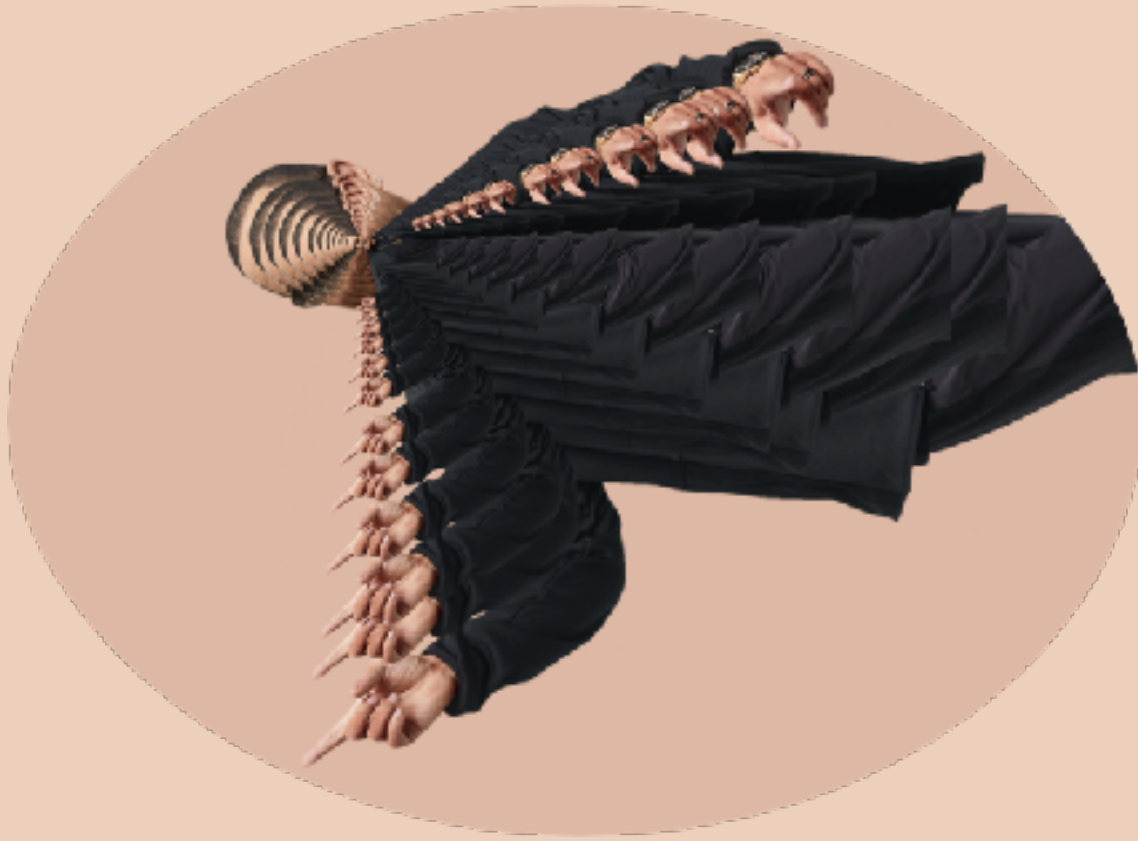


# *fine print*

MAGAZINE

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*eyewitness reporting*

# A PHENOMENON



I was driving a remote stretch of Highway 106 at dawn on leap day 2008 in my aunt's violet diesel Volkswagen coupe when they appeared: four businessmen in traditional Scottish kilts walking down an invisible staircase from the sky, right to the side of my car.

They opened the doors and sat down (the three in the back seat fused their bodies together in order to fit). They didn't buckle their seatbelts but they did sing an a cappella version of *Dreamweaver* with commendable pitch. The men were brisk and moony, and their heads were unnaturally bulbous. I also observed that their teeth were made of clear glass, allowing me to

see speakers poking up from the back of their mouths.

