**Larger Than Life**

How precious also are thy thoughts unto me,

**O God! They are more in number than the sand.**

***(Psalm 139:17,18)***

**World’s longest mountain range: the Andes, which stretch more than 4,000 miles through seven nations. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 177)***

**Memorial Day is held the last Monday in May. The day honors those who have lost their lives serving our country. To honor all the men and women who have served our nation, there are more than 100 special cemeteries in this country and in Europe. One of the best known is Arlington National Cemetery, where more than 285,000 service members and their family members are buried. Service members from every American war, including Iraq, are buried there. *(Betty Debnam, in Rocky Mountain News)***

**A small child could crawl through a blue whale’s major arteries. *(Noel Botham, in The Best Book of Useless Information Ever, p. 63)***

**I remember reading something about aspen trees being one of the largest living organisms. Can you refresh my memory? Scientists determined that the largest known single living organism on Earth is a 200-acre grove of aspen trees in Utah, south of the Wasatch Mountains. It appears at first to be just a regular forest, but all the trees are actually “suckers” that have grown from the roots of a single tree. The giant aspen, nicknamed “Pando,” meaning “I spread,” is estimated to weigh about 6,600 tons. *(Rocky Mountain News)***

**Some asteroids in our solar system are so large that they even have their own moons. *(Noel Botham, in The Best Book of Useless Information Ever, p. 66)***

**President William Howard Taft was the heaviest chief executive, tipping the scales at 325 pounds. After repeatedly getting stuck in the White House bathtub, he had one installed big enough to accommodate four average-sized men. *(Russ Edwards & Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Digest, p. 102)***

**Try Putting This In A Pie: The Big Apple wants to make perfectly clear that it really is a BIG apple. A New York sculptor proposes to place a 40-ton, 38-foot-high steel apple, green in color, just north of Times Square so the whole world will know what New York thinks of itself. The question is, why not red? After all, green apples are often quite tart. *(Barb Cunningham, in Catholic Forester)ju***

**The biggest thing in the universe: British astronomers have identified a celestial object so large that it challenges scientists’ basic assumptions about the nature of the universe. Huge-LQG is a cluster of 73 quasars, each of which lies at the center of its own galaxy. The structure measures 4 billion light-years across at its greatest dimension; our own Milky Way galaxy, which is 100,000 light-years across, is a speck in comparison. But the conundrum of Huge-LQG – the letters stand for Large Quasar Group – isn’t its immense size alone but also its location, astronomer Roger Clowes, of the U.K.’s University of Central Lancashire, tells the Toronto Star. Not far away, at least in cosmic terms, is another immense quasar cluster. The size and proximity of the two objects, Clowes says, confound the so-called cosmological principle, which holds that the universe is essentially homogenous, and looks the same in every direction, regardless of the viewer’s vantage point. That principle has allowed astronomers to assume that parts of the universe they have not observed are fundamentally similar to the known parts. Clowes calls the discovery of Huge-LQG “the most dramatic challenge” yet to that reassuring assumption. “The structure we found is a few percentage points, say 5 percent, of the size of the observable universe,” he says. It makes it hard to say the universe is uniform.” *(The Week magazine, February 1, 2013)***

**A billion is a difficult number to comprehend, but one advertising agency did a good job of putting that figure into perspective in one of its releases. A billion seconds ago it was 1951. A billion minutes ago Jesus was alive. A billion hours ago our ancestors were living in the Stone Age. *(Agency Biz)***

**You have heard about the great bison herds of the Old West? Apparently they were nothing to the springbok herds of South Africa. In 1900, observers estimated one such herd at about 300 million of the little antelopes -- 15 miles wide and 140 miles long. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The secrets of super-massive black holes: Astronomers have spotted the most enormous black holes ever detected, inspiring new theories about how such pockets of extreme gravity form. Together, the two objects, which are roughly 300 million light-years away, have more mass than 30 billion suns, University of California at Berkeley astrophysicist Chung-Pei Ma tells the Associated Press. “They are monstrous,” she says. The smaller of the two black holes is 54 percent bigger than any ever found before. Black holes are regions of space where gravity is so intense that not even light can escape; they can form when stars run out of energy and collapse into themselves. Every galaxy, including our own Milky Way, appears to have a black hole at its center, but until now all of those found have been much smaller. Since these new “super-massive” finds are far bigger than those left by any single dead star, scientists now wonder if they expanded by gobbling galactic matter or by merging with black holes inside other galaxies. Ma says these black holes might also be remnants of quasars that burned out in bright bursts of extreme energy during the early phase of the universe. *(The Week magazine, December 23, 2011)***

