

# WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE LEFTOVER HOLES AFTER YOU EAT THE BAGELS?<sup>1</sup>

by

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“And the winner of the science fair is.....

JOSHUA LANGDON.”

“Yes!!!! I won! I knew my project would do it. Now I’m going to be on TV and everyone is going to learn about bagel holes.”

It all started with a bagel eating contest I was in last year. Bryce, Andy, Evan and I were having a contest to see who could think of the most interesting ways of eating a sesame seed whole wheat bagel.

Evan went first, and he cut his bagel up with a knife and fork and ate it that way. Andy soaked his bagel in orange soda until it was all soft and ate it with a spoon. Then Bryce pretended that his bagel was a bird he was trying to catch. He sneaked up behind it, as it lay unsuspecting on his plate, and he pounced on it, grabbed it by its throat, and shook it until it stopped resisting. Then he took a big bite out of it. I toasted my bagel until it was nice and

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crisp. Then I smashed it with a hammer until it was just bagel dust, mixed the dust with ketchup, and sucked the goop up through a straw. Of course my way was the most interesting.

Well, Evan couldn't let me win the contest, so he figured out an even more interesting way to eat a bagel. And we couldn't let him win the contest, so we each figured out even more more interesting ways to eat bagels. We even figured out some ways that you couldn't eat bagels.

Anyway, after about half an hour of this, we were pretty tired. And we were pretty full. I guess we had each eaten five or six bagels. Bryce was sitting back, just kind of casually munching on a bagel. He was taking itsy bitsy bites, seeing how long he could take to eat one bagel. He was turning the bagel around and around, making sure that he ate it evenly all the way around. And then something happened that surprised all of us.

He had eaten almost down to the hole in the middle. He was being very careful not to take too big a bite, so he wouldn't bite through the thin circle of bagel that was left. It was getting so thin that it almost wasn't there at all.

And then it happened. He took one nibble too many, and he bit off a piece of the circle. But that wasn't what surprised us. What surprised us was that we could still see the whole bagel hole even though a piece of the bagel circle was gone.

He took another bitty bite, and more of the circle was gone, but the whole hole was still there. We could all see it. It was still there.

Then he took a bunch of careful little bites along the edge of the bagel, and suddenly the whole bagel was completely gone. *But the whole bagel hole was left!* It was still there.

That was amazing. We had never thought about it before. Usually when we ate a bagel, we just stuffed the last piece into our mouth, and we never noticed before that we usually ate the hole too. This time Bryce had been so careful that he had managed to eat the bagel and leave the hole.

Very delicately, he put it down on the table. And we all sat and looked at it with wonder. We had never seen a bagel hole without a bagel before. It didn't glow or shimmer. It didn't hop or wiggle. It just sat there. But that was enough.

After a while, I looked at Bryce and Andy and Evan, and I whispered: "How long will it sit there? Will it fade away? Or it will last forever?"

"I don't know, Joshua, " said Andy. "I've never seen a naked bagel hole before."

"I wonder if it feels lonely without a bagel to snuggle up against," Evan said.

Bryce said, "Let's put it in a glass and leave it on the bookshelf, where it won't be disturbed. Then we can check on it tomorrow and see how it's holding up." And he got a glass and put the bagel hole on the shelf for safe keeping. It was a good thing he did it then, because five minutes later our moms all showed up, and all the guys had to go home for supper.

The next morning I didn't have time to check on the bagel hole. I took too long getting dressed and then I had to rush to eat and get to the school bus on time. All day long in school, I

kept wondering how the bagel hole was doing. In fact, once when Kelly called on me with a math problem, I got all confused. She asked me what zero minus zero would be, and all I could think about when she wrote the problem on the blackboard was the bagel hole. Somehow I had the feeling that if I took zero away from zero, the zeros would go away but I would be left with the two holes from the middles of the zeros. I got all confused and couldn't say that clearly. Then I started talking about bagel holes, but I could tell no one was understanding what I meant.

After I got off the bus that afternoon, I ran up the street to my house. And I found Andy, Bryce and Evan waiting on my porch when I got home.

"How's it doing, Josh?"

"I don't know, Evan. I didn't get a chance to look at it this morning." We all rushed into the living room. And it was still there. It was still there in the glass, just the way we had left it.

"Wow, neat-o! I bet it will stay that way forever."

It was hard to imagine it not changing, staying just the same for ever and ever. But on the other hand, it was obvious that the bagel hole couldn't rust, or wear out, or crumble, or evaporate, so I guess it would have to last forever, wouldn't it?

I was glad it was Friday afternoon. Tomorrow was Saturday, and that meant we could go out to breakfast. "Hey, guys, come with me. I've got an idea." They didn't know what my idea was, but they all followed me down to my dad's office in the basement. He was sitting there working at his computer.

"What are you working on, Dad?"

"I'm writing another children's story. Would you guys all like to be in it?"

"Sure. What's it about?"

"I can't tell you yet. It's still a secret. But the title is 'What Do You Do with the Leftover Pits after You Eat the Avocados.' And when I'm done with the story, you guys will be the first to hear it."

