**Counting Our Blessings**

**I Wouldn’t Like That Either!**

## The Lord has done great things for us, Whereof we are joyful. (Psalm 126:3)

**Would you buy a newspaper that devoted its entire front page to advertising? All British newspapers did 100 years ago. So did a lot of American newspapers. The London Times did it until 1966. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**In 1930, Ellen Church recruited seven other young nurses to work 5,000 feet above the Earth. They were the first airline stewardesses, flying on Boeing's San Francisco -- Chicago route, a trip that, in good weather, took 20 hours and made 13 stops. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 194)**

**In medieval Japan, a woman who was caught alone in a room with a man other than her husband was immediately put to death, even if the meeting was completely innocent*. (Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 95)***

**Cambodia's youngsters learn 72 letters in their alphabet. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Amharic, the language of Ethiopia, has an alphabet of 267 letters. *(Uncle John’s Unstoppable Bathroom Reader, p. 99)***

**No alphabetic language in existence today contains more than 72 letters, and most contain far less. Chinese writing, in contrast, contains close to 50,000 characters. *(James Meyers, in Mammoth Book of Trivia, p. 254)***

**Sing along. There are 158 verses in the Greek national anthem. *(Uncle John’s Unstoppable Bathroom Reader, p. 146)***

**75: That’s the age Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat turned Wednesday. There were no birthday parties or parades. Arafat spent the day hunkered down in the shell-pocked compound where he lives and works in the West Bank city of Ramallah. *(Associated Press, as it appeared in the Rocky Mountain News, August 8, 2004)***

**Soviet Army soldiers get no time off at all during the first year, then five days furlough during the second year. *(Boyd’s Curiosity Shop, p. 160)***

**Bachelors of Sparta were penalized for remaining unmarried. One punishment was cruel and inhumane. Bachelors were not allowed to witness the gymnastic exercises of the maidens! *(Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia, p. 26)***

**We're surrounded by taken-for-granted greatness -- inventions that slipped humbly into our lives and made themselves indispensable. Remember what a hassle it used to be to get to the bank before 3 p.m.? That was only a decade ago, before automated teller machines made it possible to dip into bank accounts at any time. *(Owen Edwards & Andrew Nelson, in Special Report)  as reported in Reader's Digest in the May, 1994 issue)***

**Banned abroad:**

**Porky Pig (on Cartoon Network) – banned in Asia**

**Babe – banned in Malaysia**

**The Prince of Egypt – banned in Thailand**

**The King and I (1956) – banned in Thailand**

**The Nightmare Before Xmas – banned in South Korea**

**The Exorcist (1973) banned in United Kingdom (finally released in 1998). *(World Features Syndicate)***

**Going barefoot was no walk in the park 30 years ago. Chances were if you did dare to walk barefoot in a park (or on the beach), you’d cut your foot on a beverage can pulltab. Before today’s “stay-put tabs” became standard, the ringed openers on beer and soda cans pulled completely off. Unfortunately, a few people carelessly tossed these metal hazards on the ground, where their sharp edges caused a hazard to bare feet. Luckily, these pull-tabs were extinct by the mid-1980s. *(Clifton Thorold-Stone, in Tidbits)***

**Not long ago, a Bulgarian woman was allowed only one bath in her lifetime – and that was on the day before her wedding. *(Russ Edwards & Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Digest, p. 96)***

**The Arctic woolly bear is a caterpillar that lives 14 years. No other in said category lives that long. Sadly, though, the woolly bear remains frozen solid through most of its life. (L. M. Boyd)**

**You can buy beef in Peru, all right, but only during the last two weeks of any month. It's just not available during the first two weeks. (L. M. Boyd)**

**The Chinese custom of binding women's feet was originally intended to insure that a wife would remain faithful to her husband, since she would find it extremely difficult to travel very far on her own with her feet in such a condition. (Quentin Compson, in Amazing Facts & Trivia, p. 22)**

**In Colonial America, men had to rise early to get outside and tend to the fields. A typical breakfast at that time consisted of a glass of cider or beer, and a bowl of porridge that had been cooking all night over embers. One day a week, those who could afford to topped their morning porridge with molasses as a treat. (Murray McLeod, in Tidbits)  
Animal breeding habits:**

**Hooded seal -- mate again 2 hours after giving birth**

**Lemming -- breed again 4 weeks after giving birth**

**Kangaroo -- pregnant again few days after giving birth. (World Features Syndicate)**

**Whatever you think of bullfighting, you might do well to keep it to yourself if and when you’re in Colombia. An authority on international manners says criticism of the sport isn’t welcome there. (L. M. Boyd)**

**In order for the film to be processed, the first Kodak hand cameras had to be returned with their exposed film still in the camera. A reloaded camera and prints from the processed film were later sent to the owner. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 287)**

**NEW DELHI: In a capital city where cows roam the streets and elephants plod along in the bus lanes, it's no surprise to find government buildings overrun with monkeys. But the officials who work there are fed up. They've been bitten, robbed and otherwise tormented by monkeys that ransack files, bring down power lines, screech at visitors and bang on office windows. The Supreme Court has stepped in, decreeing New Delhi should be a monkey-free city after citizens filed suit seeking protection from the animals. *(Andrew Wang, in Rocky Mountain News)***

**Be glad you’re not buying a car in Burma. In that Southeast Asian nation (officially known as Myanmar), a new Toyota Land Cruiser costs a whopping $300,000. Even a 1993 Toyota is $75,000. Why? The ruling military junta, led by Gen. Than Shwe, permits an army-controlled company to sell the autos. As a result, this nation of 50 million imported just 4500 cars last year – though thousands reportedly are smuggled in from neighboring Thailand. *(Parade magazine, August 21, 2005)***