The mysterious men gestured to me with their hands but I couldn't figure what they were trying to communicate, so they instead caused words to form in the air in front of the car, glittering and golden and rippling in the breeze: *DRIVE US SOUTH TO THE OUTLET MALL.*

I must have upset them with the delay because one of the men rolled his eyes so hard that they popped clean out of his face. Then he rolled his eyes again, but this time down the road in the direction of the Springdale outlets.

I tried to make small talk on the way but the businessmen were absolutely fixated on a dandelion they had picked up before they got into the car. I told them the name of the flower

and one of the men screamed, opened his door, jumped out of the Volkswagen and exploded into 117,320 pieces when he hit the pavement. The remaining three covered their ears for the rest of the drive.

When we arrived at the Springdale outlets it was 6:14 AM. I noticed my cousin Craig pulling up with more businessmen. He was somehow also driving my aunt's violet Volkswagen coupe. I waved to him but he just frowned and flipped me off.

The three men with me in the Volkswagen leaned out of the car windows and made booing sounds from their mouth-speakers. One of the men handed me a piece of paper that said the other men were the bad-boys of the group. But it was getting difficult for me to tell so many of the businessmen apart, because their

facial features constantly morphed into new likenesses.

I should mention that I drank three Red Bulls before getting in my aunt's diesel Volkswagen coupe that morning. So by the time we arrived at the mall, someone had peed my pants.

As we got out of the coupe, we were surrounded by woodland creatures. Badgers, deer, and beavers pushed their noses to the front pockets of the businessmen's kits while birds circled overhead carrying mice and squirrels in their talons. Bugs were also crowding around the men and climbing into their front pockets — which somehow didn't fill up, even after huge numbers of spiders, ants, beetles, moths, earwigs, slugs, ladybugs, and craneflies had crawled inside. The smell of so many wild animals in one place was disgusting.

We ran into a nearby Sheri's diner. When I closed the door behind me, it disappeared into a vast expanse which extended impossibly into every direction. There were thousands of tables and booths, so it took several minutes of walking to get to our table. The place had an unappetizing smell, like vegetable oil and old cardboard, which is probably normal for any chain restaurant but I think it's still relevant to my account of these extraordinary events.

When we finally sat down, the businessmen pulled out folders of documents and historical photographs and began arguing with each other in some other language. Looking at the papers, it was clear that the men were plotting a coup of Mussolini's Italy, in fascist World War II times. *Mussolini is dead, his corpse was dragged through the streets in a parade*, I told them. And they replied, *Proprio*


*come previsto.*

Then our waiter arrived and insisted on telling us about every menu item in excruciating detail. By page three, *Burritos*, it became clear that I would die of starvation.

I got up and found my cousin at the bar watching a flatscreen TV. He kept shushing me so he could hear the Rustler's Steak House ad. I asked him what game was on and he told me that he *didn't have the faintest, daintiest, foggiest, wispiest, nor slightest idea* what I was talking about. Then he turned back to the screen and said, *The Brooklyn Dodgers are playing Sister Mary Immaculate Catholic Girl's School.*

I decided that it was time for me to leave but since the restaurant was unfortunately infinite, I had to search around for some kind of exit. Eventually I found a hatch on the

floor which opened into a dark hole. I jumped in and landed right back in the driver's seat of the Volkswagen. Somehow the businessmen were already in the diesel coupe along with me, but we weren't on Highway 106. We were flying past galaxies in deep space on the way to their home planet (according to the road signs on the cosmic superhighway). I wanted to stop and check out some of the roadside attractions but the businessmen were stern about keeping the car moving. All of my FM radio presets were useless so we had to ride in silence.

We found a parking space on their planet and paid for parking. After looking around for a while I concluded that their planet was unremarkable. Not much to say about anything in and around the place. We went there and then I just drove home afterward. 

