**I Didn’t Know That!**

**Although it could fit inside Buckingham Palace or the Kremlin, there's much more to the White House than meets the eye: 18 acres of lawns and gardens, 132 rooms, 412 doors (with brass knobs to polish), 32 bathrooms, 45 chandeliers, 66 sculptures, 492 paintings, 468 prints and drawings. The second-floor family quarters measure 5600 square feet and include 17 bedrooms and 29 fireplaces. To paint the building's outside walls gleaming white -- it has had more than 30 coats so far -- requires 570 gallons of paint. Running the residence alone takes 87 full-time employees and a yearly outlay of almost $8 million. Over in the bustling West Wing, the President's Oval Office is the heart of a governing hive. Total operating costs of the White House Office is approximately $39 million a year. *(Robert Shnayerson, in Reader's Digest, February, 1994)***

**The White House has 412 doors, 147 windows, 132 rooms, 35 bathrooms, 28 fireplaces, 8 staircases, 6 levels, and 3 elevators. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 184)***

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**September 7th, 2022 - A magnetic catastrophe: About 42,000 years ago, Earth's magnetic poles flipped. Previous research has suggested that this event -- which happens every now and then, cosmically speaking -- had little impact. But a new study suggests that this switch in fact caused drastic environmental and climactic changes around the planet, reports The Guardian (U.K.). Earth's magnetic field acts as a shield against damaging solar radiation. When the poles switch or wobble, that protection weakens, leaving the planet more exposed to high-energy particles. Using radiocarbon analysis on the fossilized remains of kauri trees -- which can live for thousands of years -- from New Zealand, researchers were able to pinpoint the specific 800-year period when the magnetic field occurred. The researchers then looked at archaeological and climate records from that period and found that numerous environmental changes took place around the world: tropical rain belts shifted dramatically; an ice sheet started to stretch across North America; and a severe drought in Australia led to a die-off of megafauna. Co-author Chris Turney, from the University of New South Wales, says that the rise in the use of caves by our ancestors around this time may be down to the fact that they offered shelter from the harsh conditions outside. "It probably would have seemed like the end of days." (The Week magazine, March 12, 2021)**

**August 29th, 2022 - On June 14, 1920, the United States Postal Service announced that babies could not be sent by parcel post. Parcel post was an ingenious innovation, allowing the post office to deliver larger parcels throughout America. Some Americans, though, took advantage of the service and actually delivered babies under 11 pounds to relatives via the mail. One Ohio couple mailed their eight-month-old son James to a grandparent, paying only 15 cents (and insuring him for $50). In 1914, a four-year-old girl was mailed 73 miles away. After all, parcel postage was cheaper than a train ticket*. (The Daily Chronicle)***

**August 22nd, 2022 - On January 3, 1921, the very first weather report was broadcast over the radio on the University of Wisconsin's 9XM radio station. In 1915, the U.S. Department of Commerce granted the university an experimental radio station license with the call sign 9XM. In 1916, the station began transmitting weather reports in Morse code, requiring farmers to translate the dots and dashes into meaningful information. In 1921, after the invention of a "radiotelephone," the first weather broadcast was sent using spoken words. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

**August 15th, 2022 - AMAZING FAX**

**If you think of the fax machine as a modern convenience, consider this:**

**the first one was invented more than 140 years ago.**

**Giovanni Caselli was a priest, but his neighbors in Florence thought of him as a bit of a mad scientist. He was eternally tinkering with things, and his home was always filled with junk.**

**The telegraph was the hot new technology of the moment, and Caselli wondered if it was possible to send pictures over telegraph wires. He went to work in 1857, and over the course of six years perfected what he called the "pantelegraph." It was the world's first practical fax machine. Standing six feet tall and made up of swinging pendulums, batteries, and wires, it worked by passing an electrical current through an image. The signal was sent to a receiver that translated it onto a piece of treated paper;.**

**Emperor Napoleon III of France was so impressed with Caselli's work that he authorized use of the machine on French telegraph lines. By 1868 the pantelegraph was transmitting as many as 110 faxes per hour. But it was viewed as a novelty, not a necessity. When a Prussian troops invaded France in 1870, the service was interrupted, never to be resumed again. It was another hundred years before the modern fax machine suddenly became indispensable. *(Rick Beyer, in The Greatest Stories Never Told, p. 100)***

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