**Almost but not quite one person in 14, worldwide, owns a car. (L. M. Boyd)**

**The Arctic woolly bear is a caterpillar that lives 14 years. No other in said category lives that long. Sadly, though, the wooly bear remains frozen solid through most of its life. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Martin Cooper created the first cell phone in 1973. It weighed two pounds and looked like a brick. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 260)***

**Cellular phones sold for $4,195 in 1984. *(Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Extraordinary Book of Facts, p. 301)***

**China, in eastern Asia, is about the size of the United States. It is the most populous country in the world, with more than 1.25 billion people. About one in five people in Earth live in China. *(Betty Debnam, in Rocky Mountain News, February 13, 2008)***

**There is not a single Christian church or school left in Afghanistan, says a new State Department report. The last church was razed in 2010, and today Afghan Christians – who make up less than 1 percent of the population – are afraid to “state their beliefs or gather openly to worship,” the report says. *(CNSNews.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, October 21, 2011)***

**When your granddad was a lad, a string of 28 Christmas tree lights cost the equivalent of a week's wages. (L. M. Boyd)**

**About foreign cities:**

**Turin, Italy – dogs must be walked three times daily**

**Hong Kong – no divorces unless both spouses’ bosses say OK**

**Moscow – 15 murders a day (two murders a day in New York City). (World Features Syndicate)**

**City life in Bangkok today: breathing air same as smoking three packs of cigarettes. (World Features Syndicate)**

**In colonial America, the manufacture of clothing at home was a time-consuming, never-ending task. Because it took nearly a year and a half to create linen from flax, a man's shirt often wore out by the time a woman could complete a new one. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 174)**

**Cowboy coffee, or brown gargle, is a sure-fire eye-opener. There were no Starbucks shops on the open trail; cowboys ground their coffee beans with the butt of a six-shooter, and poured them into a saucepan of water to boil it on the campfire. When the grounds sank to the bottom of the pan, the coffee was ready. (Victoria Westlane, in Tidbits)**

**The list of the top ten coldest cities in the world shows every one of those ten to be in Russia. (Kathy Wolfe, in Tidbits)**

**The next time you feel like complaining, remember that your garbage disposal probably eats better than do 30 percent of the people in this world. (Robert Orben)**

**If you think your job is hard, consider the poor conductor of a train in Wales who has to call out the name of this station on his line: Llanfairpwllgwyngllgogerychwyrndrobwllantysiliogogoch. The tickets at this station are six inches long and are sold as souvenirs, according to the Associated Press. (Bits & Pieces)**

**Think you have a long trip? The first cross-country road trip took 63 days in a one-cylinder Winston touring car. A long way, considering there were no rest stops in 1903. (Cracker Barrel Old Country Store Breakfast Menu)**

**Turf diggers in Harksheide, Germany, deliver their product for sale in Hamburg – 13 miles away – in carts pulled by a harnessed team consisting of the turf digger and his dog./ *(Ripley’s Believe It or Not!)***

**Democracy is the worst system ever invented -- except for all the rest. *(Winston Churchill)***

**You hear a lot in the news about recent dry seasons in the American Southwest, and everyone knows that the Sahara Desert is rather lacking in water, but these places seem like oases when compared to the Atacama Desert, located in Chile, on the west coast of South America. It holds the dubious distinction of being the world’s driest place, some parts of this desert haven’t had a single drop of rain in hundreds of years. Perhaps unsurprisingly considering the harshness of this terrain, early versions of the Mars rover were tested there. *(Samantha Weaver, in Tidbits)***

**Ancestors of familiar devices:**

**Electrocardiograph – filled two rooms**

**Stethoscope – made of paper**

**Polaroid camera – 5 pounds**

**Sony tape recorder – 50 pounds**

**Vacuum cleaner – had 800-foot house (drawn by horse). *(World Features Syndicate)***

**Most dinosaurs walked on their toes. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 244)***

**Divorce is always sad, but it’s saddest when neither spouse wants to part, said Ebtihal Mubarak, in Riyadh’s Arab News. Here in Saudi Arabia, the courts recently ruled that a divorce can be forced upon a couple if the wife’s father insists. Appalled feminist activists are now petitioning the king to intervene. The women are championing the cause of Fatima al-Timani, a 34-year-old woman who has been married for three years. Her father claimed that her husband, Mansour al-Timani, lied about his tribal background in order to marry her. The father brought and won a divorce suit. But Fatima, who loves her husband, refused to return to her father. She is now in jail with her baby, separated from her 2-year-old. Such a situation goes against “Islamic law, which is the law of the kingdom. Shariah does not prohibit marriage between members of different tribes. More fundamentally, though, what’s at stake is women’s rights. It’s a huge step backward if a married mother in her 30s can still be “controlled by her father.” (The Week magazine, February 16, 2007)**

**The driest spot on earth is not the Sahara Desert. Climatologists say the most arid place in the world is the Atacama Desert of Chile in South America. Scientists call Atacama an absolute desert because rainfall has never been recorded there. In certain places there are no cacti, lizards, or gnats. *(Lester Seto, in Portals of Prayer)***

**What’s the penalty for drunken driving in Norway? First offense, 21 days in jail plus a year’s loss of the driving license. (Boyd’s Curiosity Shop, p. 171)**

**My mother was a trouper. She worked at Kresge's “5 and 10” in those days. She also “dry-cleaned” Dad's wool preaching suit -- with naphtha purchased from who knows where. Ordinary folks didn't use Middletown Dry Cleaners in the early 1940s. That luxury would wait for war's end and more prosperous times. There Mom is in the backyard with a big tub filled halfway with this dangerously flammable and toxic liquid. She stirs Dad's suit with a wooden spoon, careful not to make a spark. She hangs it on the clothesline to let the bitter cold wind blow it dry. *(Thomas R. Zehnder, in Portals of Prayer)***

