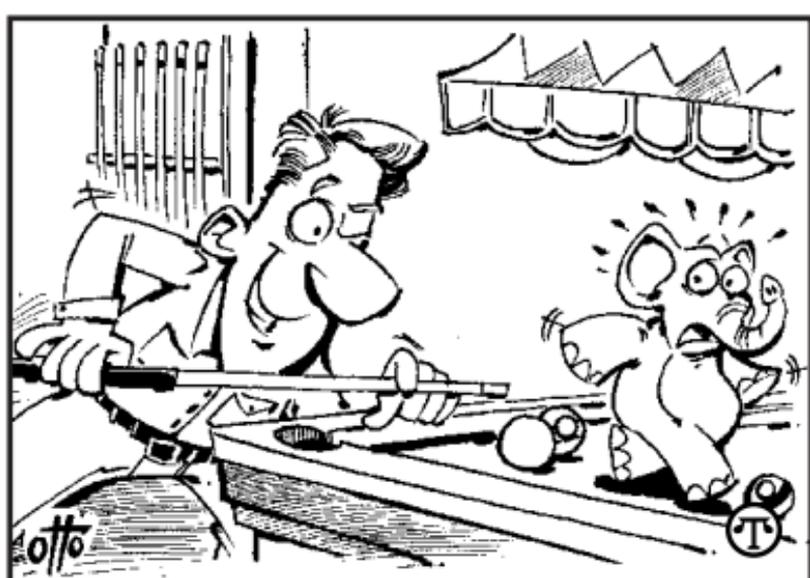


THEN & NOW!

Plastics: Surprising Past, Stupendous Present

(NAPSA)—Oddly enough, it all started with elephants. In the 1800s, as the popularity of billiards increased, the number of elephants providing ivory for billiard balls drastically decreased. Fortunately, an American named John Wesley Hyatt combined cellulose and camphor to create celluloid.



Plastics were invented to make billiard balls in 1866. Before, these were ivory—a big problem for elephants.

In 1907, Leo Baekeland cooked up chemicals into a transparent amber solid that wouldn't burn, boil, melt or dissolve. It was used in electric insulation, ashtrays, even jewelry.

Polyethylene, created by accident in 1933, provided vital insulation for the Allies' newly-discovered radar during World War II.

According to a survey of journalists and scholars, the invention of plastic is among the top news stories of the 20th century. Plastic today, report the experts at the Society of Plastics Engineers (SPE), is the most widely used material in the United States and important to such cutting-edge technologies as the space program, prosthetic limbs and bullet-proof vests. From entertainment to defense to transportation, fashion and medicine, plastic is an important part of practically every aspect of modern life.

You can learn more about the history and uses of plastic online at www.4spe.org.