

See also "Shame"

https://docs.google.com/document/d/17jcc81tqDemEKZol7ul_rLGoq4ZycaKH/edit

"Big Boy" BY DAVID SEDARIS. *Esquire*. JAN 29, 2007

<https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/a129/sedaris-big-boy-1199/>

Euphemism---a nice way of saying something uncomfortable. Think of the many words for the place we use for bodily functions: *bathroom, rest, loo, powder, water closet, WC, washroom*. These "nice" words avoid saying what we actually do in the room. There are some words that are not euphemisms. They describe a thing more crudely--think of words for bathroom like "the crapper."

IT WAS EASTER SUNDAY in Chicago, and my sister Amy and I were attending an afternoon dinner at the home of our friend John. The weather was nice, and he'd set up a table in the backyard so that we might sit out in the sun. Everyone had taken their places when I excused myself to visit the bathroom, and there, in the toilet, was the absolute biggest piece of work I have ever seen in my life--no toilet paper or anything, just this long and coiled specimen, as thick as a burrito.

I flushed the toilet, and the big boy roused around. It shifted position, but that was it. This thing wasn't going anywhere. I thought briefly of leaving it behind for someone else to take care of, but it was too late for that--before leaving the table, I'd stupidly told everyone where I was going. "I'll be back in a minute," I'd said. "I'm just going to run to the bathroom." My whereabouts were public knowledge. I should have said I was going to make a phone call. I'd planned to pee and maybe run a little water over my face, but now I had this to deal with.

The tank refilled, and I made a silent promise. The deal was that if this thing would go away, I'd repay the world by performing some unexpected act of kindness. I flushed the toilet, and the beast spun a lazy circle. "Go on," I whispered. "Scoot! Shoo!" I claimed a giddy victory, but when I looked back down, there it was, bobbing to the surface in a fresh pool of water.

Just then, someone knocked on the door, and I started to panic.

"Just a minute."

At an early age, my mother had sat me down and explained that everyone has bowel movements. "Everyone," she'd said. "Even the president and his wife." She'd mentioned our neighbors, the priest, and several of the actors we saw each week on television. I'd gotten the overall picture, but, natural or not, there was no way I was going to take the rap for this one.

"Just a minute!"

I seriously considered lifting this monster out of the toilet and tossing it out the window. It honestly crossed my mind, but John lived on the ground floor and a dozen people were seated at a picnic table ten feet away. They'd see the window open and notice something drop to the ground. And these were people who would surely gather round and investigate, then there I'd be, with my unspeakably filthy hands, trying to explain that it wasn't mine. But why bother throwing it out the window if it wasn't mine? No one would have believed me except the person

who had left it in the first place, and chances were pretty slim that the freak in question would suddenly step forward and own up to it. I was trapped.

"I'll be out in a second!"

And I scrambled for the plunger and used the handle to break it into manageable pieces, all the while thinking that it wasn't fair, that this was technically not my job. Another flush and it still didn't go down. Come on, pal. Let's move it. While waiting for the tank to refill, I thought maybe I should wash my hair. It wasn't dirty, but I needed some excuse to cover the amount of time I was spending in the bathroom. Quick, I thought. Do something. By now, the other guests were probably thinking I was the type of person who uses dinner parties as an opportunity to defecate and catch up on his reading.

"Here I come. I'm just washing up!"

One more flush and it was all over. The thing was gone and out of my life. I opened the door to find my friend Janet, who said, "Well, it's about time." And I was left thinking that the person who'd abandoned this man-made object had no problem with it, so why did I? Why the big deal? Had it been left there to teach me a lesson? Had a lesson been learned? Did it have anything to do with Easter? I resolved to put it all behind me, and then I stepped outside to begin examining the suspects.

Another funny Vietnam story

Many of the sleeping quarters for enlisted men in our small basecamp at Binh Phouc had sandbag walls with some wood posts in the walls to help support the roof on them. My place was long enough for 4 cots that ran along the wall on one side of the room and 3 cots on along the other wall with only maybe a yard wide aisle between the cots. We were right next to our battalion headquarters, so we were fortunate to have electricity. The sandbag walls of our place were more than 4 foot thick and the only opening in the walls was the one door. We had a big rat (that we called George) that lived in the walls. Every once in awhile George would tunnel inside our room. We proved to be inept at throwing bayonets at George when he did this. One of my roomies, that slept on a corner cot, had nailed a wooden box (for 105mm rounds) on a post in the wall about 4 foot above his cot. He kept some things in it and on top of the box he kept some spare magazines for his M 16 and a couple of the old style iron pineapple grenades.

Well, just imagine all 7 of us being sound asleep in our small room and being awoken about 2 a.m. by someone in our room who has let out a blood curdling scream. Needless to say, all hell broke loose in our room. I immediately sprang out of my cot only to hit head first into the

stomach of the guy getting out of his cot across the aisle from me. I hit him so hard I knocked him back over his cot and against the wall behind him. The same thing was happening to the others in our room. Guys that managed to stand were tripping over the others that had been knocked to the floor when they scrambled for their rifles. All during this, someone in our room continued to scream.

Finally, after what seemed an eternity of chaos, someone in our room found the light switch for our lone light bulb and turned it on. The guy in the corner with the 105 mm box was still laying on his cot. He was holding his crotch (the family jewels) with both hands while he rolled side to side on his cot still uttering sounds that told you he was in great pain. Next to his cot on the floor lay one of his iron pineapple handgrenades.

It seems George the Rat had made a new tunnel in our walls during the night that came out into our room level with the top of the 105 mm box. There, George had knocked off one of the grenades, scoring a direct hit on the guy sleeping below it.

One or two of us may have deserved a purple heart that night. Also it was a good thing we were all young men for an older one may have suffered a heart attack from the blood curdling screams the guy had let out. In the few seconds of mayhem in our small room we had put some serious hurt on each other scrambling out of our cots in that completely dark small room.

By the way, George did not live too long after the incident he caused.