"Dad, could we all have a treat tomorrow?"

"Well, maybe. What did you have in mind?"

"We'd like you to take us all out to breakfast tomorrow morning."

"That sounds like fun. I'd be glad to, but we have to check with everyone's parents to make sure it's OK. Want me to phone them now and ask?"

Then Bryce and Andy and Evan all got what my idea was. I could tell that my dad knew something was up when we all shouted "Yes" together at the top of our lungs, but he just smiled.

"Do you want to go any place in particular?"

"Yes, Dad. We want to go to Block's Bagels."

"Fine, let me make the phone calls." And he did. "Tell you what, guys, Josh and I will come by your houses around 9:30 tomorrow morning and pick you up, OK?"

We all thought that was a great idea, and we ran off to play outside.

The next morning, I was up bright and early. I watched TV for a while, but I really wasn't interested. I wanted to go out to breakfast. At 8:30 I ran into my Mom and Dad's room and leaped onto my dad. I ran in quietly so the leap would be a surprise. But my Dad surprised me. He had rolled up a blanket and stuffed it in his bed to fool me into thinking he was still sleeping. When I jumped on him, he came running out of the closet, yelling "Now I've gotcha," and jumped on me, and I realized I'd been tricked.

"Hah! You thought I was going to oversleep and forget about taking you and your friends out to breakfast. Well, I didn't, and I got the jump on you this time, Josh."

"You just wait, Dad. I'm going to get you next time." My dad and I had a competition going about who could out-trick who. So far I was definitely winning, except for maybe just this time.

It was hard to wait for my dad to get showered and dressed, but finally we were in the car.

"What's up, Josh? Are you starving to death or is the great Bagel Spirit Himself going to meet you at Block's for breakfast?"

"I can't tell you yet, Dad. But I can say that Bryce and Andy and Evan and I are definitely investigating something holy. If we really do see what I think we are going to see at breakfast, then we'll tell you what we're up to.

Forty minutes later, we were parking the mini-van at Block's. We all got out, walked across the parking lot, and stopped in front of the door. "Well, this is it, guys." We four kids took four deep breaths, and then we pushed the door open, and we walked into the restaurant.

We stopped and looked around. We stared. We were amazed. Wherever we looked, there they were. They were lying in heaps in the corners. There were piles of them underneath the chairs. There were drifts of them mounded up against the serving counter. While we stood there open-mouthed, we saw a three year old boy having a temper tantrum throw a bagel on the floor real hard, and we saw the bagel hole get knocked loose from the bagel and roll across the floor until it stopped in a mound of loose bagel holes by a potted plant.

"Hey, Joshua, what are you guys staring at? Come on, let's go get a place to sit."

My dad took me by the arm and tugged me toward a booth. That sort of broke the spell, and the other guys followed me. "Now, guys, tell me what's going on. What are you all staring at?"

"Paul, tell us true," said Andy. "Look over there by the potted plant, and tell us what you see."

"See? I don't see anything. What's there to see except the floor tiles? Tell me what's going on!"

"OK, Dad, we'll tell you, but let's go get our food first." Ten minutes later we were all back at the table. I had lox and cream cheese on a six-grain bagel, and everybody else had other things. Bryce had an extra bagel to demonstrate with, plain so the hole wouldn't get all gummed up with cream cheese or chopped liver or something.

We all watched Bryce as he carefully nibbled around the edge of the bagel. When he got down to the bare filmy bagel circle, we all sat absolutely still, waiting for the next bite. And when he nibbled the rest of the bagel away, leaving just the hole, we all looked at my dad. He was squinting and looking pretty funny.

"I sort of think I see something, kind of, but I can't figure out what I'm looking at." Then he said in a urgent tone of voice, "What is that thing?"

"Dad, that's a bagel hole. I think maybe kids can see it better than grown ups. Maybe our eyes are better at seeing new things. But THAT is a BAGEL HOLE!"

"It certainly is something, but it doesn't look like anything. I guess I'd better believe you, but tell me what is going on around here."

"Take a breath, Dad. Get centered. You're going to have to get used to this. We have discovered that after the bagel is eaten, lots of times the bagel hole just hangs around. Look over on the floor by the potted plant again. Let your eyes do something new, and see what you see this time."

"My gosh! There's a pile of bagel holes over there. That's amazing."

You should have seen the expression on my dad's face when he looked around and saw bagel holes wherever he looked. He was more even surprised than we had been.

"Well, the bagel eating contest and the breakfast, they were the beginning of my science fair project. I couldn't stop wondering what we were going to do with all the bagel holes that had been piling up around us. My first idea was to wrap dough around them and use them to make doughnuts, but before you could say 'Bobby Bailey baked a big bag of beautiful buttered bagels' other ideas started to come to me. You could mix them into your garden soil to make holes in the ground for worms to crawl through. You could put them in the bottom of your best friend's cereal bowl for the cereal to leak out from. You could print designs on them and play checkers with them. Or if you shaped them just right, you could use them for eye glasses. And that's just the beginning.