

# DID YOU KNOW...?

## When did the first regularly-scheduled television broadcasts begin?

By Jack Bagley didyouknowcolumn@gmail.com

The annual renewal of the world (at least the northern half of it) begins next week! That's right ... spring will arrive!

I don't know if I've told you this (over more than seven years of this foolishness I probably have but I've also forgotten), but the start of spring also used to be the start of the new year. Maybe we ought to go back to that ... it made a kind of sense at the time.

I'm not in charge of the calendar, of course, but I do want to wish you a happy spring once it does start.

And some happy trivia from now until then! Enjoy, friends.

Did you know ...

... a Roman dictator was made such while he was plowing his field? Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus (519 BC-430 BC) was notified of his selection as dictator while he was working on his farm. Cincinnatus accepted the honor and led the army in defense of Rome from numerous rival tribes. Following his victory – which came only sixteen days after he assumed command – Cincinnatus retired, going back to his farm. The U.S. cities of Cincinnati, Ohio and Cincinnati, New York are named in his honor. (Politicians, there's a lesson here for you, if you'll just learn it.)

... "nice" didn't always mean what it does these days? During the 14th Century, for instance, the word nice was a noun meaning "foolish or simple person." (So it applies to me either way, I guess.)

... a type of wine has its own unofficial holiday? August 18 is Pinot Noir Day. (Take a guess at the proper way to celebrate.)

... you may have a periapt? Before you go heading off to the dermatologist to have it removed, wait ... periapt is an archaic term for a charm or an amulet. That would be something you'd wear to protect yourself against disease, bad luck, etc. (And if you have two, you have a pair of periapts.)

... most pirates who wore eye patches did not have vision problems? The basic idea behind the patches stemmed from the fact that pirates moved about below decks on ships, where the light was bad, and then up on deck in sunlight. The patch kept one eye "dark-adapted" so the pirate could move the patch to the other eye below decks and see easily.

... jellyfish are not fish? Heck, scientists aren't totally sure of exactly what they are. They have no bones, no brain and no heart. (Sounds like a visit to the Wizard of Oz might be in order.)

... the first regularly-scheduled television broadcasts began in 1935? And they didn't happen where you might have thought they would, in Britain or America. Nope, the first regular TV broadcasting took place in Germany. A service called Deutscher Fernseh-Rundfunk (German Television Broadcasting) began on March 22, 1935, airing programs promoting the Nazi government of Adolf Hitler (1889-1945). The broadcasts were low-definition black and white, with a resolution of 180 lines, and were seen mostly in "television parlors" in and around Berlin. For comparison, modern analog television – which isn't even used any more – had 525 lines in the U.S. and 625 lines in Britain. Broadcasts, which aired three to four days a week at the beginning, petered out as World War II went worse and worse for the Germans, finally ending in November of 1944. Programming was mostly political in nature, but there were some variety programs and even a comedy or two. The 1936 Olympic Games were very thoroughly covered, though primarily from a German perspective. A group of 285 reels of the filmed programs was discovered in a warehouse in Berlin in the late 1990s, and was put together in a special collection called Television Under the Swastika in 1999. That program is available on YouTube. (And programming has gone downhill ever since.)

... it's a good idea to check those yard sale purchases you make more closely? In 2013, a family purchased a bowl at a garage sale for \$3. The bowl later brought \$2.2 million at an auction after it was learned that the bowl was a piece of pottery from the Northern Song Dynasty of China and had been made in the 11th Century. Prior to that discovery, the bowl had been collecting dust on the family's mantle for years. (I can only guess how many of you are checking over that stuff for this weekend's yard sale right now.)

... you probably have never seen the most common wildcat in North America? Bobcats are the largest group of wildcats on the continent, but they don't like being around people and thus stay out of sight as much as they can. (Which is just fine with me.)

... a famous movie director had a high opinion of puns? Most people consider puns to be the lowest form of humor, but not Sir Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980). Hitchcock, director of classic films such as Psycho, said that "puns are the highest form of literature." (And I don't think he was trying to be punny, either.)

... chocolate does not cause acne? In fact, it may be quite the opposite. German researchers have found that the flavonoids in chocolate absorb ultraviolet light, which helps protect and increase blood flow to the skin. This ultimately improves the appearance of the skin. (Lemme have another Hershey bar, then.)

Now ... you know!



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