*travel department*

# CUSTOMS QUESTIONNAIRE

## TRAVEL INFORMATION

1. Why are you visiting our country? Isn't there somewhere else you can go? Do you need help finding some other destination for your stupid vacation?
2. Please list all addresses where you will be staying overnight and indicate whether you are a heavy sleeper.
3. Can you refrain from criticizing our political leadership, especially our recently-installed glorious leader? Because he's not fond of hearing people's opinions.
4. Can you touch your big toe to your belly button? IF YES: Why?
5. Have you ever thought about the fact that we're all just chemicals reacting in a complex state of self-perpetuation?
6. Do you intend to harm any of our citizens during your stay (for reasons other than love or heart-break)?
7. Rate your proficiency with a clarinet on a scale from 1-10.
8. Use the space below to share a state or trade secret from your homeland.
9. How's your brother these days? We worry, you know.
10. Do you intend to spread any ideas (particularly liberal ones) during your stay?
11. Will the owner of a black

Hummer H3 please report to the airport's parking lot attendant? Your headlights are on so he smashed them out for you.

### WILDLIVE AND ECOLOGY

12. Are you carrying any predatory bullfrogs in your luggage? Do you have diseased rats clinging to your jacket? How about one of those freaky giant wasps? Is there a bird being smuggled in your mouth?
13. Can you imagine a sign that says *Keep Off Grass*?
14. Have you considered cultivating a garden of invasive plants and fungi in our pristine soil? If yes, we're requesting that you go ahead and not do that.
15. Explain in detail what you would do if you encountered a fully-

dressed raccoon that stood up on its back legs and spoke to you.

16. How do you think we should eradicate our rapidly-growing pigeon population?
17. Do you climb trees, scale shrubs, or ascend plants of other varieties?
18. List seven personality differences between an Albanian Blacknose Weasel and a common Ermin.

### HEALTH

19. Have you been in contact with a demon-possessed person in the last seven days?
20. You aren't coughing are you? Because if you're coughing, that's a problem.
21. Are you smuggling drugs? Come

on, you can tell us. Hey, it's ok! We already know you're holding. Just have a quick chat with our friendly law-enforcement agents and spend a little time in some of our justice system's incredible facilities.

22. Do you have an aspirin you can spare? My head is killing me today.
23. Since laugh tracks have been almost entirely eliminated from television, how do people know when the jokes are happening?
24. Where do you stand on the issue of orthopedic footwear?
25. Is love all the world needs today, or is that more of 1960s solution?
26. Are you on a fad diet? IF YES: can you just avoid all restaurants? ■■■

*legal desk*

# THIS IS MY LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

**F**amily and loved ones:  
I am, regrettably, dead. My lawyer, who is now reading this document with bravado and charm [*that's a cue, Charles*], has been directed to dispense my vast fortune — but not before reading a preamble that I've composed as an ode to my legacy and guiding philosophies.

I hope that my passing is met with temporary discomfort which fades into optimism about the potential of your own lives. Even though you will never reach the heights of my

greatness, you can still end your pitiful laziness and make something of yourselves!

I have lived a rich life, and I only ask that you remember me fondly. So it goes without saying that you should try not to think about what happened at the Greek restaurant in 2011 and instead turn your thoughts to the awards ceremony that preceded it.

As I reflect on my life, my accomplishments, my relationships, my fully loaded TV-internet-phone

package, I can't help but wonder if there's more to life. From the outside, it probably looks like I have it all: money, companionship, hundreds of channels, screaming fast download speeds, and free long distance calls throughout the continental US ... but why do I feel like something is missing? I should have bought a boat.

*[Charles, have someone wake Uncle Harvey, we're getting into bequeathments now.]*

I leave my children fifty thousand dollars each, paid in coins and small



denomination bills for your convenience. Even if I made a point to never say it, I really did love a couple of you, but not the ones you'd expect.

To Greg, my estranged former business partner, I leave my sincerest condolences for the loss of your livelihood after our business merger with the Tickman Group in which you were fired and publicly humiliated. I deeply regret certain aspects of that episode.

