**Obstacles**

**Before lawn mowers, grazing sheep often kept golf courses trim. One course in Florida tried using goats, but it didn’t work – alligators ate them. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 244)***

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*During the **American Revolution**, more inhabitants of the American colonies fought for the British than for the Continental Army. (David Louis, in Fascinating Facts , p. 175)**

**As Americans return to air travel, the Federal Aviation Administration has received more than 1,300 reports of passenger disturbances since February -- about the same number of passengers subject to enforcement action over the previous 10 years. The incidents have "overwhelmingly" involved passengers who refused to wear masks, some of whom attacked flight attendants and other passengers. *(The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, May 21, 2021)***

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*Galactic turmoil ahead: The Milky Way and its closest neighbor, the Andromeda galaxy, are on course for “a head-on collision,” astronomer Roeland van der Marel of the Space Telescope Science Institute tells ScienceDaily.com. But no need for precautions – the crash won’t happen for another 4 billion years. Researchers have long known that Andromeda, currently some 2.5 million light-years away, is moving toward us at 250,000 miles per hour. Now NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope’s precise measures of the galaxy’s motion show it heading right for the Milky Way. The meeting will be more of a merger than a crash: Since galaxies are mostly empty space, with stars separated by light-years, astronomers say it’s unlikely that any stars or planets will collide. The mash-up of gas and dust from the two systems, however, could give birth to new stars. Any earthlings still around by then would see more stars in the sky. But our solar system will likely remain intact. (The Week magazine, June 22, 2012)**

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**Researchers and astronauts testified last week before a Senate subcommittee about the potential threat of large asteroids striking the Earth. Among the testimony: 10% - The chance in this lifetime that a 60-meter asteroid will strike some part of Earth; 10 megatons of energy would be generated by the impact. 700 Hiroshima-sized bombs blasted simultaneously: The amount of damage such an impact could do. *(Scripps Howard News Service)***

**Hazardous asteroids: Look out below: NASA has doubled its estimate of how many asteroids are on paths that could put them on a collision course with Earth. Extrapolating from new data from the Wide-Field Infrared Survey Explorer (WISE) satellite telescope, researchers have estimated that 4,700 asteroids qualify as “potentially dangerous,” meaning that they are at least 330 feet in diameter – big enough to pass through our atmosphere and cause catastrophic damage – and orbiting within 5 million miles of our planet. Of those, twice as many as previously thought are in “low-inclination orbits” pitched like our own, meaning that they “make close approaches to the earth more often,” lead researcher Amy Mainzer tells New Scientist. Only about 30 percent of the close-flying asteroids have been located, but the search continues: Scientists will need to spot them at least “20 to 30 years before a potential impact” in order to “have time to deflect them,” Mainzer says. The good news is that the closer asteroids are to the earth, the easier they are to explore and possibly mine for valuable minerals. NASA hopes to land astronauts on an asteroid by 2025. *(The Week magazine, June 8, 2012)***

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# In 1911, Bobby Beach broke nearly all the bones in his body after surviving a barrel ride over Niagara Falls. Some time later in New Zealand, he slipped on a banana and died from the fall. *(Noel Botham, in The Book of Useless Information, p. 151)*

**As if being hammered daily in the press weren’t bad enough, Goldman Sachs is now dealing with a new scourge: bedbugs. Employees at the investment bank’s Jersey City office tower had to summon exterminators because bedbugs had infested rugs, chairs, and even walls. *(ABCNews.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, July 2-9, 2010)***

**Birds and aircraft collided more than 10,000 times last year, with about 60 planes and helicopters suffering serious damage, and eight people dying. “Birds and planes are fighting for airspace, and it’s getting increasingly crowded,” said Richard Dolbeer, an expert on bird-plane collisions. *(Associated Press, as it appeared in The Week magazine, January 22, 2010)***

**On September 9, 1942, the first bombing of World War II on continental U.S. soil took place at Mt. Emily, Oregon. Japanese bombers attempted to start a major forest fire, but the effort was not successful. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

