed its 42% drop in sales on “higher customer inventory levels.”
- Lisa Marie Presley’s estate shows that the lone Elvis heir was highly indebted while spending \$92k per month for living expenses. Somehow her ownership of Graceland and 15% of the Elvis catalogue and NIL was not enough to support her lifestyle.

Feb 8, 2023

- Super Bowl ads will generate over \$500mm for Fox. The average for a 30 second spot is over \$6mm. Some spots have sold for over \$7mm. No crypto ads this year. But we will be on the lookout for the dumbest use of money.
- The Council on Environmental Quality, a policy board serving the president, has instituted new guidance. It includes a few vaguely worded provisions including: “Agencies should incorporate environmental justice considerations into their analyses of climate related effects.”
- Why is the Save button still a floppy disk icon?

- Two bank robbers in Vegas went on a spree heisting nine banks in 20 days. They got away with...\$6100.
- The WSJ reports that the UK's National Health Services, its socialist medical system, "is in crisis." As a friendly reminder, we have been saying this for years. When Mrs. Chalk Creek gave birth to our son in London, we were given the good news that if she were to die, the cost of the delivery and hospital stay would be free. Oh, what a relief.

Feb 1, 2023

- Microsoft's 10% intraday swing last week was equivalent to the entire company's market cap as recently as 2012.
- Morgan Stanley is fining some of its employees as much as \$1mm for doing business on WhatsApp.
- MSG, the owner of Madison Square Garden, the Knicks, and the Rangers (of NY not Texas), has been using facial recognition technology to bar lawyers that are suing the company from entering the venue.
- The high school son of LeBron James, Bronny, makes \$7.5mm a year in endorsements (NIL).
- A food delivery guy walked onto the court during a Loyola-Duquesne college basketball game. He was delivering McDonald's. He literally walked on the court aimlessly during play.
- Ammonia prices in the US are benchmarked to the Tampa contract.
- While doing some regulatory upkeep on the FINRA website, we came across this, "FINRA has adopted important changes...to train registered persons...particularly women and underrepresented minorities..."
- Northwestern Christian has a college basketball player with one arm.
- There is a new study on ESG funds. The more money the managers of the fund have in the ESG fund, the worse the ESG score. ESG fund managers, as a whole, do not believe in their own product. The defense is that these ESG hucksters believe in a different definition of ESG and thus do not adhere to the benchmarked ESG portfolio.
- ESPN is going to start broadcasting pickleball.
- Consumers spend about \$6b a year globally on dating apps.
- There are 50mm Catholics in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- When the fancy, new artificial intelligence wizbot, ChatGPT, was asked to construct a portfolio to beat the market, it answered, "It is not possible for me to design an ETF that will beat the US stock market because the stock market is unpredictable and past performance does not guarantee future results."
- A member of the San Francisco city council (or its equivalent) is saying that the proposed \$5mm reparations payment to black residents is "miniscule."
- The long Island Railroad misspelled Georgia O'Keeffe's name on the wall of luminary quotes.

Jan 25, 2023

- Dictators exaggerate their countries' growth rates by about 35% a year. The research is based on night-time light activity gathered from satellites.
- Estimates for the total cost of that San Francisco reparations package we recently detailed are around \$100b.
- An NFL bettor wagered \$1.4mm to win \$11,200 when the Chargers were up 27-0 on the Jaguars.
- An employee of a video game maker was fired for tweeting that she was looking forward to the next Harry Potter game.
- Half of food delivery customers make less than \$49k per year.
- Hamburgers are the second most delivered food after pizza (14% vs 16%).

Jan 18, 2023

- 60% of US propane production is exported.
- Natural gas prices in California recently have been 5x the national price (\$20 per mm/BTU vs \$4).
- JP Morgan is suing a company it acquired for fraud. The company, Frank, purported to have 4.5mm customers in its database. Email records show that it had 400k emails, and it manufactured another 4mm fake email addresses.
- USC, UCSF, UTSA, and Johns Hopkins are all being investigated for racial discrimination at their medical schools. Violations of civil rights laws include offering stipends and scholarships only to non-whites and excluding whites from certain classes.
- The report that stoked the not-dead-yet proposal to ban gas stoves was funded by an environmental group that has the goal to reduce "greenhouse-gas" emissions by 50% in seven years. The report claimed gas stoves give children asthma.
- The Inflation Reduction Act subsidizes the purchase of electric stoves.
- 6,542 guns were confiscated at TSA checkpoints in 2022. Almost 90% of them were loaded. No word on Barry Switzer.
- The National Hockey League has changed its Pathway to Hockey summit in Florida by removing the minority-only qualifications.
- The city of San Francisco's African American Reparations Advisory Committee is proposing to pay black residents \$5mm (each). Recipients must meet two of eight criteria including having been incarcerated by the "failed War on Drugs."

Jan 11, 2023

- China and Afghanistan (Taliban govt) are close to signing an oil exploration deal.
- A Wells Fargo executive has been fired for urinating on a passenger on a flight to India.
- Gerard Finneran still holds the crown for the most outlandish plane behavior.
- The parent of a disgruntled men's World Cup soccer player for the US decided to dig up dirt on the coach that benched the player. The mom, who was friends with the coach 31 years ago, said she saw the coach kick his girlfriend in the leg. That coach and girlfriend have been married for 25 years.
- ChatGPT is looking to raise money at a \$29b valuation.

- The US government is considering banning gas stoves (this already appears to be fading).
- The city of Seattle is suing some social media companies for intentionally harming children.
- The president of Mexico, AMLO, took 28 minutes to answer a single question at a press conference alongside Biden and Trudeau.

Jan 5, 2023

- “it’s a Wonderful Life” is a Christmas television staple because the producers let the copyright lapse so it entered the public domain (it could be shown on continuous loops for free).
- The 2022 Armed Forces Bowl was the coldest bowl game ever with a wind chill of -7.
- The 1967 Icebowl between the Packers and the Cowboys had a windchill of -36.
- There is a crypto-themed restaurant in Manhattan.
- The average NFL viewership on Christmas day was 22.9mm. The average for the NBA games was 4.3mm.