**The largest animal that every lived is alive right now. It is the blue whale, which can weigh nearly 200 tons -- almost twice as much as the largest dinosaur on record. (The largest accurately measured blue whale had a length of 110 feet, 2 1/2 inches.) *(Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 124)***

**The world's largest building without internal supports is the Goodyear Airship hangar, in Akron, Ohio -- it has 55 million cubic feet of air. Clouds form in the top of the structure during sudden temperature changes, and it rains. *(Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 421)***

**A senior Chinese agronomist claimed he has discovered the world's largest butterfly in southern China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, with a total wingspan of 8.9 inches. Xinhua reported Jiang Shaofang found the giant Atlas Moth butterfly on Mount Hanshan and framed it in a specimen case. *(Steve Newman, in Rocky Mountain News, 9-22-2003)*
Mammoth Cave is the longest known cave in the world, with more than 350 miles of explored passages. *(Debby Debnam, in Rocky Mountain News)***

**Never worry about the size of your Christmas tree. In the eyes of children, they are all 30 feet tall. *(Larry Wilde, in The Merry Book of Christmas)***

**37,000: The weight in pounds of the world's largest cookie. Officially measuring 102 feet across, the chocolate-chip cookie was baked last week by Immaculate Baking Company and was accompanied by a 4,000-gallon glass of milk. All the cookie's ingredients -- 30,000 eggs, 6,500 pounds of butter and 6,000 pounds of chocolate -- were donated. Pieces of the cookie were cut and sold as a fund-raiser for the Folk Artist's Foundation in North Carolina. *(Rocky Mountain News, May 28, 2003)***

**The giant spider crab has a claw span of 12 feet 1 inch. (The Diagram Group, in Funky, Freaky Facts, p. 54)**

**Creatures with very large homes:**

**Tropical ants – nests size of a football field**

**Arctic foxes – dens size of two football fields, 100 entrances**

**Naked mole rats – tunnel can be 35 football fields long**

**Beavers – dams as long as a football field**

**Prairie dogs – dens size of two football fields. (World Features Syndicate)**

**Dad: “Go here! Go there! Do this! Do that! Everybody wants me for something! There just isn't enough of me to go around!” As his son looks at his Dad's large belly, he says: “Actually, Dad.” Dad: “Oh, shut up!” *(Kevin Fagan, in Drabble comic strip)***

**Boulder Dam is as thick at its base (660 feet) as a city block is long. *(David Louis, in Fascinating Facts, p. 15)***

**The largest rough diamond ever recorded was the Cullinan which weighed 3,106 carats. More than 100 finished diamonds were cut from the Cullinan including one which weighed 530 carats*. (Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)***

**The biggest dinosaur yet: The fossil of the largest animal ever to have walked on land has been found in Argentina. The creature, thought to be a new species of Titanosaur, likely weighed 170,000 pounds, and measured 130 feet long and 65 feet tall. “It’s like two trucks with a trailer each, one in front of the other, and the weight of 14 elephants,” lead paleontologist Jose Luis Carballido tells The Guardian (U.K.). “This is a real paleontological treasure.” The size estimates are based on the length and circumference of the creature’s fossilized femur, found in the desert of Patagonia. The species belongs to a group called sauropods, characterized by their enormous heft and elongated bodies, which roamed parts of South America roughly 95 million years ago. Though paleontologists caution that projecting overall size from individual bones is tricky, the new species likely displaces the previous heavyweight champ, the Argentinosaurus, which was first unearthed in 1987. Despite the dinosaur’s enormity, modern blue whales, which can weigh as much as 320,000 pounds, still reign as the largest creatures ever to inhabit the earth. *(The Week magazine, June 6, 2014)***

**If unwound, your DNA would reach from Earth to the Sun and back . . . more than 400 times. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 185)***

**The biggest dog on record was an Old English Mastiff that weighed 343 pounds, and he was 8 feet, 3 inches from nose to tail. *(Kids’ Pages)***

**Largest dragonflies that ever lived had wings as big as crows’ wings. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The dust bowl years, 1930 through 1936, were known as the “dirty thirties.” Some dust storms were so big that they blackened the skies over New York City. One massive dust storm in the Great Plains had a width of two hundred miles. *(Don Voorhees, in The Super Book of Useless Information, p. 237)***