**America’s most dangerous occupation is that of coal miner. He’s faced with dangers of explosions, rock falls, and black-lung disease. He earns every cent he gets. *(Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia)***

**Colgate faced a big obstacle marketing toothpaste in Spanish-speaking countries. Colgate translates into the command “go hang yourself.” *(Noel Botham, in The Book of Useless Information, p. 111)***

**On February 10, 2009, for the first time, a hypervelocity collision occurred between two satellites (Cosmos 2251 and Iridium 33). They were at an altitude of 490 miles and the impact speed was about 26,000 mph. The collision created a cloud of debris that is sometimes a hazard to other satellites. *(The Daily Chronicle)***

**The Continental Army, under General George Washington, spent the winter of 1779-80 at Jockey Hollow, near Morristown, New Jersey. This was the coldest winter in recorded history. While the winter spent at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, was milder, the wet conditions at this encampment led to the deaths of two thousand men from disease. *(Don Voorhees, in The Indispensable Book of Useless Information, p. 191)***

**Almost every county in the United States has been under the ocean at least once in the past 400 million years. (Noel Vietmeyer, in Reader's Digest)**

**A 66-foot-long dock from Misawa, Japan, sucked out to sea by the March 2011 tsunami, washed ashore near Newport, Oregon, last week. Japanese scientists estimate that 1.5 million tons of debris from the tsunami is floating in the Pacific, and it has begun showing up on U.S. shores. *(Los Angeles Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 22, 2012)***

**In simpler times, we didn’t need to worry so much about disasters on the domestic front. But for reasons no one fully understands, times have become more dangerous. It is estimated that of the 20 costliest catastrophes in the world over the past four decades, half have occurred in the past decade alone – and no less than 13 of the world’s total have been in the United States. It is estimated that 91% of Americans now live in places with moderate-to-high risk of a natural disaster or terrorist attack. (David Gergen, in Parade magazine, August 15, 2010)**

### Attila the Hun was a ****dwarf****. Pepin the Short, Aesop, Gregory of Tours, Charles III of Naples, and the Pasha Hussain were all less than 3 1/2 feet tall. (David Louis, in Fascinating Facts , p. 120)

### Has the ****earth**** been hit in this century by anything from outer space that was big enough to destroy a whole city? Twice, it has. In 1908 and in 1947. By curious luck, both huge chunks landed in isolated areas of Siberia, hurting nobody. (Boyd's Curiosity Shop, p. 185)

**It will take years and $1 billion to cart away the broken blocks, twisted metal, and shards of concrete of the 245,000 ruined structures from January’s earthquake in Haiti. There’s enough rubble to fill the Louisiana Superdome 17 times. *(The Washington Post, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 19, 2010)***

**Remember, easy street usually has a dead end. *(Reminisce Extra magazine)***

### The ****parents**** of Dwight D. Eisenhower, who rose to become one of the few five-star generals in U.S. history, were pacifists. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 256)

**WHY ENGLISH ISN’T EASY:**

* **The bandage was wound around the wound.**
* **The farm was used to produce produce.**
* **The dump was so full it had to refuse more refuse.**
* **A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.**
* **I did not object to the object.**
* **The insurance was invalid for the invalid.**
* **They were too close to the door to close it.**
* **The wind was too strong to wind the sail.**
* **Upon seeing the tear in the painting, I shed a tear.**
* **I had to subject the subject to a series of tests. *(The American Legion magazine)***

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*Caesar and Napoleon were both epileptics. *(Russ Edwards & Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Digest, p. 103)***

**Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, and Dostoyevsky were all **epileptics**. (David Louis, in Fascinating Facts, p. 120)**

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*A fellow was up to his ears in debt. His car wouldn’t run. His mother-in-law moved in. He lost his job. And when he phoned Dial-a-Prayer, he was put on hold. *(Leslie B. & Bernice Flynn, in Humorous Incidents and Quips for Church Publications, p. 57)***