As part of my contract with the Tickman Group, I hereby leave my vacation home to the board of directors for their rest and rejuvenation needs. And to the Tickman Charitable Trust, I endow two million dollars to support its work to end American football.

My lovely wife Tracy — my guiding

star, my pickled plum, my *shumsie-wumsie widdle wuver pie* — what can I possibly give as a final act of affection and devotion? The green stapler at my desk will do nicely. *[Throw the stapler at her, Charles.]*

As many of you know, collecting [redacted] was my life's passion. My vast storage unit is a catalogue of rare and valuable [redacted]s which should only be handled by a true [redacted] aficionado. Out of respect for the [redacted] community, I have directed the fire department to conduct a controlled burn of the facility. This will exponentially raise the value of other [redacted] collections and keep the grubby, ignorant hands of my family and business associates off all of the fragile [redacted]s. In the end, it's my [redacted] community that I truly valued. To them, I wasn't some cash cow to beg for a handout (as I was to

all of you scoundrels), I was a respected [redacted] expert among equals.

To CenturyLink, my communication utilities provider, I request that my Supreme Home Connection Package (Fiber Optic + Cable TV + Home Phone + C-Link DVR™ + Email Bundle) be extended in perpetuity for all future owners of my home. To ensure continuous service, I have prepaid for two hundred fifty years of coverage at the current rate of \$189 per month.

During my memorial service, I require that Charles deliver a eulogy, and that his statement shall consist of just one word: *Plethora*. At which point Tracy shall stand and reply, *That means a lot*. Then everyone is required to laugh heartily.

Now leave my house immediately. ■

*factoids & truisms*

# TODAY IN HISTORY

PART VI: NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

## 1 NOVEMBER 2022

The first entry of volume six of the groundbreaking *Today in History* factoid series was published.

## 2 NOVEMBER 1667

ISAAC NEWTON ate the apple that invented gravity.

## 3 NOVEMBER 1993

Detroit-area rapper MARSHALL MATHERS developed his stage name, *Slim Shady*, while eating a bag of chocolate candies that he stole from a small child.

## 4 NOVEMBER 1999

The first podcast came out and everybody listened to it because there weren't any other options yet.

## 5 NOVEMBER 2004

STAN EGRESS of Ontario Steel Corp. was promoted to Regional SVP of Operations (North America) after six years of commendable performance as District Operations Super Intendant. He was honored with a small ceremony at a nearby Applebee's.

## 6 NOVEMBER 21,943 BCE

The Eternal Flame of Light in the Highest Temple was extinguished by the dark lord GHALOSH, ushering in the Millennium of Corruption.

## 7 NOVEMBER 2022

Out of nowhere, my wife grilled me about girlfriends I had as a teenager.



**19 NOVEMBER 1826**

Amish people officially decided to call everybody outside their little club *English* even though they're fully aware that there are more nationalities than just the one.

**20 NOVEMBER 1952**

The invention of the in-home kitchen finally made it possible for people to cook their own meals.

**21 NOVEMBER 2022**

Several strangers watched me intently throughout my daily activities — including at the grocery store where a man in sunglasses followed me out to the parking lot.

**AH SHIT IT'S THE 22ND ALREADY?**

Let's just say that maybe CLEOPATRA did something good today.

**23 NOVEMBER 2010**

Apple invented the iPad to entertain small children so their parents could have a moment to poop or do the dishes.

**24 NOVEMBER STARDATE 46,175**

XHEP ZQQOE wins the prestigious Quasar Prize for its beautiful and sweet smelling gland tendrils.





**6 DECEMBER 2018**

I earned \$300 just by filling out a short questionnaire and uploading some personal documents! Reach out for more info.

**7 DECEMBER 1845**

The Irish potato famine began when Ireland's king signed an unfair trade agreement with German wheat producers.

**8 DECEMBER 1980**

JOHN LENNON enjoyed his favorite breakfast (a plain stale bagel with moldy cream cheese) before going outside and getting shot dead by Mark David Chapman.

