

Mining for Polka-Dot Gold

COLLECTING Popsicle wrappers was a popular warm-weather activity in the 1940s and '50s.

“I would search the streets of Hewitt, Bertha and Wadena, Minnesota for those little paper bags with the red polka dots on them,” recalls Bill Kern from Hewitt.

“We sent them in to Popsicle Pete for prizes. Every month or so, a new prize sheet would come out. It told how many bags you needed for each prize. You also could send a little money and fewer bags for a given prize.

“I’d think I had found a piece of gold every time I found a bag.

“If I found a bag in a storm drain, I would chew some bubble gum, put it on a stick and poke that down the drain to retrieve the bag. Popsicle Pete never refused a bag, no matter how badly it was damaged.

“It was a twofold program. I earned a prize, and it also helped keep the streets clean. Maybe we should put polka dots on throwaway items today!”