**About ten years ago, there was a 7.8 magnitude earthquake in Bolivia that was felt even in Toronto. It’s astounding that a temblor emanating from South America could reach as far as Canada. *(Lester Seto, in Portals of Prayer, February, 2006)***

**One egg of that extinct fowl known as the elephant bird could have made an omelet big enough to feed 90 people. *L. M. Boyd, in Boyd’s Book of Odd Facts, p. 6)***

**Who is the largest employer in the United States? In the private sector, it may not surprise you to know that this honor belongs to Wal-Mart. Between its 3,500 Stores, Supercenters and Sam’s Clubs, the retail giant employs about 1.1 million people nationwide. In fact, the only U.S. organization that employs more workers is the federal government. *(Robyn Dawson, in Tidbits)***

**A lifetime of bathroon reading: In the early 15th century, Chinese scholars compiled an 11,095-volume encyclopedia. *(Uncle John’s Unstoppable Bathroom Reader, p. 345)***

**English has a vocabulary nearly twice the size of any other language. *(Charles Berlitz, in Native Tongues)***

**Fast-food restaurants across the globe (estimated figures in the year 2000):
McDonald's -- 24,500 outlets in 115 countries
Burger King -- 10,365 outlets in 54 countries
Pizza Hut -- 10,200 outlets in 87 countries
Wendy's -- 8,776 outlets in 36 countries
Kentucky Fried Chicken -- 10,000 outlets in 76 countries. *(World Features Syndicate)***

**As a junior at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, I had grown accustomed to taking lengthy final exams. But none compared to the one I took for my psychology class. When the professor handed out a 20-page test, a classmate asked, “Does this come in hardcover?” *(Kari Mitchell, in Reader's Digest)***

**The 1666 Great Fire of London destroyed 13,200 houses but resulted in only six recorded fatalities. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 152)***

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**There are estimated to be about 1.5 billion red-billed queleas – a small sub-Saharan bird. Flocks have been reported that are so big they take five fours to pass overhead. *(Don Voorhees, in The Perfectly Useless Book of Useless Information, p. 160)***

**During the early nineteenth century, enormous flocks of passenger pigeons darkened the skies of North America east of the Rockies. Some flocks numbered in the billions and stretched one mile in width by three hundred miles in length. *(Don Voorhees, in The Super Book of Useless Information, p. 7)***

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**Scientists have catalogued about 10 million galaxies, says, George Helou, director of the Infrared Processing and Analysis Center at Caltech. He estimates there are a trillion galaxies in total. *(Discover magazine, 2006)***

**That galaxy called the Milky Way is just one of the 25 in its group. When astronomers discovered another galaxy near it, they called it Snickers. *(L. M. Boyd)***

A galaxy teeming with planets: Stars that are encircled by planets are not at all unusual. In fact, a new study says, so many stars have planets that the Milky Way galaxy probably contains more than 160 billion planets. “Planets are the rule rather than the exception,” French astronomer Arnaud Cassan tells Space.com. He and an international team of 42 scientists just completed a six-year survey of 100 million stars in the Milky Way galaxy using a variety of sophisticated planet-detection techniques. Their conclusion: Most stars have multiple planets, and two thirds of them probably have a planet roughly the size of Earth. “One can point at almost any random star and say there are planets orbiting that star,” says astronomer Uffe Grae Jorgensen. The astronomers even found systems in which planets are orbiting a double star; on these planets, there are two suns in the sky, like on the planet Tatooine in the Star Wars films. The study marks a milestone in our understanding of Earth’s place in the cosmos, and suggests that life is very likely to exist elsewhere in the universe. “We used to think that the Earth might be unique in our galaxy,” study co-author Daniel Kubas says. “But now it seems that there are literally billions of planets with masses similar to Earth.” *(The Week magazine, January 27, 2012)*

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**A huge island of discarded cups, bottle caps, plastic laundry baskets, rubber sandals, and other garbage has formed in an area of sluggish currents and slack winds halfway between California and Hawaii. The Eastern Garbage Patch, as this floating dump is called, is twice the size of Texas. *(Los Angeles Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, August 18, 2006)***