**Janice Freiburger kept thinking she wasn't ready to die as she struggled to escape from a car wedged between the collapsed upper deck of the Bay Bridge and the split lower deck. As she fumbled with her seat belt and climbed across the driver's seat, Freiburger hoped her movements would not tip the crushed car into San Francisco Bay. Freiburger suffered a cracked breastbone, spine and collarbone. The impact left her a quarter-inch shorter, doctors said. From her hospital bed Thursday, she said she felt “very sore but very lucky. Happy to be here.” She and Bruce Stephan, the driver of the gray 1984 Mazda, marveled that they were the only ones on that section of bridge when it collapsed in Tuesday's rush-hour earthquake. (Rocky Mountain News, October 21, 1989)  
ELECTRIC PLUGS AND SOCKETS: Electricity was first introduced into homes in the 1880s, but every lamp or appliance had to be “hard-wired” into the wall by an electrician. That lasted until 1904, when a Connecticut inventor named Harvey Hubbell, was in a penny arcade and noticed a janitor struggling to disconnect the wires of a boxing game so that he could clean behind it. Hubbell knew there had to be a better – not to mention safer – way to detach and reattach wires to walls. After engineering with metal and wood (which served as an insulator before plastic came into use), he came up with a two-pronged plug-and-socket system that isn’t all that different from the one used today. In fact, since then there have only been two major updates to his design, both safety features: 1) many plugs and sockets have a third prong that serves as a ground, and 2) one prong is wider than the other so that the plug can only be plugged into the socket one way – keeping “neutral” on the correct side. *(Uncle John’s Unstoppable Bathroom Reader, p. 129)***

About 25 percent of the world’s population or 1.6 billion people, do not have electricity in their homes. *((MSNBC.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, May 7, 2010)*

**A female African elephant can be pregnant for almost two years.  
(Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book, p. 34)**

**How long does a mama elephant nurse her young? Five years. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Willy says to his wife: “We could've lost a freezer full of food when I accidentally unplugged the fridge. But instead, because it was totally empty, we lost nothing! We have to be the two luckiest people in the world!” *(Joe Martin, in Willy 'N' Ethel comic strip)***

**In the United States, it may cost an entertainer no more than some embarrassment and adverse publicity if he or she botches “The Star Spangled Banner” while performing it before a sporting event. But Mexico is extremely protective of its “Himno Nacional de Mexico.” When Jorge Muniz, a pop singer, forgot some of the words and got others wrong while singing the anthem prior to a boxing match in Mexico City, he was fined one million pesos -- about $400 -- for “disrespect for national symbols.” (Craig Neff, in Sports Illustrated)**

**China executed 1,051 people in 2006, accounting for two-thirds of the 1,591 put to death worldwide that year, Amnesty International reported. In China, 68 offenses, including such non-violent crimes as tax evasion and pornography distribution, carry the death penalty. (Los Angeles Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, January 18, 2008)**

**Forbes.com picked Moscow as the world’s most-expensive city. Moscow has earned the title of the world’s most-expensive city for the third year in a row. Home to more billionaires (74 and counting) than any other metropolis, Russia’s capital is 42 percent more expensive than New York’s, the most expensive city in the United States. *(Rocky Mountain News, July 25, 2008)*A pair of eyeglasses at the time of the American Revolution -- all such were important then--cost the equivalent of two or three years' wages. (Boyd's Curiosity Shop, p. 82)**

**Little-known firsts:**

**1. Typewriter -- had all capital letters**

**2. Transcontinental call -- took 23 minutes to connect**

**3. American Bible -- in Algonquin language**

**4. “Witch" executed -- 50 years before Salem**

**5. Traffic lights -- red and green only. (Long Beach, CA Press-Telegram)**

**Of the 15 republics that once made up the Soviet Union, only three – the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – have true freedom of the press, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. In Russia alone, 11 journalists have been murdered in recent years. (*The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, December 10, 2004)***

**What it costs elsewhere for a gallon of gas:**

**1. Milan, Italy -- $4.73 per gallon;**

**2. Paris -- $4.24;**

**3. Dublin, Ireland -- $4.15;**

**4. Amsterdam, Netherlands -- $3.94;**

**5. Copenhagen, Denmark -- $3.90;**

**6. Lisbon, Portugal -- $3.66. (Runzheimer International, April 1991)  
We pay about half the price for a gallon of gas here than they do in other countries. In Europe, they pay more tax on a gallon than our total price. Italy overdoes it. They're over $3.00 a gallon. Their tax is about $2.12 per gallon. (Lee Iacocca, in The Saturday Evening Post , July, 1985)  
The average gestation period of a human being is 267 days, which is slightly less than nine months. The elephant, in contrast, has a gestation period of 640 days, the giraffe, 450 days, and the horse, 337 days. (James Meyers, in Mammoth Book of Trivia, p. 215)**

**What is the shortest known gestation period of any mammal? What is the longest? The American opossum, a marsupial, bears its young 12 or 13 days after conception. The Asian elephant takes 608 days, or just over 20 months. (Barbara Berliner, in The Book of Answers, p. 27)  
  
Those among the first to walk across San Francisco’s Golden Gate Bridge had to pay a nickel for the privilege. (L. M. Boyd)**

**As Crankshaft tries over and over to hit the golf ball, his golfing buddy says to him: “Look on the bright side, Crankshaft, at least you haven't lost a ball yet!” *(Tom Batiuk & Chuck Ayers, in Crankshaft comic strip)***

