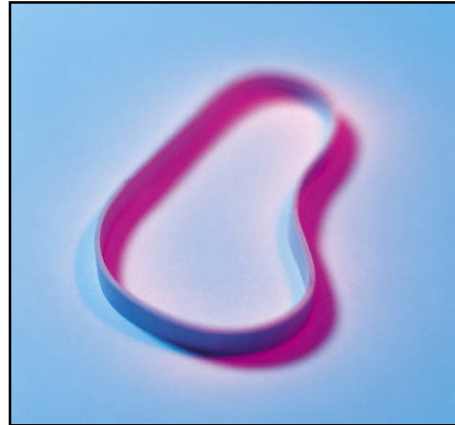


What Makes a Rubber-band Flexible?

This question came up during a chemistry class that I took in college. As I recall, the student ask, “What makes a rubber-band elastic?”

Well, without delving into the answer – of which I don’t recall from the time and could not tell you now – I’ll stretch the imagination and maybe I can be elastic too.

What is true of a flexible rubber-band is that – over time – natural rubber will age and, left in the sun or out in the weather, will loose its resilience and deteriorate. What is the average life? Well, that depends on the exposure and the resilience of the rubber; with intense exposure, aging takes place and the rubber band becomes...well, less flexible or pliable...and then it breaks or simply loses its function, purpose and use.



Taking this simple item – but a not so simple property of elasticity – the matter of function, purpose and use is the essence of “What Happened to Slingshots?” The rubber-band is only a component of the slingshot; and the slingshot is simply a representation of those many items, products and “things” that have lost there usefulness and entered the domain of obsolescence.

It may seem obtuse to start with a ever-useful rubber-band – as a component of a still useful slingshot – and end up on the subject of obsolescence; but the point of the matter is that my granddad probably replaced the rubber-band – rather than discard the slingshot – as a matter of practicality and costs. You see, the products or crafts of this type were valued and appreciated; often because of the investment and the usefulness – without obsolescence; thus, the notion of simply discarding them was less frequent or common than in our modern era. For many today, “throw-away” is a way of life; not always, but often the way to “fix-it”.

Rubber-bands age and eventually die; but a slingshot can live on... But like so many things of today, in this society of “throw-way”, there may be and perhaps should be a better way. Storing “junk” is not where I’m going; but rather, following the course of good stewardship in the things we own, use and sometimes, must discard...like broken rubber-bands.