**In 2007, the Royal Canadian Mint produced six massive gold coins, each one 20 inches in diameter, weighing 220 pounds, and worth over $4 million. One of the coins was on display in Berlin's Bode Museum until it was stolen in March of 2017. Three men were accused of the theft. They climbed onto railway tracks next to the museum, smashed a bulletproof window, and then used a wheelbarrow and skateboard to roll the giant coin to the getaway car. Alas, the coin was never found. Investigators suspect that it was melted down*. (The Daily Chronicle)***

The world’s longest golf hole is 1,007 yards with a par 6 at Chocolay Downs Golf Course in Marquette, Michigan. *(American Profile magazine, 2006)*

**We walked out onto a terrace, and there it was: the biggest hole on earth, 13 miles from rim to rim, one mile deep, down a hellish immensity to a trickling river. And a silence as absolute as death. No matter how many home movies you've seen of it, the thing itself is beyond human experience. We watched the sun go over, and the mile-long shadows shifting across layers of red and purple and yellow mesas the size of cities. When all the empires are dust it will be there, with the hawks and the buzzards wheeling and gliding to the end of time. *(Alistair Cooke, in The Americans, on the Grand Canyon)***

**The Great Barrier Reef, at 1,200 miles long, is the largest living thing on the planet. *(Don Voorhees, in The Indispensable Book of Useless Information, p. 161)***

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**The Great Wall of China -- 2,500 miles long, stretching over more than one-twentieth of the Earth’s circumference -- was the longest continuous construction project in history. It was built over a period of 1,700 years; enough stone was used to build an eight-foot wall girdling the globe at the equator. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 318)***

**The Great Wall of China is long enough to stretch from New York City to Houston. *(Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Extraordinary Book of Facts, p. 303)***

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**In October, 2020, the "queen of the ocean" was found in the waters off the coast of Nova Scotia, Canada. An OCEARCH research team studying the marine life of sharks, seals, and dolphins found a 50-year-old female great white shark that is more than 17 feet long and weighs a whopping 3,541 pounds. The scientists named her Nukumi, after a legendary wise old grandmother figure of the local Mi'kmaq people. Oceanographers were blown away by the shark's massive size and are enthusiastic about all the wisdom she will share in the years to come. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

**The longest U. S. highway is Route 6, starting in Cape Cod, Massachusetts and going through 14 states, ending in Bishop, California. *(Deb and Jen's Land O' Useless Facts Internet site, in Catholic Digest)***

**The Himalayas cover one-tenth of the land on earth. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 177)***

**The length of a film should be directly related to the endurance of the human bladder. *(Alfred Hitchcock)***

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**Ross Ice Shelf, afloat at Antarctica's edge, is as big as Texas. (L. M. Boyd)
Ice shelves are large sheets of ice that extend into some of the bays that surround Antarctica. The Ross Ice Shelf is the largest, measuring more than 2,297 feet thick in some areas. *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)***

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**According to Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, an iceberg larger than Belgium was spotted in the South Pacific in 1956. It was 208 miles long and 60 miles wide -- the largest ever seen! *(Weekly World News, October 28, 1986)***

**Japan has built the world's largest indoor ski slope, a massive, covered structure the height of a 25-story building at its elevated end, and the length of five soccer fields. The over-$300-million ski dome in Funabashi City, 12 miles east of Tokyo, can accommodate 2000 skiers at a time, year-round. It is kept at a brisk 28 degrees by day, allowing man-made snow to cover the beginner, intermediate and advanced courses. *(Los Angeles Times)***

**The largest newborn infant of recent times was a 24-pound 4-ounce baby boy born in Turkey. (Barbara Seuling)**
**Jupiter is nine times the size of our planet Earth; if Jupiter were the size of a basketball, our planet would be a grape. *(Ralph M. Cardillo, in Rocky Mountain News)***

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**The Library of Congress is considered to be one of the largest libraries in the world. It was created in 1800 to make reference books available to Congress. Today, the library has more than 25 million books and over 75 million other items such as photos, manuscripts and recordings. *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)***

**The Library of Congress has 327 miles of bookshelves. *(Uncle John’s Unstoppable Bathroom Reader, p. 147)***

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**Enormous swarms of Rocky Mountain locusts, one larger in area than the state of California, covered the skies and devastated the croplands on the Great Plains in the 1870s. The number of insects in the largest swarm is estimated to have been 12.5 trillion. *(Don Voorhees, in The Indispensable Book of Useless Information, p. 238)***

