

DID YOU KNOW...?

Did a well-known television personality threaten to sue a cartoon producer over the use of his name?

By Jack Bagley didyouknowcolumn@gmail.com

Not long ago, I received an e-mail from a regular reader of the column who stated her belief that I “have a lot of fun doing this stuff.”

She’s right. I do have a lot of fun doing this stuff.

As most of my regular readers know, I am a retired history teacher, and learning new and exciting things was a necessity in my former profession. I’m glad to have had the chance to continue doing that in my current newspaper career, and it’s been said that by bringing these items to you, I’m continuing my educational career.

If that is indeed the case, then maybe I shouldn’t call myself a “retired” teacher.

Nah, I enjoy being retired from teaching. I also enjoy bringing new trivia to you, so let’s dive into this week’s assortment right now!

Did you know ...

... an oft-quoted line from a classic shark movie was ad-libbed – and had nothing to do with the story? Most of us are familiar with the line, “You’re gonna need a bigger boat,” from the 1975 movie Jaws. Uttered by actor Roy Scheider (1932-2008), the line was an ad-lib when he recoiled from the giant mechanical shark, having seen it in action for the first time. But Scheider was not referring directly to the shark when he said the line. The actor was instead adding his voice to a behind-the-scenes joke among the movie’s crew ... they thought they would need a larger boat to carry all the production equipment needed. (A bigger boat is a good idea.)

... the word cookie comes to us from the Dutch? “Cookie” is a corruption of the Dutch word koekje, which means “small cake.” Koek is the word for “cake” in that language. (I hope I don’t get in dutch for telling you that.)

... a noted actor held the highest security clearance in the United States? From 1983 to 1989, actor Charlton Heston (1923-2008) held the highest nuclear weapon security clearance, the “Q clearance,” because he was the narrator of top-secret educational films for the Department of Energy. (Of course the actor who played Moses had a high clearance.)

... being a Major League Baseball player hasn’t always been a lucrative profession? For instance, when the first World Series games were played in 1903, Cy Young (1867-1955), probably the greatest pitcher the game has ever seen, wasn’t just starting for the Boston Americans (later called the Red Sox) against the Pittsburgh Pirates, he was also selling tickets to the game at the Huntington Avenue Baseball Grounds, home of the Americans. (If he autographed the tickets, that’d be the topper!)

... you may have seen a ratite? Don’t worry, you’re not the only one who’s done so, as ratites are not rare at all. A ratite is a flightless bird, one that has a flat breastbone with no flight muscles connected to it. Ostriches, emus, kiwis and moas are all ratites. (So is a bird who’s lost his pilot’s license.)

... the producers of a popular cartoon show were almost sued by a celebrity over the use of his name? In the early 1960s, the cartoon program The Rocky and Bullwinkle Show aired a story line about a hat that makes its wearer the most intelligent person on Earth. Wearers of the hat, according to the show, invented the wheel, discovered fire, created radio and television, and so forth. The producers called the hat – a size 7 and 5/32 – the “Kirward Derby.” The name was a spoof on television host Durward Kirby (1911-2000), co-star of Candid Camera. Kirby, however, did not see the humor in the spoofing of his name, and threatened producer Jay Ward (1920-1989) with a rather substantial lawsuit over the issue. Kirby’s business manager talked him out of the lawsuit, saying it would only bring more attention to the show. For his part, Ward actually offered to pay Kirby to sue him – again, to bring more attention to the show. (“Hey, Rocky, watch me pull a lawsuit out of my hat!”)

... the first television interview of a member of the British royal family took place in 1961? On May 29 of that year, Prince Philip (1921-2021), husband of Queen Elizabeth II (1926-2022), was interviewed on the BBC program Panorama.

... two mammals on Earth lay eggs? Most people know that the duck-billed platypus of Australia lays eggs, but the other is the echidna, or “spiny anteater.” Four species of echidna lay eggs, along with the single species of platypus. (The yolk’s on them, I suppose.)

... penguins are black and white for a reason? Their plumage serves as camouflage while the penguin swims. The black feathers on their backs are hard to see from above, while the white plumage on their front looks like the sun reflecting off the water when viewed by potential predators from below. (Here I thought it was because nature ran out of colors.)

... a Dutch artist has devised a plan to save the world? Arne Hendriks (born 1971) has suggested shrinking all humans to a height of about 20 inches tall. Hendriks says his calculations indicate that humans of that size would only need between two and five percent of the resources required by today’s normal-sized people. Hendriks does not, however, have a suggestion of exactly how to achieve that goal. (That might do it, though.)

Now ... you know!



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