April Fool's Day

Driver: “A dollar eighty-three a gallon? The sign said a dollar seventy nine when I pulled into the station!” Station attendant: “April fuels!” *(Steve Breen, in Grand Avenue comic strip)*

April Fools’ Day started in France in 1564. Until then, France celebrated New Year’s Day on April 1, but in 1564 their calendar was changed and New Year’s was moved to January 1. Some people continued to celebrate New Year’s on April 1, and they were called April Fools. April 1 then became April Fools’ Day. *(Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell, p. 226)*

Crankshaft: “So, Lois, I was wondering if you’d like to go up to the Beachland Ballroom tomorrow night to see this rap group that’s performing there.” Lois: “Nice try, Ed, but April Fool's Day was last Saturday.” (*Tom Batiuk & Chuck Ayers, in Crankshaft comic strip)*

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The Top 5 April Fool's Hoaxes of All Time: The Museum of Hoaxes has ranked the top 100 April Fool's Hoaxes of all time, and here are the top three:

1. The Swiss Spaghetti Harvest: In 1957 the respected BBC news show Panorama announced that thanks to a very mild winter and the virtual elimination of the dreaded spaghetti weevil, Swiss farmers were enjoying a bumper spaghetti crop. It accompanied this announcement with footage of Swiss peasants pulling strands of spaghetti down from trees. Huge numbers of viewers were taken in, and many called up wanting to know how they could grow their own spaghetti trees. To this question, the BBC diplomatically replied that they should "place a sprig of spaghetti in a tin of tomato sauce and hope for the best."

2. Sidd Finch: In its April 1985 edition, Sports Illustrated published a story about a new rookie pitcher who planned to play for the Mets. His name was Sidd Finch and he could reportedly throw a baseball with startling, pinpoint accuracy at 168 mph (65 mph faster than anyone else has ever been able to throw a ball). Surprisingly, Sidd Finch had never even played the game before. Instead, he had mastered the "art of the pitch" in a Tibetan monastery under the guidance of the "great poet-saint Lama Milaraspa." Mets fans everywhere celebrated at their team's amazing luck at having found such a gifted player, and Sports Illustrated was flooded with requests for more information. But in reality this legendary player only existed in the imagination of the writer of the article, George Plimpton.

3. Instant Color TV: In 1962 there was only one tv channel in Sweden, and it broadcast in black and white. The station's technical expert, Kjell Stensson, appeared on the news to announce that thanks to a newly developed technology, all viewers could now quickly and easily convert their existing sets to display color reception. All they had to do was pull a nylon stocking over their tv screen, and they would begin to see their favorite shows in color. Stensson then proceeded to demonstrate the process. Reportedly, hundreds of thousands of people, out of the population of seven million, were taken in. Actual color tv transmission only commenced in Sweden on April 1, 1970.

4. The Taco Liberty Bell: In 1996 the Taco Bell Corporation announced that it had bought the Liberty Bell from the federal government and was renaming it the Taco Liberty Bell. Hundreds of outraged citizens called up the National Historic Park in Philadelphia where the bell is housed to express their anger. Their nerves were only calmed a few hours later when Taco Bell revealed that it was all a practical joke.

5. Nixon for President: In 1992 NPR's Talk of the Nation program announced that Richard Nixon, in a surprise move, was running for President again. His new campaign slogan was "I didn't do anything wrong and I won't do it again." Accompanying this announcement were audio clips of Nixon delivering his candidacy speech. Listeners responded viscerally to the announcement, flooding the show with calls expressing shock and outrage. Only during the second half of the show did the host John Hockenberry reveal that the announcement was a practical joke. Nixon's voice was impersonated by comedian Rich Little. (Judy Mackenzie and David Milster, in South of the Lake Messenger)

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In France, April Fools' Day is called “Poisson d’ Avril” meaning April Fish. The tradition is that French children will tape paper fish to the backs of their friends. When they would discover the fish on their back, the prankster would yell “Poisson d’ Avril!” In Scotland the April fool is called April “gowk” which is Scottish for cuckoo. The Cuckoo is an emblem of simpletons. *(Tidbits of Denver)*

After making Margret angry, Dennis says to his friend: “Boy! I wish April Fool’s Day came every month!” *(Hank Ketcham, in Dennis the Menace comic strip)*

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