**Not So Mobile: The world’s largest functioning mobile phone is the Maxi Handy, which measures 6.72 feet tall by 2.72 feet wide by 1.47 feet deep. This phone was installed at the Rotmain Centre in Bayreuth, Germany, on June 7, 2004, as part of the “Einfach Mobil” informational tour. Constructed of wood, polyester, and metal, the fully functional phone features a color screen and can send and receive text and multimedia messages. Just don’t expect to slip it into your pocket. (Armchair Reader: Vitally Useless Information, p. 53)**

**More than two million Muslims prostrate themselves at the Grand Mosque in Mecca each year during hajj – “and it’s a wonderful experience, a joyful time,” says Abdullah Khouj, a Mecca native who was born near the mosque. “When people leave their worldly gains behind and come to pray in simple white garments, you realize there’s no difference between rich and poor, black and white. There’s a sense of equality.” And of wonder too: The huge influx of believers temporarily triples the city’s population, straining the water supply. “Allah provides,” Khouj explains. “And the Saudi government helps too.” (Tad Szulc, in National Geographic magazine, December, 2001)**

**Fourteen years in the making, sculptor Gutzon Borglum’s Mount Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota was finished on October 31, 1941. “This is no mere ‘colossal’ stunt,” Borglum, who died months earlier, had said of his 60-foot granite heads of presidents Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt and Lincoln, carved largely with dynamite by some 400 workers. “I am simply animating the mountain.” (*Alison McLean, in Smithsonian magazine)***

**The largest living organism ever found is a honey mushroom (Armillaria ostoyae). It covers 3.4 square miles of land in the Blue Mountains of eastern Oregon, and is still growing. *(Noel Botham, in The Amazing Book of Useless Information, p. 175)***

**How many rooms are in the papal residence? The Apostolic Palace, the Vatican City’s main building and the one in which the pope lives, has more than 1,400 rooms, nearly 1,000 flights of stairs, and 20 courtyards. *(Nino Lo Bello, in The Incredible Book of Vatican Facts and Papal Curiosities, p. 89)***

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**The size of a planet doesn't strike you until you start looking for something. *(David Sedaris)***

**Scientists on Monday announced the discovery of a frozen, shiny red world some 8 billion miles from Earth that is the most distant known object in the solar system. They are calling it a “planetoid,” saying it does not meet the definition of a planet. Named Sedna, after the Inuit goddess who created the sea creatures of the Arctic, the planetoid is 800 to 1,100 miles in diameter, two-thirds to three-quarters the size of Pluto, and probably half rock, half ice. It is currently three times farther from Earth than Pluto, the ninth and outermost planet. Sedna follows an elliptical path around the sun, a circuit that takes 10,500 years to complete. It loops out as far as 84 billion miles from the sun. *(John Antczak, in Rocky Mountain News, March 16, 2004)***

**950 light-years: The distance between Earth and Kepler-20, the star system where astronomers working on NASA’s Kepler mission recently detected the first Earth-size planets found outside our solar system. It would take a space shuttle 36 million years to get there. *(Smithsonian magazine)***

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**A Texas rancher, who owned a very large ranch, was talking to a farmer from another state who had only a modest farm. The Texan bragged about the size of Texas, and how everything was done on a large scale. Emphasizing the size of his ranch, he said to the farmer, “I got up this morning at sunrise and started driving across my ranch, and by noon I was only halfway across my land.” Nodding understandably, the farmer replied, “Many years ago I had a car like that, too.” *(Leslie B. Flynn & Bernice Flynn, in Humorous Incidents and Quips for Church Publications, p. 21)***

**California’s redwood giants: Standing beneath a redwood, you “feel belittled in the best possible way,” said Christopher Reynolds in the Los Angeles Times. I recently made a pilgrimage to see the tallest trees in the world, driving north from Leggett, California, and plunging into the forest at multiple stops. Leggett’s famous Drive Thru Tree, a 315-foot redwood, provided a gateway to the string of national and state parts ahead. Wherever you wander amid old growth, you “consider the centuries towering above you.” But my favorite moment came at Founders Grove, where I hiked half a mile to see the Dyerville Giant, a 360-foot redwood that was 2,000 years old when it fell in 1991. A “graveyard hush” surrounded the prone behemoth as I walked its length from tip to roots. From its lower trunk, though, was growing a new redwood already 10 feet tall. “Who knows? With 2,000 years and a little luck, the new giant might surpass the old.” *(The Week magazine, June 6, 2014)***

