

# STRANGER THAN FICTION

## *Military History*

HISTORY BUFF by Col. D. G. Swinford, USMC, Ret.

1. The first German serviceman killed in WWII was killed by the Japanese (China, 1940). The first American serviceman killed was killed by the Russians (Finland 1940). The highest ranking American killed was Lt. Gen. Lesley McNair, killed by the US Army Air Corps!
2. The youngest US serviceman was 12 years old Calvin Graham, USN. He was wounded and given a Dishonorable Discharge for lying about his age. His benefits were later restored by act of Congress.
3. At the time of Pearl Harbor the top US Navy command was called CINCUS (pronounced “sink us”). The shoulder patch of the US Army’s 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was the Swastika, and Hitler’s private train was named “Amerika”! All three were soon changed for PR purposes.
4. More US servicemen died in the Air Corps than the Marine Corps. While completing the required 30 missions, your chance of being killed was 71%.
5. Generally speaking, there was no such thing as an average fighter pilot. You were either an ace or a target. For instance, Japanese ace Hiroyoshi Nishizawa shot down over 80 planes, but died while a passenger on a cargo plane!
6. It was common practice on fighter planes to load every 5<sup>th</sup> round with tracer rounds to aid in aiming ... this was a problem! Tracers had different ballistics (at long range), so if your tracers were hitting the target, 80% of your rounds were missing. Worse yet, tracers instantly told the enemy he was under fire and from which direction. Worst of all was the practice of loading a string of tracers at the end of each belt to tell you that you were out of ammo. This was definitely not something you wanted to tell the enemy! Units that stopped using tracers saw their success rate nearly double and their loss rate go down significantly as well.
7. The term, “the whole 9 yards” came from WWII fighter pilots in the South Pacific. When arming their airplanes on the ground, the .50 caliber machine gun ammo belt measured exactly 27 feet before being loaded into the fuselage. If the pilots fired all their ammo at a target, it got the “whole 9 yards”!
8. When allied armies reached the Rhine the first thing men did was pee in it. This was pretty universal from the lowest private to Winston Churchill (who made a big show of it) and Gen. Patton, who himself was photographed in the act!
9. German Me-264 bombers were capable of bombing New York City but it wasn’t worth the effort.
10. German submarine U-120 was sunk by a malfunctioning toilet!
11. Among the first to be captured at Normandy were several Koreans. They had been forced to fight for the Japanese Army until they were captured by the Russians and forced to fight for the Russian Army. They were then captured by the Germans and forced to fight for the German Army and then were captured by the US Army!

### NOW THE BEST OF ALL

12. Following a massive naval bombardment 35,000 US and Canadian troops stormed ashore at Kiska, in the Aleutian Islands. (21) troops were killed in the firefight. It would have been worse if there had been any Japanese on the island ... Hello!

### THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW

*Interesting, but it won't change your life!*

*It is impossible to lick your elbow?*

\* If you were to spell out the numbers, how far would you have to go until you would find the letter “A”? ... One Thousand.

\* What trivia fact about Mel Blanc (voice! of Bugs Bunny) is most ironic? ... He was allergic to carrots.

- \* What is the only food that doesn't spoil? ... Honey.
- \* The first novel ever written on a typewriter: Tom Sawyer.
- \* The world's youngest parents were 8 and 9 years old and lived in China in 1910!
- \* San Francisco Cable cars are the only mobile National Monuments!
- \* Each king in the deck of cards represents a great king from history: *Spades* ... King David, *Hearts* ... Charlemagne, *Clubs* ... Alexander the Great, *Diamonds* ... Julius Caesar.
- \* What do bulletproof vest, windshield wipers and dishwasher all have in common? ... All invented by women.
- \* If a statue in the park of a person on a horse has both front legs in the air ... *the person died in battle*. If the horse has one front leg in the air ... *the person died as a result of wounds received in battle*. If the horse has all four legs on the ground ... *the person died of natural causes*.
- \* The first couple to be shown in bed together on prime time TV, were Fred and Wilma Flintstone ... Oh how times have changed!
- \* The phrase "rule of thumb" is derived from an old English law which states that you couldn't beat your wife with anything wider than the thumb.
- \* The cruise liner, Queen Elizabeth II, moves only six inches for each gallon of diesel that it burns!
- \* The nursery rhyme "Ring around the Rosey" is a rhyme about the plaque. Infected people with the plaque would get red circular sores (ring around the rosey). These sores would smell very bad so common folks would put flowers somewhere inconspicuously on their bodies so it would cover the smell of the sores or ("a pocket full of posies"). Furthermore, people who died from the plaque would be burned so as to reduce the possible spread of the disease or ("ashes, ashes, we all fall down").
- \* In Shakespeare's time, mattresses were secured on bed frames by ropes. When you pulled on the ropes the mattress tightened, making the bed firmer to sleep on ... Hence the phrase, "goodnight, sleep tight"!
- \* In Babylon 4,000 years ago it was the accepted practice that for a month after the wedding, the bride's father would supply his son-in-law with all the mead he could drink. Mead is a honey beer and because their calendar was lunar based, this period was called the honey month we know today as the Honeymoon!
- \* In English pubs, ale is ordered by pints and quarts. So in old England, when a customer got unruly, the bartender would yell at them ... mind your own pints and quarts and settle down. This is where we get the ... "mind your own P's and Q's"!
- \* Many years ago in England, pub frequenters had a whistle baked into the rim of the handle of their ceramic cups. When they needed a refill, they used the whistle to get some service. "Wet your Whistle" is the phrase inspired by this practice!
- \* In Scotland, a new game was invented. It was entitled "Gentlemen only ... ladies forbidden" ... and thus the word GOLF entered into the English language!

## AND FINALLY

At least 80% of people who read this will try to lick their Elbow!