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

By 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 rendi-

tion 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/

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

'Going Dark' Sheds Light on Climate Change

By Sophie Braccini



Photo courtesy Sustainable Lafayette

Lafayette will lead the way to sustainability from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. March 31 with its second annual celebration of Earth Hour. Created in 2007, participants turn off all non-essential electric lights for one hour to raise awareness of (and to take action against) climate change. This is the second year non-profit organization Sustainable Lafayette has led the project locally.

"Earth Hour was created by Australia's branch of the World Wildlife Federation," said Sustainable Lafayette Board Member Linda Riebel. "In 2011, the movement grew to 135 countries. Last March, over 5,200 cities and towns (including Lafayette) turned off lights for Earth Hour or held some other creative event to honor our planet."

Residents of Lamorinda and beyond are invited to meet at the Lafayette Plaza by 8:30 p.m. (southeast corner of Moraga Rd. and Mt.

Diablo Blvd.) on March 31 before Lafayette City Council Member Brandt Andersson turns off all the plaza lights and addresses the crowd.

While working at Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory, Andersson researched using daylight instead of electric lighting, and matching lighting needs to the tasks being performed.

"I learned two things," said the council member. "First, my boss, who was usually the last one to leave on Friday night, made a habit of going around the building before he left turning out lights that were not being used. In the 30 minutes that he spent each week switching lights off, he figured he more than paid for his substantial senior UC professor's salary. Second, we monitored some church meeting rooms in Missouri a few years ago. The rooms were well lit by skylights during the day, but we also found



that as night fell, the lights stayed off (even though meetings continued) until the lighting levels were a small fraction of the lighting typically needed for a meeting. The folks in those meetings explained that as the sun went down and the light lowered, it got pretty darn dark before anyone felt the need to get up and switch on the lights. The bottom line is that if you turn off unused lights, and don't use more light than you really need, you'll save money, and a little bit of the earth as well. Earth Hour helps send that message."

Residents are encouraged to bring candles and, like last year, the fire dancers will be performing.

"This year we want to emphasize ways to save electricity," said Reibel.

To that end, Reibel designed a pledge card that proposes different actions people can take to conserve, including: buy or borrow a Kill-a-Watt gadget and plug it into various electric devices to see how much electricity is used; try out a solar oven; replace a conventional light bulb (or ten) with a CFL or LED; use less air conditioning in the summer; air dry clothes; hibernate computers at night; and (finally) seriously investigate solar power for your home or business.

For more information about Earth Hour and ways to save electricity, go to sustainablelafayette.org.



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"I have achieved a lifestyle change that will help ensure I'll be active into my 80's."



"Losing weight is simple, becoming fit for life isn't always."
Tips from Sheena

At 54, I was at a crossroads. Despite my best efforts, I was gaining several pounds every year and beginning to develop a few medical conditions. I had tried gyms, but I didn't have the discipline to go regularly. Something had to change. Living Lean, had the ingredients for me to get on track and stay there. Two personal training appointments per week to keep me accountable; the trainers are very knowledgeable and supportive. Sheena's lovely studio is small enough to feel personal, the bikes are state-of-the-art, and the music is terrific! A great extra are meals that are "on plan." I'm much stronger and fitter than I have ever been. I have achieved a lifestyle change that will help ensure I'll be active into my 80's. Thanks, Sheena!!
-Victoria Robinson, Piedmont

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