**China’s Beijing Duck Restaurant can seat 9,000 people at one time. *(Noel Botham, in The Amazing Book of Useless Information, p. 172)***

**Rome’s ancient stadium, the Circus Maximus (for horse and chariot racing), could hold up to 250,000 people. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 153)***

**The Sahara Desert is the largest desert in the world. It covers more than 3.5 million square miles. *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)***

**St. Peter’s Basilica covers nearly 430,000 square feet, enough for a half dozen footballs fields, making it by far the largest church in Christendom. St. Peter’s has nearly 500 columns, over 430 large statues, 40 separate altars, and 10 domes. *(Nino Lo Bello, in The Incredible Book of Vatican Facts and Papal Curiosities, p. 91)***

**A team of 30 artists joined forces to build the world's biggest-ever sandcastle in the Danish seaside town of Blokhus. The sculptors used more than 5,000 tons of sand reinforced with clay to construct the intricately designed pyramid, which stands just under 70 feet tall. Chief artist Wilfred Stijger of the Netherlands said he wanted the structure, which is topped with a coronavirus wearing a crown to represent the way the coronavirus "is ruling our world, and not allowing us to do what we want to do." *(The Week magazine, July 23, 2021)***

**A single sausage measuring 5,917 feet in length was cooked in Barcelona, Spain, on September 22, 1986. *(Noel Botham, in The Amazing Book of Useless Information, p. 172)***

**The largest sentence in literature was written by Victor Hugo in Les Miserables and came to a staggering 823 words. *(Noel Botham, in The Ultimate Book of Useless Information, p. 119)***

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**Been wondering how many 1-by-10-foot boards you’d need to build a box big enough to contain the Queen Mary ocean liner? However many it is, that’s the number you can get out of just one giant sequoia. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**In 1852, a California hunter chased a wounded bear into a stand of trees bigger than any European-American had ever seen. Thirty feet wide at the base, with trunks stretching hundreds of feet into the sky, these trees are now called giant sequoias, and they were sensational from the start. Across the country, doubters and believers alike clamored to see a specimen for themselves, prompting intrepid businessmen to descend upon the grove, armed with axes. As the big trees were felled and sliced up into worldwide traveling sideshows, the site itself became a tourist attraction, with one massive stump converted into an outdoor dance floor, wide enough for a band and 32 dancers. *(Tal McThenia, in Bloomberg Businessweek magazine)***

**Trees are so common and quiet that we pay them little mind. What, for instance, should we answer when asked to name the biggest living thing Earth has ever seen? Dinosaurs? Blue whales? No, the largest sequoias in northern California weigh more than six blue whales. The tallest redwoods and Australian eucalyptus trees tower more than 300 feet high, three times the length of the greatest dinosaur. *(Lowell Ponte, in Reader's Digest)***

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**The size of a planet doesn't strike you until you start looking for something. *(David Sedaris)***

**A prehistoric snake named Titanoba weighed more than 2,500 pounds, was forty-two feet long, and could swallow a full-grown alligator. *(Don Voorhees, in The Perfectly Useless Book of Useless Information, p. 152)***

**In 1887, the largest snowflakes on record fell to the Earth in Montana. Each snowflake was 15 inches in diameter. *(Noel Botham, in The Best Book of Useless Information Ever, p. 65)***

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**M.I.T. physicist Irwin I. Shapiro on the task of precisely locating the Voyager spacecraft now coursing through the outer solar system: It's something like being in Boston and measuring the width of Lincoln's nose on a penny held over San Francisco." *(Quoted by James Moran, in Discover)*Number of solar systems -- estimated 100 quintillion. *(World Features Syndicate)*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

**The Soviet Union is so wide that it encompasses eleven time zones. *(Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 330)***

**The two Voyager spacecraft are heading in different directions out of the solar system and are 4.1 billion miles apart. *(Rocky Mountain News, August 16, 1993)***

**The 2.5-ton, fifty-five-foot-long giant squid has the largest eyes of any animal on earth, each being more than a foot in diameter. *(Noel Botham, in The Ultimate Book of Useless Information, p. 46)***

**The red super-giant star Betelgeuse has a diameter larger than that of the earth’s orbit around the sun – 186 million miles. *(Noel Botham, in The Ultimate Book of Useless Information, p. 63)***

