# Been Around A While

**The counting device known as an abacus is over 3,000 years old and is still in wide use in the Orient. It enables experts to work complicated mathematical problems, in an astonishingly short period of time. And you don’t even have to replace the batteries! *(Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia, p. 340)***

**How old is advertising? Nobody knows. On the walls of Pompeii posters advertised the day’s program in the amphitheater, others asked taxpayers to vote for local politicians, and one even offered $10 reward for return of a lost wolfhound. *(Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia, p. 331)***

**Animals around for a very long time: Lizards – 290 million years old; Spiders – 400 million years old; Wild turkeys – 3 million years old; Whales – 50 million years old; Termites – 250 million years old; Human precursor Homo habilis – 2 million years old. *(World Features Syndicate)***

Surprising ages of well-known businesses:

* **Orkin Pest Control – 103 years old**
* **Coldwell Banker – 100 years old**
* **GNC Stores – 71 years old**
* **Culligan – 70 years old**
* **Samsung – 68 years old**
* **Martinizing Dry Cleaning – 57 years old. *(World Features Syndicate, 2005)***

**Why don’t you try your hand at inventing a new candy bar? A successful one can go on selling for decades. Butterfinger and Baby Ruth, for example, were first concocted in the 1920s and still remain among the bestsellers. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**To what age do clams live? To 150 years, at least, say some of those who are supposed to know. *(L. M. Boyd)***

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**The cockroach has been on earth approximately 364 times longer than man. *(L. M. Boyd, in Boyd’s Book of Odd Facts, p. 6)***

**One of the first insects to take shape, once the total conquest of land was achieved about 300 million years ago, was the cockroach. Other timely designed, super-successful creatures on the earth today include the beetle (250 million years), the dragonfly (250 million years), the shark (350 million years), and, of course, the champion of champions, the worm (at 500 million years). *(Bartleby Nash, in Mother Nature's Greatest Hits, p. 136)***

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**Scholars have not been able to trace back to a time in human history where there was no such ailment as the common cold. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**It is tiresome to keep hearing that America is a young country when in fact we have one of the oldest continuous constitutional governments in the world. *(Sydney J. Harris, Field Newspaper Syndicate)***

**The oldest corporate mascot dates back to 1877: the Quaker Oats Pilgrim. Aunt Jemima followed in 1893. The Morton Salt Umbrella Girl debuted in 1911, and Mr. Peanut donned his top hat in 1916. *(Fortune, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 23, 2005.***

**Ancient art suggests the first cowboys to rope bulls with lassos were Egyptians in the Valley of Nile. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**We are not the first civilization to consider disability income. Laws going back to the first Anglo-Danish king of Kent, Aethelbert, in A.D,. 616, compensated a man for the loss of his fingers or thumb. *(Barbara Seuling, in You Can’t Sneeze with Your Eyes Open, p. 8)***

**Old ditty called “The Bear Went Over the Mountain” is still sung around campfires. Novelist Thomas B. Costain said the tune was the first marching song of The Crusades. Richard the Lionhearted heard it in the last decade of the 12th century. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Earlier than you thought:**

**Two-piece bathing suit – first in 15th century**

**Insurance policy – first in 3000 B.C.**

**Medical degree -- first in 3000 B.C.**

**Drugstore – first in 754 A.D.**

**Drug Catalog – first in 2000 B.C. *(World Features Syndicate)***

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Frozen into the ice of Antarctica are numerous 1,000-year-old fish. *(L. M. Boyd)*

**Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer, a curator at the East London Museum in South Africa, spied an unusual fish when combing trawler captain Hendrick Goosen’s catch for specimens December 22, 1938. Five-feet long, 127 pounds, with fins that look like limbs, the find is determined to be a coelacanth, a fish previously known only from fossils and presumed extinct for 65 million years. Coelacanths have a hinged skull and an electrosensory organ unknown in other living fish. Now endangered, they are most often found in the Indian Ocean at depths of more than 300 feet. *(Alison McLean, in Smithsonian magazine)***

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**“Here Comes the Bride,” from Richard Wagner’s 1850 opera Lohengrin, was first used as a wedding march during the Civil War. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 253)***

**Honey won’t spoil, due to its high sugar content, which bacteria and fungi can’t tolerate. *(Don Voorhees, in The Essential Book of Useless Information, p. 241)***

