

# Hambone Award Contender

Have you ever heard of the Hambone Award? It's a prize given out by Veterinary Pet Insurance, the nation's largest and oldest pet insurance company. Each month, the company selects the most unusual claims and chooses a monthly winner to vie for the yearly prize – the Hambone Award. Don't worry, all the contenders are pets who survived their ordeals. Last year's winner Ellie, a Labrador retriever from California, went to the emergency room after eating an entire beehive. She vomited large piles containing hundreds of dead bees, but Ellie was not harmed by the dead bees nor by the pesticide that killed them.

When reading suburban Chicago newspaper The Daily Herald's online headlines, the following caught my eye, "Owl Vs. Chihuahua", and that's where I read about Chico the Chihuahua's brave fight against a Great Horned Owl. Chico's owner was taking him for a walk in the wee hours of the morning, when a Great Horned Owl swooped out of nowhere (owls are silent flight birds) and picked up poor Chico, intending him for his late night snack. Chico and his owner won the tug-of-war, and Chico won the VPI 'most unusual' story for the month of January, beating out such claims as a Labrador retriever that ate a marijuana cookie, a Golden retriever that swallowed a 5-inch barbecue skewer, a mutt that got wedged between banister bars and a Boston terrier who collided with a skier. If you'd like to read the other entries and be part of the public voting in September, you can go to the [VPI Hambone Award's website](#).

Oh, and how did the Hambone Award get its name? There was a dog insured by VPI who got himself trapped in a refrigerator and ate an entire Thanksgiving ham before he was discovered. He was treated for a mild case of hypothermia whereupon he fully recovered.

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# Look, Another Post! aka Lake Water Main

Two posts this month so far! Okay, that's the last I'll say about my lack of posting over the last couple of months. No essay here like other bloggers, just a news flash. Last week, less than a week after snowmageddon '11 (hey, that almost rhymes!), a village employee came a-knocking and informed us that a water main had burst under our driveway. Yikes. I knew there was water there, but I thought some of the snow had melted under the beating sun. In the past, when snow started melting a low point on our sidewalk would become a pond. The night before I saw this and tried to push the water to the driveway, thinking of letting it have somewhere to go. Later, I noticed the entire sidewalk in front of our house had become drenched- an obvious sign of something worse than melting, but I didn't think much of it. Good thing the neighbors to one side never shoveled their walk, so no one would be walking on our sidewalk anyway. So back to the village informant, within a few hours they had called several trucks over, waited for the gas company to mark their territory with yellow (paint my friends, what were **you** thinking? ☐ ), and then dug away with a backhoe and other equipment, a good four feet or so underground. I was gone for much of this- by the time I returned the hole was nicely dug and they were fixing the pipe. My guess it was to the fire hydrant by the driveway, so good thing they fixed it quickly- just in case. Well, they filled it in once finished and satisfied, and went on their merry way. Wait- what about the driveway? Well, cold as it was, all they could do was flatten it out and put on a thin layer of asphalt. Personally, I wish they did away with the asphalt altogether for the time being. It is really uneven

and very rough. They said they would make a permanent fix in the spring. Hopefully I will still have tires left come spring...

Oh, one unrelated thing- some might say a certain musical group at a certain annual Sunday event gave a "solid" performance, but I am with the bloggers/twitts (what do you call twitterers anyway? Not the name I just gave them for sure!) who are, shall we say, in disagreement with this. I say if the performance was solid, it certainly had cracks or chips in it due to one song. Let me just say to Fergie of the BEPs, you tried (I'm sure), but you have proven beyond a reasonable doubt that you are no Axl Rose. Never try to sing a GnR song publicly again please. Ever. Thank you, that is all. I think my ears are still bleeding... ☐

And I won't even mention another not-quite solid performance by another singer at that same event that same evening...

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## **So you say it's my birthday??**

Well not anymore. The birthday is officially over now. I'm older, I have my new license and sticker for the truck. Everything nice and legal.

I had dinner with a couple of my daughters. I had some me time (much needed). I got to talk with some very interesting people. I met a few friends. A good day.

I've never been one to put much into hitting a certain age on a birthday. I've hit the big 50 a couple of years ago, and honestly it didn't bother me much. Age and getting older doesn't happen in one day. I'm no longer in my 20's, but the difference between now and then didn't happen overnight.

The gray hairs that I have, I earned. They didn't come in on a specific birthday, they came in one by one. The daily complaints of my muscles and joints came in the same way. My eyes didn't start needing glasses to read when I put down a book and picked up the next one. Slowly, ever so slowly we change.