**Singapore banned chewing gum nationwide in 1992 because officials were concerned about the untidiness of discarded gum stuck on sidewalks and under desks. Ten years later, they lifted the ban as a concession to the United States as part of the Free Trade Agreement, with stipulations. Under the new law, gum can be purchased in pharmacies in Singapore, but only with a prescription. *(Tidbits of Denver)***

**Women started removing hair from their legs in 400 BCE. They either plucked them with tweezers or singed them with a flame. *(Noel Botham, in The Ultimate Book of Useless Information, p. 73)***

**Only in California: It has been said that a company like Hewlett-Packard, founded in a California garage in 1939, never could have started in Germany, owing to red tape:  
1. One regulation states every business must have an office.  
2. Another stipulates every office must have a window.  
3. A third says a garage may not have a window. *(Rocky Mountain News)***

**A new 1,000-mile stretch of highway in Russia’s Far East will make it possible for the first time to drive by road across the sprawling nation. The entire route between Moscow and Vladivostok runs 6,214 miles. Some portions of the route – nearly twice the Seattle-Miami driving distance – aren’t fully paved. (Rocky Mountain News, February 27, 2004)  
  
In the 1930s there were laws in 26 states against hiring married women. (L.M. Boyd)**

**What’s the average price and square footage of a home in Tokyo? Figure $432,000 for 675 square feet. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Prior to the construction of Tremont House, in Boston, Massachusetts, which opened in October 1829, American travelers were often forced to share hotel accommodations with as many as five other individuals, usually perfect strangers. Tremont House was the first hotel to guarantee its guest private rooms. (James Meyers, in Mammoth Book of Trivia, p. 194)**

**A husband in Saudi Arabia can be sent to jail if his wife is found behind the wheel of a car. (L. M. Boyd)**

**The average per capita income in Iraq in 2004 was $422, up from $322 in 2003, according to a new U. N. study. *(Time, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 10, 2005)***

**From 1950 to 1963 in the United States, individuals earning above $200,000 had to pay 91 percent or 92 percent of their income to the federal government. (Charlotte Lowe with Emma Wilson and Rachel Federman, in Useless History Fact-O-Pedia, p. 53)**

**Denmark is the highest income tax in the world. Rates start at 42% *(Uncle John’s Unstoppable Bathroom Reader, p. 123)***

**One of the hazards confronting early American school children as well as bookkeepers, authors, and others who worked with the quill pen was the low temperature of winter. Often the ink froze in the inkwell! How did they solve it? With antifreeze, of course. They'd add a few drops of brandy to the ink! (Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia , p. 212)**

**Think today's interest rates are high? The Pilgrims borrowed $7,000 from a London company of 70 investors in 1620, and devoted the next 23 years to repaying it at 43 percent. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Sizes of five inventions in their first forms:**

**Telephone answering machine *--* weighed 300 pounds;**

**Vacuum cleaner hoses *--* 800 feet long;**

**“Portable”vacuum *--* weighed 92 pounds;**

**Soap bars for home use *--* weighed 30 pounds;**

**First Xerox copier *--* weighed 600 pounds. (World Features Syndicate)**

**The new Iraqi government has passed a series of laws criminalizing speech that ridicules the government. In the last year, about a dozen Iraqi journalists have been charged with offending public officials; they face up to seven years in prison. (The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, October 13, 2006)**

**The laws of colonial Connecticut forbade a mother to kiss her child on the Sabbath. The Jane Law outlawed Christmas, dancing, playing cards, and mince pies. (James Meyers, in Mammoth Book of Trivia, p. 255)**

**A single-sheet letter from New York City to Buffalo cost 25 cents, a prohibitive price in a time when a good day’s wage for a laborer was rarely more than one dollar. Add a couple of enclosures to the missive and the cost jumped to 75 cents. In 1845 a congressman calculated that a letter sent from the East or South to the Northwest cost the equivalent of a bushel of wheat – or a day’s labor. (John Ross, in Smithsonian magazine)**

**In one Turkish village any letter addressed to Mustafa Baysal – a name shared by 42 of the 342 villagers – is read aloud in the square before being turned over to its proper recipient. The local headman, himself a Mustafa Baysal, says the problem of telephone calls has not yet been solved. When a call for one Mustafa Baysal comes in, all Mustafas line up at the phone to see which of them the call is for. *(Cyprus Mail, Nicosia)***

**At the turn of the century most light bulbs were hand-blown and cost the equivalent of half a day's pay for the average worker. (William S. Ellis, in National Geographic)**

**Cost to mail a letter using the Pony Express: $5 per half ounce. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Extraordinary Book of Facts, p. 108)*  
As late as 1890, nearly 75 percent of Americans had to fetch their mail from a post office. A community had to have at least 10,000 people to be eligible for home delivery, and most people lived in towns or on farms. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 173)**

**The original recipe for margarine was milk, lard, and sheep’s stomach lining. *(Noel Botham, in The Amazing Book of Useless Information, p. 166)***

**What the Orthodox Hindu does in private with his matrimonial mate is regulated in some detail by his religion. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Italy's Benito Mussolini banned Mickey Mouse comic books in 1938*. (L. M. Boyd)***

**Travails of Mickey Mouse:**

**1. East Germany -- banned in 1954**

**2. Germany -- banned in 1933**

**3. Yugoslavia -- banned in 1937**

**4. SovietUnion -- banned in 1936**

**5. Italy -- banned in 1938. (Mickey Mouse has been banned 12 times outside the U.S. (World Features Syndicate)**

**The first microwave oven:**

**1. Name – Radarange**

**2. Height -- as tall as a refrigerator**

**3. Weight -- 750 pounds**

**4. Installation -- by electricians**

**5. Hook-up -- required water and plumbing**

**6. Price -- from $1,295 to $3,000. (Long Beach, CA Press-Telegram)**

**Raytheon engineer Percy Spencer was working on a radar research project in 1946 when he noticed that a candy bar in his pocket had melted. Messier experiments with popping corn and a raw egg convinced Spencer that low-density microwave energy from a new vacuum tube, called a magnetron, was responsible for the heating. In 1947, Raytheon offers the first microwave oven – standing 5 ½ feet tall and weighing over 750 pounds. Selling for about $5,000 and needing plumbing to water-cool the magnetron, the device meets some market resistance despite its ability to cook food in a fraction of the time it takes to cook conventionally. (Raytheon Company, as it appeared in Reminisce magazine, January, 2005)**