**One of the few jingles that has remained in continuous use for over 50 years is Roto-Rooster’s “Away go troubles down the drain.” It was first performed by Tom C. Fouts, who was better known to many listeners as Captain Stubby. The Captain and his Buccaneers were regulars in WLS Radio’s National Barn Dance. Fouts also provided the TV voice of the Jolly Green Giant’s tiny sidekick, Little Sprout. *(Lynne Patrice, in Tidbits)***

**In the lesser Sundas of eastern Indonesia is Komodo Island where 3,000 of those giant lizards called Komodo dragons have outlived their dinosaur relatives by millions of years. About 1,000 village people live there, too. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Pioneer women in Blue Rapids, Kansas, stocked the Ladies Library in 1874 with 143 books. The next year, they built the present building, making the Blue Rapids Public Library the oldest continuously operating library in its original building west of the Mississippi River. *(American Profile magazine)***

**Do you remember this nursery rhyme from your childhood? “Mary had a little lamb / its fleece was white as snow / and everywhere that Mary went / the lamb was sure to go.” There really was a Mary and a little lamb. Mary was Mary Sawyer of Sterling, Mass. According to Ruth Hopfmann of the Sterling Historical Society, the story of Mary and her lamb dates back to 1816 when Mary’s lamb followed her to school one day. Mary hid the lamb under her desk. All went well until Mary was called to the front of the class for a recitation. The lamb again followed and was banished to a nearby shed until dismissal. Visiting the school that day was young John Roulstone, who commemorated Mary’s adventure in three verses. Fourteen years later, Sara Josepha Hale, a magazine editor, included Roulstone’s poem in a booklet of poetry and added several verses of her own. Fleece from the lamb, it is said, was used to knit two pairs of stockings. Those stockings were unraveled by Mary Sawyer herself in 1883 when, in a fund-raising project aimed at saving Boston’s Old South Church, she sold cards wrapped with the yarn and telling the story of the verse. Today Mary and her lamb live on, not only in the verse but in a statue of the two that stands in the town common. *(Three Minutes a Day, Volume 27, Christopher Books)***

**Mules go back so far that nobody knows for sure how far. For example, Solomon’s coronation chariot was pulled by a mule. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The chambered nautilus (immortalized in poetry by Oliver Wendell Holmes), from whose ancestors the squid and the octopus evolved, has been roaming the world’s oceans for 450 million years, antedating the dinosaurs. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 124)***

**“O” is thought to be the oldest letter in the alphabet at about 3,150 years old. Ancient Syrians called the letter “o” ayin, which translates to the word “eye.” “O” is about the fourth most-commonly used letter in English printed material. As an abbreviation, it can mean oxygen, ocean, Ohio, old, or ohm. “O” is expressed in Morse code by dash-dash-dash. The 24th and final letter of the Greek alphabet is omega, which corresponds to the English letter “O” and is often used to mean “the last” of a series. *(Kathy Wolfe, in Tidbits)***

**There are olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane that were around at the time of Christ. *(Don Voorhees, in The Perfectly Useless Book of Useless Information, p. 174)***

**How long can an orange tree bear oranges? If your guess is like mine, it will be way off. It has been documented that one such tree has been producing oranges for 473 years. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The ancestor of today’s pelican appeared 30 million to 40 million years ago. Out of the more than 1.5 million birds that have existed throughout time, the pelican is one of about 9000 species that remain. *(Jack Denton Scott, in Reader’s Digest)***

**What do the Caribbeans mean by a pepperpot? Family stewpot. It’s never completely emptied, so it seasons whatever is put into it. It is sort of like the sourdough crock up north. The Caribbean pepperpot with contents is also passed along from generation to generation. (L. M. Boyd)**

**You think, at 150 or more years, giant tortoises can live a long time? Some bristlecone pine trees in the American West are more than 4000 years old, seedlings at the time the Egyptians were building the Pyramids. *(Lowell Ponte, in Reader’s Digest)***

**As a species, the platypus is 150 million years old. (Humans are about 200,000 years old.) (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 251)***