We don't have crystal balls to tell us how long we will stay around this little blue ball in space, so I could be way past middle age, or maybe just hitting it. Living to 104 really isn't that crazy of an idea. A lot more people do that these days. I could have something happen tomorrow, or next week. I don't know,, and I really don't care I get up in the morning (or sometimes after late night gaming sessions the afternoon), and go about my routine. I like life and living. And that makes it a joy to be here.

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## A wish?

I really need to thank a friend for the inspiration behind this post. A simple facebook question, "If you had one wish?" Implied, of course, is what would it be?

Should I wish for "One More Day" like Diamond Rio? Should I wish for a big lottery winner? Peace on Earth? More wishes? As the Disney Studio so aptly put in the movie "Aladin" are there limits on wishes? No wishing for more wishes? No wishing for raising the dead? No wishing for someone to love you?

There have been many stories about wishes. The wish granter always seemed to turn the words of the wishee to something that just didn't fill the general tone of the initial wish. That genie in the lamp, or the selling of your soul to the devil, either way, these two seemed to have fun with the game

of words when wishes were granted. True, they followed the letter of the wish, but maybe not the intent.

So I guess, you have to be very careful with your wishes. Things may not turn out the way your dreams envision. Asking for too much could ruin whatever happiness you have now. Changing your life style may not give you the things you desired. Wishing to go back in time may actually make things worse than they are now. Wishes, if available, could be very powerful things for good or ill.

It is fun to dream about winning that lottery, seeing lost loved ones, finding that perfect person, getting all of those other wishes, but in the end it is a dream.

My wish, after thinking about all of this is very simple. I wish to live my life to the best of my ability, and be surrounded by friends and family who make life worth living. The best thing about this, is that wish already came true.

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## The Status Quo

According to the Wiktionary (or probably some dictionary) Status Quo is "..., a commonly used form of the original Latin "statu quo" – literally "the state in which" – is a Latin term meaning the current or existing state of affairs." Of course if you want to keep things just the way they are, you would be keeping the Status Quo.

I find this to be a strange state of affairs myself. As much as I like things to stay the same, I also like some changes in my life. I have my own "comfort zone". When everything falls in my comfort zone, I am a very happy camper.

There are times when my comfort zone changes. Some are forced changes. Those things that I have no control of. These things have to be accounted for and adapted to. For me, depending on the severity of the change, I can be moody or down right depressed during those time. How long they last also depends on the severity of the change.

At other times, the changes are less dramatic, and mostly in my control. I actually look forward to some of these changes. They prevent life from getting too boring. They add zest. My comfort zone shifts just a little bit. Most things are the same with one or two things added or subtracted. In that I grow, learn, live and enjoy my life.

My life is currently in one of those less dramatic comfort zone changes. Mostly in my control, but not everything. I've had more than my share of unalterable changes, so this is a welcome relief.

Here is to living in a comfort zone, that doesn't believe in the Status Quo.

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## Two Months

A new record- yeah, you can figure out what for... So, what to write about. The show whose opening weekend I wrote about closed over a month ago with a record number of seats sold causing them to add a performance when no one objected to it. How about how I am in between shows, and the question of whether or not to try out for the godless JC Superstar was answered for me when I couldn't sing due to a cold audition weekend? How my right arm hurts from all the shoveling, including some this morning to free the dryer vent so I can take care of some clothes? There was the Tron movie I had a

countdown to that I still haven't seen- is it still in the theaters I wonder? There was our 4th and 5th grade lock-in/retreat two weeks ago. My team came in last place and I didn't get sick this year. There's work- nah. Nothing to talk about there. I think one of the owners may still be snowed in. The person who normally does her long driveway took one look at it Wednesday and drove away. She lives in Antioch, an hour north of me. Gaming and my new DSi XL? Dunno. Yes, there's that first vacation I took in years, outside of the annual summer camp week- the now infamous injurious one for a fellow tangenteer. It was great to get away. Someone mentioned to me how he would just stretch out on a beach over there, but I'm just not that type of person. I enjoy the activity offered at theme parks, talking with friends as we walk from ride to ride. Of course, I still did not like the one extreme go-kart track at Old Town and am not so into activity that I will waste money on the extreme thrill rides there. But what I did do was a nice break, and I did miss an extremely cold work day. Unfortunately I didn't get out of all those days- this Thursday was pretty bad, and next Tuesday also promises to be brutal.