**Echo Farms in Brooklyn was the first to put milk in bottles, in 1879. Before this, folks would buy milk from barrels on wagons and put it into buckets to take home. *(Don Voorhees, in The Essential Book of Useless Information, p. 234)***

**China’s coal mines are the world’s deadliest, with numerous fires, floods and other disasters every year despite repeated government promises to improve safety. 3,800 miners died in China in 2007, an average of about 10 a day. 33 coal miners died in the United States last year, according to the U.S. Labor Department. (Associated Press, as it appeared in the Rocky Mountain News, January 22, 2008)**

**The national anthem of Greece has 158 verses. *(Noel Botham, in The Book of Useless Information, p. 152)***

**The Boston Nation, a newspaper published in Ohio during the mid-nineteenth century, had pages 7 1/2 feet long and 5 1/2 feet wide. It required two people to hold the paper in proper reading position. (David Louis ,in Fascinating Facts , p. 38)**

**70 million: Estimated number of Nigerians who live on less than $1 a day. (Reuters, as it appeared in Time magazine, July 16, 2007)**

**Auto no-no's in five foreign countries:**

**Switzerland -- can't yodel while driving;**

**Germany -- no kids under 12 in front seat;**

**Sweden -- headlights can't be off in daytime;**

**France -- no horn-blowing in cities;**

**Czechoslovakia -- no smoking while driving. *(World Features Syndicate)***

**Do you ever feel overworked, over-regulated, under-leisured, underbenefited? Take heart. This notice was found in the ruins of a London office building. It was dated 1852:**

**1. This firm has reduced the hours of work, and the clerical staff will now only have to be present between the hours of 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. weekdays.**

**2. Clothing must be of a sober nature. The clerical staff will not disport themselves in raiment of bright colors, nor will they wear hose unless in good repair.**

**3. Overshoes and topcoats may not be worn in the office, but neck scarves and headwear may be worn in inclement weather.**

**4. A stove is provided for the benefit of the clerical staff. Coal and wood must be kept in the locker. It is recommended that each member of the clerical staff bring four pounds of coal each day during the cold weather.**

**5. No member of the clerical staff may leave the room without permission from the supervisor.**

**6. No talking is allowed during business hours.**

**7. The craving for tobacco, wine, or spirits is a human weakness, and as such is forbidden to all members of the clerical staff.**

**8. Now that the hours of business have been drastically reduced, the partaking of food is allowed between 11:30 and noon, but work will not on any account cease.**

**9. Members of the clerical staff will provide their own pens. A new sharpener is available on application to the supervisor.**

**10. The supervisor will nominate a senior clerk to be responsible for the cleanliness of the main office and the private office. All boys and juniors will report to him 40 minutes before prayers and will remain after closing hours for similar work. Brushes, brooms, scrubbers, and soap are provided by the owners.**

**11. The owners recognize the generosity of the new labor laws, but will expect a great rise in output of work to compensate for these near Utopian conditions. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**The oil spill that never stops: Imagine if an environmental catastrophe like the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico occurred every year, in the same place, for decades, said Anene Ejikeme. That’s “what residents of Nigeria’s oil-producing Niger Delta have been living with” since 1958. Since oil explorations began there a half-century ago, multinational oil companies have spilled roughly 13 million barrels of oil -- about 50 times the amount spilled in the Exxon Valdez disaster. The consequences have been devastating. “Dead dish and oily water are part of daily life for Niger Delta residents, as are gas fares” that perpetually illuminate the night sky. Local people cook, drink, and wash with badly polluted water. Since they are dirt-poor and powerless, neither oil companies nor the Nigerian government show much concern for the continuing catastrophe. Royal Dutch Shell operates in 100 countries around the world, yet 40 percent of all its oil spills happen in Nigeria, where companies operate “with little or not oversight from the government.” Shell, the largest operator in the Delta, doubled its oil-spillage from 2007 to 2008, then doubled it again from 2008 to 2009. Does anyone care? *(The Week magazine, June 18, 2010)***

**Those who wish to clean up the Internet can recall a little history: If a telephone operator in 1882 overheard a caller use a cuss word, she could have his telephone removed from his property immediately. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**At least a couple of widows in Japan have received financial compensation after authorities determined their husbands died from overwork. The 12-hour workday there is not so exceptional. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Before they invented paper, the Chinese wrote on bones, shells and silk. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Cape Verde is an island country located off the western coast of Africa, opposite Mauritania and Senegal. When someone passes away in Cape Verde, family members must dress in black for a full year after the death and are not allowed to play music or dance. (Charlotte Lowe with Emma Wilson and Rachel Federman, in Useless History Fact-O-Pedia, p. 52)**

**The male penguin incubates the egg, resting it on top of his feet to protect it from the ice. He stands perfectly still, not even moving to eat. For he must conserve his body temperature to warm the egg 51 degrees C. warmer than the surrounding snowy wastes! (James Wiley, Beasts, Brains, and Behavior, p. 100)  
  
To that lengthy list of items, reported in short supply in the Soviet republics please add pens and pencils. (L. M. Boyd)  
In China, it’s illegal to own any animal as a pet. You can still have a cat, dog, bird or what you have around. You just have to indicate you’re raising it for a purpose: to eat, to pull a plow, etc. (L. M. Boyd)**

