

DID YOU KNOW...?

Was a classic television police series set for another reboot when its creator died?

By Jack Bagley didyouknowcolumn@gmail.com

After seven years of this nonsense, I don't make too many mistakes, but when I make one, it's a killer.

Three weeks ago, I said that penguins were the only birds who can swim but not fly. I was rather quickly reminded of birds like the cassowary, the ostrich, the rhea, the emu, the kiwi, and many other flightless birds who can swim.

Penguins are the only ones who can dive.

Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa ... I goofed. Thanks to my friends at valorguardians.com who pointed it out to me. Maybe I can get this week's trivia right!

Did you know ...

... a classic artist only sold two paintings during his lifetime? The popular story about Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) is that he only sold one painting – The Red Vineyard – and that sale took place in 1889. But records show that van Gogh did sell at least one more painting, although neither went for a very good price: The Red Vineyard sold for 400 francs, the equivalent of £16 at the time. (Hard to make a living at that, wouldn't you say?)

... a popular theme park is taken over by cats every night? Disneyland, the huge theme park in Anaheim, California, is overrun by stray cats every night. The park embraces the cats, because they keep the mouse population in check. Disney even treats the cats like pets, including spaying and neutering and making sure they are up to date on their shots. (There's something disquieting about Disneyland using cats to keep down ... mice.)

... goats have been used as torture devices? The "tickle torture," devised by the ancient Romans, involved dipping the victim's feet in salt water, then bringing in a goat to lick the salt water off. It would begin as something ticklish, but would soon degenerate to real pain. (A baaa-a-a-d thing to do.)

... ancient Romans always entered the home of a friend with their right foot? The Romans believed the left side of the body was thought to portend evil. The Latin word for left, in fact, is sinister. Our English word "sinister" means anything malevolent or threatening, and it derives directly from that Roman belief. (A pretty sinister thought.)

... only six species of animal are known to be able to recognize themselves in a mirror? Humans, of course, but also apes, dolphins, orcas, elephants, and European magpies have shown the ability to recognize themselves in mirrors, and not think the image is a different animal. (Humans are, however, the only ones who don't always like what they see.)

... a classic television police drama was set for another reboot when its creator died? Dragnet, a police procedure drama which showed much of the minutiae of law enforcement, first aired on television from 1951 to 1959, starring its creator, Jack Webb (1920-1982). Webb brought the show back from 1967 to 1970, again playing the lead role of Sergeant Joe Friday. He was developing a third incarnation of the show in 1982, when he passed away from a heart attack. Each reboot featured Friday with a new partner: when the 1967 version was planned, original partner Ben Alexander (1911-1969) was working on Felony Squad and was not available, so Webb chose Harry Morgan (1915-2011) as his partner. Morgan was not available in 1982 when Webb was planning a return of the show as he was committed to AfterMASH, so Webb was said to be working with actor Kent McCord (born 1942) to reprise his role from Adam-12 as Friday's new partner. Additional trivia note: The series was indeed rebooted in 2003 as L.A. Dragnet, with actor Ed O'Neill (born 1946) playing now-Lieutenant Joe Friday. The show became more of an ensemble police drama after its first twelve episodes, and was cancelled during its second season. The Los Angeles Police Department retired Joe Friday's badge number 714 as a tribute to Webb. Also, a 1987 comedy movie was made based on the series, with Dan Aykroyd (born 1952) as the namesake nephew of Webb's original character. Morgan appeared in the film as Captain Bill Gannon, reprising his character from the 1967 series. (Just the facts, ma'am.)

... the Earth's ozone layer is vital to life? Sure, you don't breathe it, but ozone – a molecule consisting of three atoms of oxygen bonded together – blocks much of the ultraviolet light that comes from the Sun. A 10% loss of the Earth's ozone could result in 300,000 additional skin cancers and 1.75 million additional cases of cataracts world-wide each year. (Save the ozone!)

... the apple has been a symbol of love since the time of the ancient Greeks? The Celts believed that the apple represented love because it lasted so long after being picked. (I wish love lasted as long.)

... a fully-loaded supertanker needs 20 minutes to stop at normal speeds? The captain of the ship has to cut the tankers' engines 15 miles away from the dock to be able to safely get into port. (That's a long time to stand on the brakes!)

... some ancient customs were really extreme? Take, for example, the ancient customs observed by inhabitants of the island of Fiji. Back in the day, when a man on Fiji died, it was expected that his wives, his friends, and his slaves should all be strangled. (No comment.)

Now ... you know!



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