

**WILLIAM HENRY BARTHOLOMEW SMITH, CONSUMER
ADVOCATE VS. THE REAL PROBLEMS AFFLICTING THE WORLD:
WHY YOU SHOULD BE OUTRAGED ABOUT THE POOR QUALITY
OF PAPER TOWEL PERFORATIONS IN AMERICA**

By Bradley Walton

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William Henry Bartholomew Smith, Consumer Advocate vs. The Real Problems Afflicting the World: Why You Should Be Outraged About the Poor Quality of Paper Towel Perforations In America

by
Bradley Walton

AT RISE: On a bare stage, WILLIAM HENRY BARTHOLOMEW SMITH, dressed in his Sunday best, which looks like something the average person might wear on a Tuesday when they're not planning to be seen in public. It is perfectly fine for the character to be female, in which case she is called WILLA HENRIETTA BARTHOLOMEW SMITH.

People on the TV and the Internet are moaning and complaining all the time about the world's problems... about the so-called "environment," about so-called "endangered species" of animals whose existence you've gotta take on faith because they don't sell 'em at the grocery store, about wars in parts of the world that no self-respecting American could even find on a map. Well I'm here to tell you... those people who are obsessed with all that junk have no sense of priority. They have no respect for the everyday afflictions that ail the common man. They don't care. Well, *I* care. And I'm here to rub your face in it. To make you so angry that you actually get up and do something. My name is William Henry Bartholomew Smith, consumer advocate, and I'm here to talk to you about the shameful, embarrassing, and downright un-patriotic quality of paper towel perforations in America today.

You know what I'm talking about. When you go to tear yourself a sheet of paper towel off of the roll, you've got a lot on your mind. You need to nuke yourself a frozen burger or clean up the mess your dog left next to the spare tire in the living room. You have a task that you must complete before you can get on with your life. And in order to complete that task, you need a paper towel. And in order to *get* that paper towel, you gotta tear it off the roll. You don't have time for nonsense. You need to be able to rip it off and go. So you find that perforation line, and you give the sheet on the end a good hard tug in the expectation... the hope... the *need* of a good clean tear. But that's not what happens. It rips down the middle of the sheet. Jagged. Crooked. All over the place. Not pretty at all. And now you've got either more or less paper towel in your hand than you wanted, and the next time you need a sheet, there's going to be this extra part of a sheet that you're not gonna know what to do with. It's distressing. It disturbs you. And keep in mind, you've got

stuff to do. You've got a burger to nuke, or puppy surprise to clean up in the living room if you ever want to rotate the tires on your pickup truck again. You don't need this additional stress. It's completely unacceptable. And it shouldn't have to be that way.

I work hard. I *earn* my money. And when I spend that hard-earned on money on paper towels, I expect those paper towels to tear the way they're supposed to tear. It's what I deserve. It's what you deserve. And we should not tolerate any less. Paper towels should tear straight every single time. Sure, you may have gotten a perfect tear when you cleaned up the mess your cat left under the lawn mower blade in the kids' bedroom yesterday. Or last week when the stupid ferret got sick all over the Volkswagen motor under the dining room table. But when your hand's going numb from holding a frozen burger that should be sizzlin' in the microwave by now, all the times that the paper towels did tear right, they just don't count anymore. So what do we do about it? You can't take up the problem at a retail level. They don't care.

Years ago I went into a supposedly fine retail establishment to complain about the poor air pressure in a can of aerosol hairspray. I unloaded on the first employee I could find. He (*or she*) just looked at me like I was crazy and went right back to cleaning the bathroom. As if he had no idea what to even say to me! Jerk.

So in my first efforts to combat the pathetic paper towel perforation plague, I bypassed the store where I bought the paper towels, got on the phone, and called the manufacturer. And the second the phone picked up, I let them know exactly how I was feeling. I screamed until I was sure the receptionist on the other end of the line was deaf. And let me tell you, it felt good to inflict some pain and deafness on the enemy. Actually, I did it a little too well. The woman on the other end was so deaf and so shaken that all she could do was ask me to enter my party's four-digit extension over and over again. The tone of her voice never changed. I must've really gotten to her. (*Chuckles.*) Still, the four-digit extension thing was kind of a dead end. So I got in my truck and I drove fifteen hours to their corporate headquarters. And I marched right up to that door and I walked inside and would you believe what the woman behind the desk said to me? The words she had the gall to utter? The filth-laden linguistics with which she polluted the snowy-pure porcelain sanctity of my eardrums? "How may I help you?" Not, "We aren't worthy of the hard-earned dollars you spend on our crummy products, please let me grovel before you," which would've been the proper greeting. Not even, "Go away, I'm busy playing (*insert name of a current, popular mobile video game here*)," which would've at least been honest. No.

“How may I help you?” Sweet as can be. Just like that. As if there wasn't a problem in the world. As if she somehow didn't know the mental suffering and anguish that had been inflicted on me by their product! Trying to throw me off-guard by knocking the ball back into my court. Well, I wasn't gonna fall for that. No way. So I showed her. I showed all of 'em in that office. I showed 'em that you don't play mind games with William Henry Bartholomew Smith, 'cause I'll play those games right back at you. And I play to win. So you know what I did? I turned right around and left. Marched out of that office without saying a word, got in my truck, and drove away. (*Chuckles.*) Bet that taught her a lesson.

But even after that, would you believe that my paper towel troubles were still not behind me? It wasn't even three days later when I was brushing my teeth and chipped a tooth on one of the antlers of the moose head mounted over the sink in my bathroom. Well, being a consumer advocate, I know some tricks about saving money, and avoiding the dentist is at the top of the list. I've managed to steer clear for years. Anyway, I got a tube of super glue out of my wife's (*or "my" if the character is female*) makeup bag, and I glued that little chip right back onto the spot it came off of my tooth. Problem was, I got more glue in there than I needed, so I reached for a brand new roll of paper towels that I'd just bought. And wouldn't you know it... I ripped an extra quarter-inch chunk off of the next sheet on the roll. So now I'm standing there with a rapidly-drying bulge of super glue in my mouth. One hand is holding my lip up so the inside of my face doesn't get stuck to my tooth. And the other hand is holding this asymmetrical piece of paper towel. What am I supposed to do? I mean, would you want to put an asymmetrical piece of paper towel in *your* mouth? Well, I couldn't fix the glue spot. The blasted paper towel company saw to that. Buncha jerks. And now I've got this tooth that just doesn't quite... (*probing a front tooth with this tongue*) feel right. I've been sucking on little bits of cinder block hoping that maybe I can grind the thing down, but it looks like I'm gonna have to break out the electric sander here pretty soon, or else I'm gonna lose my mind. But that's neither here nor there. The bottom line is, paper towel manufacturers are evil. That's just all there is to it. There's no other rational explanation. This is a real problem that desperately needs to be addressed. It's time for consumers to unite and take action together! Now, you might think I'm going to suggest a boycott. You would be wrong. The paper towel manufacturers would be expecting that. We have to keep them off guard. Mind games, remember? We need to send them a mixed message, and it needs to be crystal clear.

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