**A three-minute phone call from New York to San Francisco cost $20.70 in 1915. *(Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Extraordinary Book of Facts, p. 301)***

**In 1927, a phone call from New York to London cost seventy-five dollars for the first three minutes. *(Don Voorhees, in The Super Book of Useless Information, p. 232)***

**The first mobile car phones were located in the car’s trunk, taking up nearly half of the space. (Noel Botham, in The Amazing Book of Useless Information, p. 152)**

**In photography’s pioneer days, sitting for a portrait called for extreme patience. Making a daguerreotype in 1837 required a fifteen-minute exposure. The subject's head was put in a clamp to hold it still. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 172)**

**In 1644, Oliver Cromwell banned the eating of pie -- for 16 years pie eating was an underground activity. (Village Inn Pie Bites)**

**The Muppet Show was banned from television in Saudi Arabia because one of its stars was Miss Piggy. Pigs are forbidden to Muslims. *(Noel Botham, in The Ultimate Book of Useless Information, p. 15)***

**Lorenzo the Magnificent had a smashed nose, result of an early accident. He counted it a blessing because with a smashed nose he didn't have to smell the awful stink that was a daily companion of residents of most big cities. You think our air is polluted? You should have lived in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: no sewers, no garbage collectors, no fly sprays, no pay toilets on the public square (in fact, no toilets of any kind on the public square). And to top it off, there were an awful lot of horses prancing through the streets. If you didn't have blocked nasal passages or a busted nose, the best you could do to avoid the stench was to douse yourself heavily in perfume. (Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia, p. 19)**

**During the 1920s, popcorn was banned from the movies because it was too noisy. (Don Voorhees, in The Essential Book of Useless Information, p. 23)**

**It is illegal to import pork products into Yemen, with a maximum punishment of death. *(Noel Botham, in The Amazing Book of Useless Information, p. 172)***

**Comparison of first-class postage rates of the U.S.A., and other countries (up to 1 ounce): Japan - 80 cents; Germany - 64 cents; Denmark - 61 cents; Switzerland - 60 cents; Austria - 54 cents; France - 52 cents; Norway - 51 cents; Belgium - 47 cents; Italy - 46 cents; Netherlands - 46 cents; Sweden - 42 cents; Great Britain - 39 cents; Australia - 35 cents; United States - 32 cents; and Canada - 31 cents. (Dear Abby, in Rocky Mountain News , January 24, 1995)  
  
Ed: “Hey, Gord.” Postal carrier: “Ed, if you're going to give me a hard time about the postal rate increase, I'm not in the mood.” Ed: “Not at all. In fact -- I think it's a bargain one can mail a letter anywhere in the U.S. for 37 cents. Plus, America still has one of the lowest postal rates in the industrialized world.” Postal carrier: “Bless you.” *(Steve Breen, in Grand Avenue comic strip)***

**Costa Rica has the highest standard of living in Central America, but most of the country has no street names or addresses. As a result, it takes an average of nine days for the postal service to deliver a letter, and 20 percent of all mail never arrives at its destination. *(Los Angeles Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, November 16, 2007)***

**The female sea lion is pregnant 364 days of the year*. (L. M. Boyd)***

**If among your acquaintances is an expectant mother who's tired of waiting, give her a call. To let her know about the female sea lion - she's pregnant 364 days of the year. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Criminal behavior in Puritan New England:**

**1. To dance at a wedding;**

**2. To conduct sports events;**

**3. For the poor to wear shoe buckles;**

**4. To have theatrical performances. (World Features Syndicate)**

**The town of Tidikelt in the Sahara Desert once went ten years without a rainfall. In Calama, a town in the Atacama Desert of Chile, it has never rained. (David Louis, in Fascinating Facts , p.. 181 & 183)**

**The first remote control – called Lazy Bones – was sold by Zenith in 1950. It was connected to the set by a wire. (Don Voorhees, in The Essential Book of Useless Information, p. 1)**

**You complain that you never go anywhere? Well, many small rodents live out their entire existence without ever straying more than 20 feet from the place of their birth. *(Denver P. Tarle, in A Treasury of Trivia, p. 7)***

**An Iranian actress was given a suspended sentence of 74 lashes for kissing a young actor on the cheek, the actress said Wednesday. Gowhar Kheirandish was prosecuted after she shook hands and kissed Ali Zamani at a public festival in the city of Yazd in September, provoking organized protests*.* *(Rocky Mountain News, April 24, 2003)***

**The longest sermon on record was delivered by a minister in West Richland, Washington, in 1955. The declamation lasted 48 hours and 18 minutes. A congregation of eight was still present at the sermon's end. (James Meyers, in Mammoth Book of Trivia , p. 255))**

**The electric razor made its debut on the American marketplace March 18, 1931. It should be noted that, until any kind of razor was invented, man shaved by pulling hairs out individually or by cutting them with sharp-edged stones. (Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book , p. 48)**

**Shaving in earlier times: Greek men -- singed hair off legs with a lamp. *(Peter James & Nick Thorpe, in Ancient Inventions)*  
Nobody with the surname “Young" should remain ignorant of the fact that it was a Young -- William Young of Philadelphia, PA, in 1800 -- who first made shoes especially for the right and left feet. Earlier shoes could be worn on either foot. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Until the 1950s, shoes were made by hand and most were “straight"--they could be worn on either foot. There were two widths: fat and slim; most Americans wore slim. The concept and production of left and right shoes came in with machines. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 288)**

**Even in the post-Taliban era, it’s still against the law in Afghanistan for a woman to sing on TV. *(Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Extraordinary Book of Facts, p. 13)***