**9 DECEMBER 8812 BCE**

The first storm happened and everybody was super confused because they had never seen one before (because it was the very first storm to ever happen), so yeah, it's safe to say that everybody was weirded out by the whole thing — they'd never seen a storm before that because there weren't any until then. Yep, it was the very first one so you'd better believe people were like, *huh?*

**10 DECEMBER 1270**

THOMAS AQUINAS wrote his most famous line of marketing

copy: *YOU DEMAND IT, WE SUPPLY IT™*. (Doing philosophy was more of a side-thing but Aquinas' advertising job paid the bills.)

**11 DECEMBER 2022**

My car was hit by an unmarked, windowless van at Sharpe Avenue and 19th Street. Luckily a police offer was passing by at the same time so he helped me and the five large gentlemen from the van sort out the situation and go our separate ways.









*monologues*

# HISTORICAL SOCIETY TOUR

**W**elcome to the Arbor Heights Historical Society Museum. Today I'm your guide to the rich history of this town and its people. I hope you'll walk away informed and inspired by the proud, hardworking community that took what little they had and made this special place what is today.

Let's begin with the earliest days here in Arbor Heights. Many people don't know that our first settlers had to beat the odds to create a comfortable life in this once-rugged territory. It was

Thompson Harper and his wife Prudence that were the first to farm these rolling, rocky hills. The Thompson farm started at Cottage Creek and stretched all the way to Bingham's Gulch! And as the gathering of townfolk around the Harper farm began to grow and blossom, the Harper family were all hanged for practicing witchcraft. It was a simpler time.

The town square of Arbor Heights used to center on our humble general store, which was owned and operated

by Grayson Verge. His quaint family shop eventually grew into a large enterprise of stores throughout the region, until a US Marshall put Mr. Verge to death by firing squad for committing treason.

And right out front of Verge's general store was Bonkers, the Arbor Heights donkey! Travelers from as far as Rouge Valley would come to see Bonkers presiding over this community with his charming spirit. Many people will tell you that it was Bonkers who really put Arbor

Heights on the map — until the county veterinarian determined that Bonkers was near-sighted and thus not an effective work animal. Bonkers was euthanized by catapult from the peak of Mount Scriffon after his veterinary examination.

Our first house of prayer was the Chapel of the Virgin Mary, where Father Sullivan hosted daily mass until he was stoned to death by local Lutherans for promoting the papacy.

While most early settlers to the valley were humble farmers, we also have had our fair share of successful entrepreneurs. Before the highways were paved for automobiles, the Carver family made their fortune running a rail company. The old Carver Mansion still stands just outside of town. Unfortunately, the whole family was beheaded after Elizabeth Carver purchased several

provocative modern paintings for the Carver residence.

The Bozeman-VonClairens were another family of means. Their breathtaking manor was a prime example of local craftsmanship and true architectural prowess. It used to stand where the Discount Tire Store is today. Their vineyards were the pride of the west until they were razed by fire (along with the head winemaker, who was tied to a stake) after the Bozeman-VonClairens produced a poor vintage in 1831.

And if you're noticing a bit of a pattern, so were the residents of Arbor Heights in the mid-1800s. That's when our first sheriff, Thompson Flack, was hired to enforce the law fairly and justly. He helped bring in a new era of lawful civilization to the wild west. But it wasn't an easy transition, as Flack

and about a dozen of his successors were sadly killed in the line of duty in various shootouts, mobs, brawls, guillotines, hangings, and more. Eventually the town's eccentric spirit was tamed. Disagreements are *significantly* less likely to be handled with deadly force these days!

When the Graville Lake airstrip was built, we got our first view of Arbor Heights from above. They discovered what we all know today as an uncanny geometry of roads and driveways, almost as if the whole town is formed into the shape of a cherry, or maybe a rope with some sort of loop at the end? Anyway, it's another charming little detail of the region! As you go about the town, don't forget to go visit historic Main Street, where you can find our boutiques and eateries. We only ask that all interlopers vacate city limits by nightfall. 