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**$20 billion: The possible cost to the nation in lost productivity because of the flu vaccine shortage – almost twice as much as in a typical year. The average worker misses about 1.5 days a year because of the flu, said David Cutler, a health economist at Harvard. That absenteeism rate could double because of scant flu vaccine supplies. *(Associates Press, as it appeared in Rocky Mountain News, October 22, 2004)***

**Medicos now say a flu virus can mutate enough in 15 weeks to invalidate a vaccine for it. *(L. M. Boyd)***

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**Report is that two out of three professional football players finally leave the game with permanent injuries. Lifelong trick knees and the like. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Does India have golf courses? Some. Different set of hazards there. A local bird, the kite, flies off with golf balls. So the job of the caddie is to run yelling and arm-waving after the driven ball to cover it with a red cloth before the kite gets it. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**In the aging process, sagging skin and organs, varicose veins, arthritis and failing hearts all result at least partly from the losing battle against gravity. *(Rocky Mountain News)***

**In 1789, Dr. Guillotin merely proposed the machine that bears his name, and he never made a working model. In fact, he was opposed to the death penalty. The first working model was made by his assistant years laer. When the machine attained infamy during the French Revolution, Dr. Guillotin protested its use and went to his grave claiming that the machine was unjustly named after him. *(Noel Botham, in The Best Book of Useless Information Ever, p. 98)***

**A fierce gust of wind blew forty-five-year-old Vittorio Luise’s car into a river near Naples, Italy, in 1980. He managed to break a window, climb out, and swim to shore, where a tree blew over and killed him. *(Noel Botham, in The Book of Useless Information, p. 151)***

**The masterpiece Messiah was written when Handel was debt-ridden,**

**spiritless, and failing in health. His creditors were threatening to throw him in jail. *(Glenn Van Ekeren, in The Speaker’s Sourcebook, p. 154)***

**Haydn’s wife didn’t like his music; made table mats of his compositions.**

***(World Features Syndicate)***

**Am told just high humidity, nothing more, can swell your finger enough to make your ring too tight. *(L. M. Boyd)***

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**The Atlantic hurricane season produced 30 named storms, the most in history. Twelve of them made landfall -- beating a record of nine that's held since 1916 -- and 10 of them hit in September, a record for a single month. There were six major hurricanes of Category 3 or above. *(Houston Chronicle, ass it appeared in The Week magazine, December 11, 2020)***

**There have been as many as four hurricanes at the same time in the Atlantic Ocean. *(Don Voorhees, in The Super Book of Useless Information, p. 14)***

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**Influenza caused more than twenty million deaths in 1918. More than half a million people died as a result of the Spanish influenza epidemic. *(Noel Botham, in The Book of Useless Information, p. 145 & 146)***

**Researchers estimate that there are fifty thousand invasive (non-native) species of life in the United States. *(Don Voorhees, in The Indispensable Book of Useless Information, p. 175)***

**Because his son-in-law was late with the carriage, Thomas Jefferson had to walk to his own inauguration. *(Russ Edwards & Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Digest, p. 92)***

**A considerable number of people in this country get killed by guns that aren’t loaded and by drivers who are. *(Quoted by Calvin F. Key, in Richland, Georgia, Stewart-Webster Journal)***

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**Nearly 700,000 land mines were dug up from the banks of the Suez Canal by the Egyptians and the Israelis after their brief but bitter war in October 1973. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 257)***

**In the New York City of 1884, about 43,000 families were evicted for not paying rents. That’s in the record. New York landlords in the 1930s evicted about 17,000 tenants a month. *(L. M. Boyd)***

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**At any given time, there are 1,800 thunderstorms in progress over the Earth’s atmosphere. Lightning strikes the earth 100 times every second. (*David Louis, in Fascinating Facts, p. 183)***