**Understand the year-round smog over Taiwan's cities runs about twice as heavy as Los Angeles smog. (L. M. Boyd)**

**When the snow is up to your knees, about the only thing to be thankful for is that you’re not eight feet tall. (Doug Larson, United Featurs Syndicate)**

**Up until 1830, when a housewife purchased a “bar” of soap, the grocer simply hacked off a chunk from a large block. Cakes of soap, already cut to one pound size and individually wrapped, were sold by Jessie Oakley of Newburgh, New York, and were introduced in 1830. (Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia , p. 335)**

**Consider spaces between words you read in this sentence. You and I take such spaces for granted. But ancient writing included no spaces between words. Space had to be invented. (L. M. Boyd)**

**As you cruise along at 40,000 feet in your comfortable jet, think of the poor folks who had to travel from the Midwest to California by stagecoach. Wells Fargo charged $300 for an Omaha-San Francisco ticket, with meals at isolated way stations at a buck a piece (that’s about $25 on today’s market). Not only that but one passenger described the meals like this: “Tough beef, greasy potatoes and coffee strong enough to float a mule shoe.” Yeah, but think of all the famous outlaws you got to meet! (Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia , p. 257)**

**STAPLERS: The hardest part about inventing the stapler wasn’t the device itself, it was getting all those little staples to stick together. The precursors of modern staplers were invented in the 19th century and were used by printers to bind pages of books and magazines together. These machines used rolls of wire instead of staples, which the machine cut and bent into shape as it was binding the pages together. The first machines to use pre-bent, U-shaped pieces of wire came in the 1860s, but they held only one staple at a time and had to be reloaded by hand before each use. The first stapler to hold more than one staple was invented in 1894, but it used staples set onto a wooden core that came loose easily and jammed the stapler. In 1923 Thomas Briggs, founder of the Boston Wire Stitcher Company (later shortened to Bostitch), figured out a way to glue the staples together into a long strip that could be loaded into a stapler. Bostitch still makes staplers today. (Uncle John’s Unstoppable Bathroom Reader, p. 130)**

**The steering wheel was invented in 1894. Before this, early autos were steered with a joystick-type handle. *(Don Voorhees, in The Super Book of Useless Information, p. 254)***

**Street numbers in Japan are not assigned by the position of the house on the street, but by when the house was built. The older the house, the lower the street number, regardless of street location. *(Russ Edwards & Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Digest, p. 105)***

**One of the most sensible precepts of the Judeo-Christian tradition is to “count your blessings,” and our most important blessing is that we have survived the 20th century, perhaps the most dangerous century in history. We are leaving it with the international order, which first broke down in 1914 and remained fractured until the late 1980s, at least partially restored and with good prospects of a complete recovery. Looking back, one is appalled to think of the number of occasions when the civilized world was in real danger of extinction. *(Paul Johnson, in National Review)***

**The total tax burden on Americans in 2009, as a percentage of GDP, was 24 percent, lower than it was in 1965. In comparison, Canadians pay 31 percent of GDP in taxes, Britons 34 percent, Germans 37 percent, and the French 42 percent. *(Toronto Globe and Mail, as it appeared in The Week magazine, August 12, 2011)***

**In Italy, the tax on gasoline is higher than the price of it. *(Boyd’s Curiosity Shop, p. 20)***

**The cruelest tax burden: Americans complain about taxes, but compared to Inca families, we’ve got it easy. Inca rulers, a new study shows, often demanded that citizens surrender their children as a form of tax. In the 15th and 16th centuries, Inca leaders collected physically perfect children ages 4 to 10 to be brutally sacrificed. Inca leaders took girls from the ranks of the acllakuna (“chosen women”), and used them as servants of the state. Boys were also collected from the families of local lords. Inca leaders then selected the most unblemished children to be killed in the capacocha ceremonies, which had religious and political significance. Researchers reached their conclusions through analysis of dozens of human remains found at Inca sites in Argentina, Peru, and Ecuador. “The forensic evidence indicates that some were killed by strangulation, others by a blow with a blunt instrument to the head,” researcher Tamara Bray tells Discovery.com. Not that it’s much consolation, but the young victims were probably drugged with chichi (corn beer) to dull the pain. *(The Week magazine, June 17, 2005)***

**George Washington’s false teeth: set made from elephant tusks; set made from hippo teeth; set made from lead; set made from human teeth; set made from cow teeth. *(The Diagram Group, in Funky, Freaky Facts)***

**The first telegrams to the West Coast cost $1 a word. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**More than 50% of the people in the world have never made or received a telephone call. (Kids’ Pages, September, 2007)**

**As of 1976 in Greece, it cost $250 to get a telephone installed in a private residence and there was a four-year waiting list. (David Louis, in Fascinating Facts , p. 38)  
  
Recent reports say some Argentineans now have to wait 10 to 20 years to get a new telephone line. (L. M. Boyd)**

**If you figure $500 as the price of a television set in 1939 and now, it cost 33 percent of the average annual income then and 3 percent now. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Charlie Brown: “What did you get on the test, Patty?” Patty: “I got a D minus.” Charlie Brown: “That's too bad.” Patty: “It doesn't bother me. I'm just glad I have my health!” *(Charles Schulz, in Peanuts comic strip)***

**THE OPTIMIST: I have no friends, no family, no money, no food, no job, no credit, no luck, no hope, and no future. However, I do have matches, toothpicks, chewing gum, paper clips, rubber bands, shoelaces and Scotch Tape. Maybe things aren’t so bad. *(George Carlin, in When Will Jesus Bring the Pork Chops?, p. 52)***

**Thirsty travelers on the brink of Hells Canyon in Idaho could look down on the waters of the Snake River but had no way to get down to drink. *(The World Almanac of the U.S.A., p. 96)***