**About 3,500 years ago in South America’s Andes, the natives began cultivating potatoes. *(L. M. Boyd)***

Name: Tabaketenmut’s hallux, or big toe; made of leather and wood, it was part of a mummy from the necropolis at Thebes. Oldest? The Capua leg, which dates to 300 B.C., was known as the world’s oldest prosthesis. Tabaketenmut, the daughter of a priest, lived at least 400 years earlier. But was the hallux functional? Latest: Yes, Jacqueline Finch of the University of Manchester persuaded two right-big-toe amputees to walk around in sandals and a replica; it bore their weight and was comfortable. She says credit for the foundations of prosthetic science “should be firmly laid at the feet of the ancient Egyptians.” *(Smithsonian magazine)*

A type of puppet theater in India and Indonesia is performed at special occasions and may last all night, from sunset to sunrise. *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)*

On February 6, 1952, Queen Elizabeth II ascended to the British throne. She celebrates the 69th anniversary of this occasion today. She is the longest-serving British monarch, exceeding the 63-year reign of Queen Victoria. *(The Daily Chronicle)*

A Norwegian man who was fishing at a depth of 2,600 feet reeled in a ratfish -- a rarely seen, bulbous-eyed species dating to 300 million years ago. Oscar Lundahl, 19, had four hooks a half mile deep in the water in search of blue halibut when he "felt something quite big" on the line and slowly brought it to the surface. "I had never seen anything like it before," he said. "It just looked weird, a bit dinosaur-like." He later pan-fried the ratfish in butter. "It is a bit like cod," he said, "but tastier." *(The Week magazine, October 4, 2019)*

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**The Sierra Redwoods have the longest lifespan on earth – 5,000 years. *(Press-Telegram, Long Beach California)***

**Many of California’s redwoods are more than 2,000 years old. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 60)***

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**St. Elmo Steak House, one of the state’s oldest restaurants, has served patrons in downtown Indianapolis, Indiana, since 1902. *(American Profile, 1904)***

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**The oldest rocks on Earth were discovered by Vic McGregor, of New Zealand, in 1966 and 1967. Working in Greenland, McGregor found rocks that were determined by atomic-dating to be 3.7 billion to 3.9 billion years old. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 330)***

**Oldest known moon rocks are older than the oldest known earth rocks. *(L. M. Boyd)***

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**Roses go back further than people. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Some chefs say how you season your food is more important than how you cook it. They point out herb seasonings go back further than fire. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**We do know that the shark’s ancestors ruled the primordial seas more than 300 million years ago. Homo sapiens, on the other hand, did not appear until about one million years ago. *(Mark Wexler)***

**The English word “soup” comes from the Middle Ages word “sop,” which means a slice of bread over which roast drippings were poured. The first archaeological evidence of soup being consumed dates back to 6000 B.C., with the main ingredient being hippopotamus bones. *(Noel Botham, in The Amazing Book of Useless Information, p. 176)***

**Antonius Stradivarius still shares his gifts with us, even though he left this world in 1737. On concert stages all over the world, bows are drawn across the strings of Stradivari instruments, made so long ago, still producing tones of great beauty and eloquence. Even today he participates in many artists' peak performances. *(Delia Sellers, in Abundant Living magazine)***

**What’s the oldest continuously operating tavern in the country? The Beekman Arms, Rhinebeck, New York. Pouring since 1766. *(L. M. Boyd)***

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**Earth’s longest-lived organism is the tree. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**90 million years: The age of a species of tree, thought to have been extinct, that was found growing in Australia in 1994. A young specimen of the Wollemi (WALL-um-eye) Pine is being housed in the U.S. Botanic Garden in Washington, D.C., in an effort to preserve the species.**

**100: The approximate number of adult trees that exist in the wild, all of them in Wollemi National Park in Australia’s Blue Mountains. The trees’ exact location has been kept secret to protect them. (Scripps Howard News Service, as it appeared in the Rocky Mountain News, February 14, 2005)**

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**Turtles go back further than dinosaurs. *(L. M. Boyd)***

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**The vending machine has been around since the time of Christ. The first vending machine was a coin-operated holy water dispenser invented by the Greek scientist, Hero, in the first century B.C. *(Paul Stirling Hagerman, in It’s a Weird World, p. 9)***

**A coin-operated vending machine dispensed holy water 2,000 years ago (a few drops for five drachmas). *(Reader’s Digest)***

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**What is 200 in 1992?**

**1. Tomato ketchup**

**2. New York Stock Exchange**

**3. U.S. Mint**

**4 The White House. *(The Old Farmer's 1992 Almanac)***

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