**Locust Warnings: The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) warned that northwestern Africa is at risk from a massive invasion of locusts, which could have “a dramatic impact on food security in the region.” Efforts to combat the swarms with aerial spraying were being launched near the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, while locusts were advancing unchecked in Niger. Waves of the ravenous insects are expected to arrive in Algeria, northern Mauritania and the Western Sahara within the next few weeks. Last month, FAO warned that areas from Saudi Arabia to Syria were at risk from locusts spreading out of northeastern Africa. *(Steve Newman, in Daily Camera, March 26, 2004)***

### ****Lord Byron****, though considered one of the most dashing and attractive men of his time, was fat and had a club foot. (David Louis, in Fascinating Facts , p. 120)

### Washington state has declared a state of emergency since an outbreak of the measles virus hit Clark County, with at least 34 cases of highly infectious and sometimes fatal viral illness. Washington is one of 18 states that permit parents to opt their children out of mandatory measles vaccines for philosophical reasons. In Clark County, 7.9 percent of students got exemptions from vaccination last year. (Vox.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, February 8, 2019)

**Good week for: Near misses, after NASA revealed that a large meteor exploded in the atmosphere in December, releasing 10 times as much energy as the Hiroshima atomic bomb. The explosion occurred over the remote Bering Sea, which is why no one noticed earlier. *(The Week magazine, March 29, 2019)***

**We are vastly, ridiculously, hopelessly, humblingly outnumbered: For every one human cell, there are an estimated 10 single-cell microbes in us or on us, at least 100 trillion in all, nestled in our guts and in our urogenital tracts, lying on our skin and happily ensconced in our mouths and noses – entire civilizations of fungi and protozoa and (mostly) bacteria that eat and breathe, evolve and reproduce and die. The microbes in our body – especially some of the 10,000 or so species of bacteria in and on us – have indeed been implicated in disorders as diverse as obesity and Crohn’s, and also in asthma, heart disease, sinusitis, and possibly even mood disorders. *(Sharon Begley, in The Saturday Evening Post)***

**Napoleon’s hemorrhoids were a factor in his defeat at Waterloo. They kept him from being able to survey the battlefield on horseback. *(Russ Edwards & Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Digest, p. 103)***

### **In the past 50 years, more than 300 pathogens have emerged or re-emerged, including ZIKA and yellow fever. (The Week magazine, March 6, 2020)**

**Polio spreads in Africa: The World Health Organization issued a warning that central and western parts of Africa are on the brink of the largest polio outbreak in recent years. The warning comes as the disease has spread rapidly across the continent from Nigeria to Sudan’s troubled Darfur region. WHO fears that thousands of African children could be paralyzed if a major epidemic takes hold in the autumn “high season” for polio. Many people in the Nigerian source region for the current outbreak refused to be inoculated several months ago after radical Islamic preachers accused the U.S. of lacing the vaccine being administered there with hormones designed to render African girls infertile. *(Steve Newman, in Rocky Mountain News, June 28, 2004)***

**Man spews nearly a billion tons of pollutants into the Earth’s atmospheric envelope every year. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 331)***

**President John Tyler was so poor after leaving office that he was unable to pay his bills until he sold his corn crop. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Wise Up!, p. 257)***

**Hrand Araklein, a Brink’s car guard, was killed when $50,000 worth of quarters fell on and crushed him. *(Noel Botham, in The Book of Useless Information, p. 151)***

**Queen Elizabeth the First of England was not likely to win a beauty pageant. She wore heavy horn-rimmed glasses, had false teeth, and was totally blind. *(Varmarie Carson, in Tidbits)***

**Babe Ruth first played baseball as a left-handed catcher with a right-handed glove. *(L. M. Boyd)***

### ****Saint Francis****, who founded the Franciscan religious order in 1209, had no theological training. He was a layman, born rich. But when he gave away his possessions and embarked on a career of charity and good deeds, his father disowned him. (Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts, p. 56)