One day at Universal, I decided I did not want to go on the water ride. Instead, I sat with the two youngest and watched several people take photos at a photo-op spot. Having recently seen the movie starring this certain dog, when Phyllis came back after one ride, I had her take this picture (slightly retouched):



Oh, about comics, I mentioned a particular comic strip while I was in Florida- here is a link to it. It is about a lower middle-class suburban self-important family. [Read on by clicking this link.](#) Now I will think about maybe breaking the two month record following this post.. ☐

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# A Different Sort Of Homecoming

Before I publish my vacation diary, I would like to say a few words about some unexpected feelings I encountered upon returning home. Ending a vacation is always a chore, and for an in-the-process-of-being-reformed-worrywart like me, it's easy to get caught up in dreading the negatives that accompany getting back to normal life; ie, returning to a cold climate, laundry, unpacking, etc. Thanks to my growing relationship with God, I've been learning to embrace positives more easily, and I could not be more grateful for the opportunity for such a wonderful vacation and for the fact that we made it there and back safely.

But when we did return home, the welcome committee seemed a bit small. The greetings of family members left behind (read: pets) seemed to be missing something, and the house seemed more empty than I had remembered it. Then it hit me: this was the first homecoming we've had since our family dog passed away last year.

I had noticed it on vacation, and in Florida it was actually an unexpectedly freeing feeling to not worry about a loved one left behind. Don't get me wrong; I love the pets we still have, but no one will ever take Charity's place. I used to feel such a hole in my heart when we went on vacation and left her behind that it gave me an extra motivation to hurry home. But this time, our homecoming celebration was short-lived: we greeted pets and they greeted us, and there was no one around to hold a grudge like Charity used to do when we left her behind. No one was miffed about getting left behind, in fact, I wonder if the dogs even really noticed...

It's been over a year since the last time I saw her, and I still miss her a lot.

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## Cutest Bunny Ever!!



Our kids had two snow days off school this week, so what better activity for a family full of animal lovers than to visit the pet store? You can see where this is going... we went looking for 1 baby rat, and we came home with 2 baby rats and a bunny. One ridiculously cute bunny as yet without a name! There have been a lot of contenders, but we just haven't found any perfect ones yet. The leading ones so far are Tigger, Snow Bunny, and Arcy. Arcy is like a feminine version of R.C. which stands for Ridiculously Cute. I really like Tigger even though we THINK she's a girl bunny, but when I tried calling her Tigger it didn't click. Here's a video, and more suggestions are welcome in the comment box below:

And the new rats:



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## Goodbye, Andy

Just moments ago, ace New York Yankee pitcher Andy Pettite announced his retirement from the team he has been with for 13 of his 16 year career. He will be sorely missed. Instrumental in many Bomber seasons, notably in 5 Championship seasons. Physically, he is ready if he was needed. Emotionally, it is time for him to move on.

Pitching has got to be the most taxing and demanding position on the diamond. So many injuries and surgeries reported that one may wonder how many are able to continue into their mid and even late 30's. And now with only three starters returning (A.J. Burnett, Phil Hughes, aaaaand C.C. SABATHIA), it looks like the Yanks will once again be looking to strengthen its starting rotation.

Long-time catcher Jorge Posada has also been re-assigned to full time DH duty. Let's hope that Cervelli is able to step up and assume the position full time.

Less than a month before Spring Training games begin in Tampa!

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# The Blizzard that wasn't

Yes, there was blowing and drifting snow. Yes the conditions for NW Ohio were miserable. The roads needed to be cleared, and people needed to be safe.

The local stores were picked bare by people in a panic. For one day worth of storm.

Yes, this storm could have been bigger. Other areas were hit harder. But unlike the last Big blizzard that still has people talking, we were well informed. The road crews were ready. Schools and businesses were prepared. And then we got the snow.

Not much, but enough to make life a bit troublesome when it was combined with high winds. Back in the woods, I wasn't even cooped up for 24 hours. We would have been able to get out by noon today. Not that I would have wanted to, but we could have.

Back in 1978, people were house bound for days. I remember helping get food to people stranded in and around Defiance Ohio. People with Snowmobiles, 4WD vehicles, tractors and one guy with a dune-buggy VW helped get things and people where they needed to be. I'm sure that if this storm had packed the same punch, the reaction would have been the same.

Still waiting, and hopefully this will be a long wait, for the next big storm.