**Please don’t squeeze the corncob. In 1935, Northern Tissue proudly introduced “splinter-free” toilet paper. Previous options included tundra moss for Eskimos, a sponge with salt water for Romans, and – hopefully, splinter-free – corncobs in the American West. *(Liza Lentini & David Mouzon, in Discover magazine)***

**The first recorded use of toothpaste was about a thousand years ago by a Roman called Scibonius Largus. It was a mixture of honey, salt, and ground glass. Ancient Spaniards dipped their toothbrushes in human urine. *(The Diagram Group, in Funky, Freaky Facts, p. 3)***

**A study out of China indicates the typical Chinese family spent 40 cents in 1989 on toys for children. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Traffic in Kenya’s capita city of Nairobi is so bad that it can take two hours to inch six miles. More than 500,000 cars jam the city’s outdated, narrow roads, where constant gridlock has damaged the economy and scared away foreign investment. (Associated Press, as it appeared in The Week magazine, August 22-29, 2008)**

**It took a man on horseback three months to go from Massachusetts to South Carolina . . . if he made it at all . . . in the 1700s. Travel by water was a big improvement . . . also if you made it at all. Between 1810 and 1850, on Western rivers, 44 steamboats collided, 166 burned, 200 blew up, and nearly 600 struck a submerged object and sank. (Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia, p. 335)  
  
How did the Old West travelers jolting along in wagon trains keep eggs from breaking? Packed them in lard. *(L. M. Boyd)*  
A dozen discontented figures in a community once visited a wise man, clamoring to tell him their problems. “Each of you write your biggest problem down on a piece of paper,” said the wise man, “and six of you stand here to my right and six to my left. Now exchange papers and you will have a new trouble to fret about.” The malcontents complied. Within a minute, all were clamoring to have their own troubles back! *(Bits & Pieces)*Mark Twain was the first to type a book manuscript. Working on Remington Model No. 1 which he bought in 1874, Twain typed at a speed of 19 words per minute. *(Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book, p. 66)***

**WISCONSIN -- C. Latham Sholes, former editor of the Milwaukee Sentinel, invented the first commercial typewriter in 1873. The bulky machine, which typed only capital letters, was manufactured by gun makers E. Remington & Sons. *(American Profile magazine)***

**Some people want to ban the bomb. Some would outlaw handguns. In Romania, the government wants to restrict typewriters. To try to stamp out dissident literature, President Nicolae Ceausescu has signed a decree banning the possession or use of typewriters by anybody who poses “a danger to public order or state security.” Romanians must register their typewriters with the police and submit samples of their machines’ distinctive type prints. Anyone who wants to buy a typewriter must get state permission. *(Newsweek)***

**Some Chinese typewriters have 5,700 characters. The keyboard is almost 3 feet wide on some models, and the fastest one can type on these machines is 11 words per minute. (David Louis, in Fascinating Facts , p. 31)**

**The first commercial vacuum cleaner was so large it was mounted on a wagon. People threw parties in their homes so guests could watch the new device do its job. (Noel Botham, in The Amazing Book of Useless Information, p. 152)**

**The first VCR, made in 1956, was the size of a piano. (Noel Botham, in The Amazing Book of Useless Information, p. 151)**

**Under the Locomotive Act in 1865, any such vehicle in motion had to be attended by at least three persons, one of whom had to walk sixty yards in front, carrying a red flag by daylight, or a red lamp by night. A speed limit of 4 mph was imposed on country roads, even this dizzy pace being halved by law in towns, and these restrictions undoubtedly served as a deterrent to the use of mechanical road transport for any purpose other than heavy haulage. *(Michael Sedgwick, in Early Cars, p. 10)*On Venus, it rains sulfuric acid all the time. (Boyd's Curiosity Shop, p. 32)**

**I count as a victory every day I go to sleep alive. *(Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot Shots)***

**One of the 19th century’s leaders of women’s suffrage, Victoria Woodhull, ran for U.S. president in 1872, even though she couldn’t vote. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 151)***

**Washington, D.C., residents were not allowed to vote in presidential elections until the 23rd Amendment was ratified in 1961. *(Russ Edwards & Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Digest, p. 103)*  
  
How democratic was the United States from 1776 to the 1920’s? For one thing, more than half of the adults in the U.S. were excluded from voting. Women weren't allowed to vote in national elections until the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was certified 144 years after the Declaration of Independence. Blacks and others were effectively prohibited from voting by poll taxes and other local laws and customs until well into the twentieth century. And the public didn't vote for U.S. Senators for the first 137 years of the nation. (Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell , p. 73)  
All bears have flat feet. They walk the way you’d walk if you walked on your hands. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Engaged couples who marry in Japan pay an average of $29,850 for the ceremony, reception and honeymoon trip. Such Japanese couples who go to Hawaii to marry pay on average of $6,400. So report the world wedding watchers. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Activities subject to public whippings in colonial times: Complaining about the government; swearing; sleeping in church; drunkenness; stealing a loaf of bread; shooting fowl on Sunday; falling in love with “unsuitable suitor.” *(World Features Syndicate)***

**Was a time in the history of old Rome when nobody under the age of 30 could drink wine legally. Responsibility wasn’t the problem. A shortage of wine was. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The Maldive Islands off India are Moslem. It's considered unseemly there for women to appear in the streets during daylight. So the girls have to go to school at night. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Saudi Arabia has refused to send a women’s team to the Olympic Games in London this summer. The conservative Islamic nation considers women who exercise in public “shameless,” and in 2009 the government shut down 153 women’s gyms. (Time.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 16, 2012)**

**A Frenchman who writes a bad check – knowingly or not -- is barred by law from use of his checking account for a year. (Boyd’s Curiosity Shop, p. 124)**

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