**Nelson: “Wow, Grampa! You can hold a dime in the wrinkles of your forehead!” Grandpa: “That’s nothing. Watch this. I can make it disappear in the wrinkles of my stomach.” Nelson: “Cool. Can I have my dime back now?” Grandpa: “It may take awhile to find it.” *(Brian Crane, in Pickles comic strip)***

**It seems there’s a world record for everything – even one for the longest sushi roll in the world. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was made in Japan, in Ichinoseki City. The record-holding cucumber roll, made in 2001, measured 4,381 feet long. Makes you wonder how many people it took to consume the entire thing. *(Samantha Weaver, in Tidbits, 2007)***

**The sun is so big that if it were hollow it could contain a million worlds as big as our earth. (*L. M. Boyd)***

**Bush detailed a foiled terrorist plot by al-Qaida in 2002. They were planning to fly a plane into the tallest structure in L.A. The plot was foiled when Shaquille O’Neal was traded to Miami. *(Jay Leno)***

**As the saying goes, “everything’s bigger in Texas.” At more than 265,000 square miles, the state is larger than about 80 percent of the nations on Earth. *(Tidbits)***

**Time required to reach stars nearest to earth (traveling 25,000 mph):
Proxima Centauri -- 113,200 years;
Alpha Centauri -- 117,000 years;
Barnard's Star - 160,400 years;
Wolf 359 - 207,900 years;
Lalande 21185 -- 220,500 years;
Luyten 726-8 - 226,100 years;
Sirius - 232,000 years.
(It would take 10 years and two months to reach our sun traveling at 25,000 mph) *(World Features Syndicate)***

**The Tri-State Tornado, which tore through Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana on March 18, 1925, had a path 219 miles in length, a speed of 73 mph, and lasted three and a half hours, all records. *(Don Voorhees, in The Indispensable Book of Useless Information, p. 129)***

**A sedan-size turtle: Paleontologists have unearthed the remnants of a colossal turtle that patrolled northern South America some 10 million years ago,. The Stupendemys geographicus grew up to 13 feet long and weighed 1.25 tons, and inhabited a giant wetland that once covered the region. These creatures were built for battle, reports Reuters.com. Fossils dug up in Colombia's Tatacoa Desert and Venezuela's Urumaco region -- including a 9 1/2-foot- long shell, the biggest ever found -- show that males had front-facing horns on their shells that they may have used to tussle with other turtles over mates. Some Stupendemys fossils have bite marks and punctured bones, evidence of skirmishes with giant crocodilians. The enormous turtle's diet "was diverse, including snail animals -- fish, caimans, snakes -- as well as mollusks and vegetation," said lead researcher Edwin Cadena, from the Universidad del Rosario in Colombia. The turtles died out about 5 million years ago, after the formation of the Andes dried out their watery habitat. *(The Week magazine, March 6, 2020)***

**Imagine that the thickness of this page represents the distance from earth to sun (93 million miles, or about eight light-minutes). Then the distance to the nearest star (4 1/3 light-years) is a 71-foot-high sheaf of paper. And the diameter of our own galaxy (100,000 light-years) is a 310-mile-high stack of paper, while the edge of the known universe is not reached until the pile of paper is 31 million miles high – a third of the way to the sun. *(Kenneth F. Weaver, in Reader’s Digest)***

**The University of Texas has campuses that are farther apart than New York City and Detroit*. (L. M. Boyd)***

**In 2005 the Bright family from Arkansas grew the world’s largest watermelon, weighing in at 268.8 pounds. *(Noel Botham, in The Amazing Book of Useless Information, p. 163)***

**Hagar: “I guess I've got a weight problem, Dr. Zook.” Dr. Zook: “Oh, I've had lots of patients who were bigger than you!” Hagar: “Really?” Dr. Zook: “Of course, that was when I was still treating horses!” *(Chris Browne, in Hagar The Horrible comic strip)***

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**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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**One hundred sixty cars can drive side by side on the Monumental Axis in Brazil, the world’s widest road. *(Noel Botham, in The Book of Useless Information, p. 155)***

**How many pages? 19 billion: Number of Web pages Yahoo Inc. claimed last week users can search. That is more than the 8.2 billion pages that Google says its engine can search. Google disputes Yahoo’s numbers. *(The Wall Street Journal, as it appeared in Rocky Mountain News, August 16, 2005)***

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