**Over 5,400 satellites are currently in orbit, according to the Union of Concerned Scientists. That figure is projected to rise dramatically as SpaceX works expeditiously to expand Starlink – its constellation of satellites – with frequent launches that border on weekly. The satellite communications corporation plans to build a low Earth orbit (LEO) mega-constellation containing 42,000 satellites to achieve global high-speed internet and phone services. “Mega-constellations pose a significant risk to on-orbit collisions,” adds Jonathan Rasmussen, an aerospace engineer who has studied the risk factors associated with orbital debris. As many as 58,000 new satellites are expected to be launched into space by 2030, according to The Aerospace Corporation, a nonprofit that works with government, businesses and academia on space-related defense issues. And while that’s good news for space exploration and aerospace innovation, the trend could infringe upon the sustainability and viability of future space operations. *(Amiah Taylor, in Discover magazine, September/October, 2023)***

**Instruments record some half-million seismic or micro-seismic disturbances of earth each year. One hundred thousand are felt and one thousand cause damage. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 333)***

**Attila the Hun was a dwarf. Pepin the Short, Aesop, Gregory of Tours, Charles III of Naples, and the Pasha Hussain were all shorter than three and a half feet tall. *(Noel Botham, in The Book of Useless Information, p. 17)***

**Boaters along the Illinois, Missouri and Mississippi rivers have reported dislocated jaws, facial cuts, broken ribs and serious bruises. The boaters are being whacked by silver carp, an import from Asia. The carp have a tendency to shoot out of the water when disturbed by passing motorboats. And they pack quite a wallop. The silver carp can grow to more than 50 pounds. They have exploded in portions of the Mississippi and its tributaries since they escaped from Southern fish farms in the 1980s. *(Minneapolis-St. Paul Star Tribune)***

**The time spent deleting spam emails costs U.S. businesses about $10 billion annually. *(Noel Botham, in The Best Book of Useless Information Ever, p. 57)***

**$8.1 billion: The size of the state deficit that California’s Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger faces this year. *(Rocky Mountain News, January 6, 2005)***

**1812 Overture composer Tchaikovsky suffered from nervous disorders, hallucinations and a morbid fear that his head would roll off his shoulders while conducting the orchestra. *(Russ Edwards & Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Digest, p. 63)***

**There are about 16 million thunderstorms a year throughout the world. About 1,800 storms rage at any moment day or night. *(The Usborne Book of Facts and Lists, p. 110)***

### ****Mark Twain**** lost around half a million dollars on a wide range of inventions that included steam generators and marine telegraphs. (Wallechinsky/Wallace)

**While studying theater at Pasadena Playhouse, Gene Hackman and a classmate were voted Least Likely to Succeed. The classmate was Dustin Hoffman. *(Bob Fenster, in They Did What!?, p. 121)***

**Good week for: Face mask companies, after more smoke from 488 still-active Canadian wildfires caused air quality alerts in 20 states from Minnesota down to Georgia. *(The Week magazine July 7 / July 14, 2023)***

**Woodrow Wilson didn't learn to read until he was nine. He saw words backwards (dyslexic). (National Speaker's Association newsletter)

What kind of typewriter did the American writer Thomas Wolfe use? He didn’t. He wrote in longhand. Wolfe was so uncoordinated, he couldn’t manipulate a typewriter. In fact, he couldn’t even drive a car. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**While the Wright brothers were inventing their plane, scientific studies**

**were undertaken to demonstrate that a body heavier than air could not possibly fly. *(Mark Fisher & Marc Allen, in How To Think Like A Millionaire, p. 79)***

**As the number of X-rays and CAT scans performed on Americans has soared, these imaging tests now are responsible for about 50 percent of the radiation Americans are exposed to – up from 15 percent in 1980. *(The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 11, 2011)***

**As an infant, Catherine Zeta-Jones contracted a virus which caused difficulty breathing, and has a tracheotomy scar. *(2002 - People Almanac, p. 484)***