

## April's Fools

By Dennis Payton Knight

There is in Southern California the Museum of Hoaxes, which is the source of much of the material for this essay. If you wish to go, take Interstate 5 north out of San Diego until you see giant jackalopes floating off to the right. If you end up in Los Angeles, you should turn around and head south, but the jackalopes will now be on your left. The curator will be there waiting for you, 24 hours per day, 365 days a year.

For centuries, mankind, womankind, and especially childkind, have reserved the first day of April for turning over outhouses and messing around with my shoelaces. But not even a single day should be dedicated exclusively to mirth, frivolity, and fake news, and our world continues to march through history, seriously and soberly, by the hour, pausing for no comedians.

For instance, on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1992, the respected National Public Radio scooped everyone with news of Richard Nixon's decision to run for president again, campaigning under the slogan, "I didn't do anything wrong, and I won't do it again."

In April 1985, *Sports Illustrated* reported the Mets had recruited a pitcher, Sidd Finch, who could hurl a baseball at 168 miles per hour, 65 mph faster than anyone before. Having no baseball experience, he had mastered the art of pitching in a Tibetan monastery.

Taco Bell ran ads in April, 1996, announcing it had acquired the Liberty Bell and was renaming it the Taco Liberty Bell. Questioned by reporters, White House press secretary Mike McCurry reported that the Lincoln Memorial had also been sold, and would now be known as the Ford Lincoln Mercury Memorial.

In April 1998, the publication, *New Mexicans for Science and Reason*, reported the state legislature of Alabama had voted to change the value of  $\pi$  from 3.14159 to the Biblical value of 3.0.

The morning of April 1, 1950, the front page of Norway's largest newspaper, *Aftenposten*, announced that the state-owned wine monopoly had received a large shipment of wine in barrels, but it had run out of bottles. For that day, the wine would be offered at 75% off, tax-free, providing buyers brought their own containers. Buckets, pitchers, and the like were recommended.

In 1975, Australians watching morning television learned their country would soon convert to metric time, with 100 seconds to the minute, 100 minutes to the hour, and twenty hours to the day. Furthermore, seconds would become millidays, minutes centidays, and hours decidays.

The BBC reported in April 1957 that Swiss farmers had enjoyed a mild winter and that, in the fall, they had eliminated the dreaded spaghetti weevil. Footage showed bumper crops of splendid spaghetti, peasants filling bushel baskets, picking strands hanging, *al dente*, from spaghetti trees.

Finally, *PC Magazine* led its April 1994 edition detailing a bill staggering through Congress that would make it illegal to be on the internet while drunk. The bill was numbered 040194, and the

sponsor was...wait for it...**Lirpa Sloof**.