

DID YOU KNOW...?

Why did Babe Ruth never achieve his dream of managing a Major League Baseball team?

By Jack Bagley didyouknowcolumn@gmail.com

Several years back, I had an item in the column that said something to the effect of, "if you put a grape into a microwave, it will explode."

I recently received an e-mail from a reader who wanted to dispute that. He had, he asserted, placed a grape in his microwave oven, and it didn't explode. No matter how long he left the grape in there, it didn't go "pop."

Intrigued, I asked how long he had the oven running and at what power level.

"What?" was his reply. "You mean I have to turn the oven on to make the grape explode?"

I love all of my readers! Especially the ones who make me laugh.

Did you know ...

... Hawaii has an official state fish? Well, of course it does; it's an island state, after all. But the name of the state fish may be a little tough to deal with. It's (take a really deep breath now) the humuhumunukunuuapuaa. If that's too much of a mouthful – and believe me, it is – try calling it the reef triggerfish. That's easier to say, anyway. (Of course, you could always go with "Hey you!")

... allspice is wrongly named? Though it sounds as if it's a collection of "all spices" into one, allspice is really the ground-up powder of the berries of a tropical plant called Pimenta dioica. If you don't want the ground-up version, you can get the whole berries, which look a lot like peppercorns. (I suppose calling it "onespice" made no sense.)

... the 1939 movie The Wizard of Oz was not the first time the story was told outside of a book? Based on the 1900 novel by L. Frank Baum (1856-1919), the story was first staged in a Broadway musical in 1902. Baum is credited as one of the playwrights, though much of the script was actually penned by Glen MacDonough (1870-1924). In fact, the story was told on film twice before the classic 1939 movie – in 1910 and again in 1925. The 1910 silent film version, which ran only 13 minutes, starred Bebe Daniels (1901-1971) as Dorothy. The role was played in the 1925 comedy version by Dorothy Dwan (1906-1981). The classic performance of the role, of course, was by Judy Garland (1922-1969) in the iconic 1939 production. (Follow the yellow brick road!)

... one of baseball's greatest players never became a manager possibly because of racism? After he retired as a player, Babe Ruth (1895-1948) wanted nothing in life more than to manage a Major League Baseball team. Several reasons have been given in the years since then why Ruth never managed, but baseball historians, his friends and family members say it was primarily because of the then-Commissioner of Baseball, Kenesaw Mountain Landis (1886-1944). Landis was determined to keep players of color out of the major leagues, and he felt Ruth – who made it a habit to play exhibitions with Negro League and Cuban league teams and players – would lobby to have players of color on his team. The "color line" would not be broken in modern Major League Baseball until 1947, one year before Ruth's death, when the Brooklyn Dodgers called up second baseman Jackie Robinson (1919-1972), by which time Landis and his ideas were long dead.

... the longest chess match ever took over 20 hours? In 1989, Ivan Nikolic (born 1978) and Goran Arsovic (born 1967) needed more than 269 moves to play the match. And after all those moves and all that time, the match ended in a draw. (Or exhaustion, take your pick.)

... it's easy to get out if you ever get lost in Central Park? New York City's famous park, located in the middle of Manhattan, features lamp posts that will guide you out. Each lamp post in the park has a set of four numbers on it. The first two numbers tell you the nearest cross street, while the last two tell you whether you're closer to the west or east edge of the park. Even numbers signal east, while odd numbers signal west. (If you get lost in Central Park, you'd be useless in rural America.)

... a classic television series almost featured a star who later became a talk-show giant? The Dick Van Dyke Show, which aired from 1961 to 1966, was created by comedian and writer Carl Reiner (1922-2020). Reiner had starred in the pilot for the show, then called Head of the Family, but the pilot did not sell. Reiner reworked the show and set about casting the new lead character role, which as we all know went to Dick Van Dyke (born 1925). The role came down to Van Dyke and one other actor – Johnny Carson (1925-2005). Carson lost the role but went on to become host of The Tonight Show for 30 years, from 1962 to 1992. Van Dyke was cast because producer Sheldon Leonard (1907-1997) saw him in the Broadway production of Bye Bye Birdie and felt he was best for the part. (I wonder what they'd have called it if Carson had won the role?)

... a Boston family was the victim of a bizarre burglary in 2019? Nate Roman (born 1975) came home from work along with his son on May 15, 2019, and discovered that his house had been broken into. But oddly, nothing was missing. Instead, the burglars had thoroughly cleaned Roman's home, making every room "neat as a pin." Police never solved the unusual crime. (I'd like to have that person break into my house some time.)

Now ... you know!



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