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## Gullible's Travails, or I'll Be a Fool for You

*Cathy Dausman*

This Sunday is April 1, better known as April Fools' Day. The day has long been the province of pranksters, a time when the sly trickster is in rare form. One theory of its origin stems from a mid-1500s calendar reform.

In pre-Gregorian calendar time, New Year's was celebrated during March's Vernal Equinox. When France's Charles IX decreed New Year's was to be celebrated Jan. 1, those who kept to the old schedule and were still celebrating on April 1 were called "fools."

Today French school children chant "Poisson d'Avril" (or April Fish) when someone tapes a picture of a fish on another child's back. Lamorindans, too, have played and received their share of pranks. If you promise not to loosen the salt shakers, we'll share some with you:

Orinda resident Robin Bradley's mother put food dye in her children's milk on April Fools' Day. "You never knew what color your milk would be that morning," Bradley said.

Whittier "Whit" Porter (Moraga) took advantage of his company's music "on hold" selection and his friend's dislike of singer Neil Young. "On April first that year, I had a colleague call my friend. 'Mr. Johnson would like to speak to you about your job application. Would you hold while I transfer your call?'" The friend agreed, and spent the next 20 minutes suffering from Neil Young's Greatest Hits. "After a rousing rendition of 'Southern Man' I came on the line and said simply, 'April Fools!'" Porter said. "He wouldn't speak to me for months!"

As a child in Iceland, Erla Boren (Moraga) heard a radio station hoax. One farmer was so mad at being duped that the next year he called the station back, claiming his cow had just had a double-headed calf. The station even sent a crew to interview the man, Boren said!

Mary McCosker (Lafayette) was a die-hard Giants fan in elementary school. "My Dad woke me up on April Fools morning to tell me that the Giants had traded Willie Mays!" she said. "I was devastated until he told me it was April Fools' Day. . . . Then I was mad at him."

Cindy Petrini's mother loved her morning coffee with lots of sugar. The night before April Fools' Day, Petrini (Moraga) snuck into the kitchen and swapped out sugar for salt. "I could hardly sleep I was so excited," she said. She awoke the next morning "to very unpleasant yelling and shouting" in the kitchen. "I got in so much trouble. I now play it pretty low on April Fools' Day hoping no one gets me."

Fool Me Once...

Compiled by Cathy Dausman

The Museum of Hoaxes documents classic April Fools' jokes, including the Swiss spaghetti harvest, Sidd Finch, instant color TV, San Serriffe Island, and the left-handed Whopper: <http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/hoax/aprilfool/index>

TV's Get Smart character, Maxwell Smart, was famous for getting out of tight spots with a well-timed "Would you believe..." See if you can spot the fable among the items below. But be careful, since it's almost April Fools' there might be some trickery involved:

- The yo-yo was once manufactured by a Marx brother.
- The Big Bang Theory actually debuted in 1952
- John and Yoko Ono report having dual sex change operations.
- Great Britain creates the Serious Organized Crime Agency

Answer: all of the above are true!

- Louie Marx was a toy maker
- The Big Bang Theory itself, not the TV show
- John and Yoko's hoax (their "report") occurred in 1970
- Yes, really. It's a national police agency with its own website: [www.soca.gov.uk/](http://www.soca.gov.uk/)

Source: <http://www.historyorb.com/events/april/1?p=2>

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[back](#)

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