

FEAR AND LOAFING

Answers to stupid questions

By Karl Nilsson
special writer

In honor of National Stupid Question Week, I am interrupting my regular series on self-hardening clay to answer those burning questions from readers. How they caught fire is another story altogether.

Q. I'm trying to organize my closets. Any point in hanging on to my old flannel clippings?

A. Don't toss that collection yet. They're useful in the manufacturing of artificial animal hooves. It used to be that when a prize show horse split a nail his career was ruined. Now, thanks to new "press-on fashion hooves," the judges never know the difference.

Q. Why did "Big Band" music fade away?

A. In the days before music videos, top swing bands relied on unusual rhyming names to promote audience recognition. The most popular of these catchy monikers was "Les Brown and His Band of Renown."

Brown's overnight success spawned a host of imitators like "Conrad Ross and His Band of Disgust" and "Reginald Pitts and His Band of Twits." Soon, all the good names were used up, bringing the Big Band era to an untimely end.

With the advent of television in the early '60s, the Big Band sound enjoyed a brief resurgence — this time with the Latin flavor of Ricky Ricardo.

Q. Where did the game of basketball get the nickname round ball?

A. Surprisingly, it was not derived from the spherical shape of today's familiar orange ball. Instead, it was a reference to geographical location as in the phrase, "that's what we play round here."

In actual fact, the original game wasn't played with a ball at all, but a cinder block. Since dribbling was more difficult, this early game emphasized passing and shooting. The switch to a rubber ball occurred during the great cement shortage of 1922.

Q. Any ideas why the Detroit Tigers' performance was so dismal?

A. I'm tired of people blaming the Tigers for something that wasn't their fault. My research department has uncovered three reasons why Detroit lost more than 100 games this season:

1. Poor hitting — Hidden cameras revealed the Tiger bat boys were



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handing the bats to the players up-side down. Knowing this, can our sluggers really be blamed for using the wrong end of the bat?

2. Poor fielding — Most reports concentrated on the fans reeling asleep in the stands, but my investigation revealed narcolepsy in the outfield, too. This outbreak of frequent and uncontrollable sleep may explain why fly balls kept bouncing off our fielders' chests.

3. Poor pitching — The problem here was a communication breakdown between coaching and pitching. What the pitchers thought was batting practice was actually the first five innings. Once they discovered the game had already started, their performance usually improved.

Q. What will be the movie box-office blockbuster of the 1990s?

Definitely a sequel. I predict Sly Stallone will bounce back with the ultimate drawing card, "Rambo Versus Rocky." Taking a cue from the old "Patty Duke Show," Stallone will play both starring roles — the trigger happy veteran and the aging boxer, confronting each other in the fight of the century.

This time the epic battle won't take place in a steaming jungle, sweltering desert or Las Vegas boxing ring. It happens in a vegetarian restaurant.

Q. Any more hot movie picks?

My vote goes to "Cocoon II," a sequel with a nostalgic twist. This time around director Ron Howard goes in front of the cameras to star in this unusual tribute to his own career.

When the extra-terrestrials return for one final undersea pod, they get an unexpected surprise. Instead of an alien life force, out pops Aunt Bea.

When she is fully revived from her suspended animation, Mayberry's best cook peels off her rubbery face mask to reveal she is secretly Barney Fife, who then pulls off his face to reveal he is actually Sheriff Andy, who rips off his face to reveal he is Floyd the barber, who removes his face to reveal he is really and truly Opie Taylor, space traveler.

STREET SENSE

Sleeplessness is common problem

Dear Barbara,

I have difficulty sleeping at night. I both have difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep. Then during the day, I am often tired and cannot stop myself from napping.

The doctor has prescribed sleeping pills, but they make me feel groggy and from what I have read, can possibly be dangerous. I am in my late 40s and have had this problem for about five years.

Sleepless in Livonia

Dear Sleepless,

Your problem is common. One-third of the American adult population complains of insomnia and 7-8 percent take some kind of sleep medication.

To diagnose and solve this problem, you must use many approaches. If you haven't already had one, a complete physical is a beginning. If no cause can be determined from this, then you need to go to a sleep disorder clinic, such as the one that they have at Henry Ford Hospital or the University of Michigan Hospital.

At these labs, your sleep will be monitored, resulting in a greater chance for appropriate treatment which could be medical, psychological, behavioral or all three.

Until then, some simple things to think about are the amount of caffeine you are consuming and the regularity of your particular cycle.

It has been found that people sleep better and are more alert when they are aware of and maintain the same sleep-wake times. However, as I have said, nothing can substitute for detailed monitoring at a sleep disorder clinic.

Dear Barbara,

Until recently, I enjoyed a close relationship with my grandchildren. They are two girls ages 4 and 7. My daughter divorced her husband when the youngest child was only one. I have been her since that time by caring for the girls while she works.

Now she is planning on remarrying. This man is a beast. He dislikes me and wants to control my daughter. I believe my daughter wants to marry him for financial reasons. He

is quite well off.

My daughter no longer wants me to see my granddaughters. In fact, she will not take my calls. Sometimes I drive by the house just to get a glimpse of them. I know they must miss me, too.

Is there anything I can do? Do I have any rights? I am a widow and this is my only child and grandchildren.

Lonely in Novi

Dear Lonely,

Yes, you have rights. There have been laws since the 1970s, which allow grandparents to initiate legal action when, because of divorce or death, their relationship with their grandchildren has been terminated without cause.

A group called the Grandparents Rights Organization is trying to have further legislation passed that would expand those rights. Call the organization at 616-7177 and they will counsel you on finding competent legal representation.

I wish you luck.

Barbara

Barbara Schiff

If you have a question or comment for Barbara Schiff, a trained counselor and experienced therapist, send it to Street Sense, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

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