

***This is True's* Weirdest Stories of 2021**

by Randy Cassingham, Founder of *This is True*

The *This is True*[®] Newsletter Publishes “Weird-but-True” Stories from “legitimate, mainstream” news sources worldwide. It has been running weekly since 1994 — the oldest entertainment feature on the Internet. Each brief story identifies its source, and ends with a comment — a tagline which is humorous, ironic, or opinionated (or with luck, some combination of the three). If a subscriber sent this to you to see what the stories are like (which is absolutely OK!), I hope you’ll stop by the site for your own free email subscription: <https://thisistrue.com>

January

Impostor: Thomas Dodd, 30, admits he was drunk when he filled out the paperwork to legally change his name. The nightclub manager from Tamworth, Staffordshire, England, was watching a Christmas Eve concert by singer Celine Dion at home on the telly, since he couldn’t go out due to Covid, and the drink emboldened his decision. But he forgot about it until the paperwork arrived confirming his name change — to Celine Dion. “At first I didn’t think it was me that had done it, but in a way it just sums up 2020,” Dodd — *er*, Dion — said. “I should not be left alone with a bottle of champagne.” On the other hand, “My name is still Celine Dion and I don’t plan on changing it back. It keeps people smiling and laughing and we could all do with that.” He plans to study to become a paramedic. (RC/Nottingham Post) ...*In which job he’ll meet all sorts of people who did much more ridiculous things than that after drinking.*

February

Bad Ol’ Puddy Tat: Chris Paulson, a farmer in rural British Columbia, Canada, lost two chickens to a hungry owl. When another critter got two more, Paulson was ready. “I tried to scoot him out of there, but he was so focused on his prey,” he said. “So I just reached down and picked him up like a house cat does with its kitten.” That’s right, he “scruffed” a lynx, which had feathers in its mouth, and scolded it. The wild cat, which he estimated was 11 kg (24 lbs), looked “a bit like [a kid] with its hand in the chocolate chip bag,” Paulson said. His wife, musician Rachelle van Zanten, took photos. Their children named the lynx “Tuffnut”, and the family put it in a dog kennel so they could take it “a bit further out in the bush” from the farm where his family has lived for over a century. The cat had already killed the two chickens, so they left them with the cat since it looked “skinny.” (RC/CBC) ...*I don’t think the lynx is the only one with “Tuffnuts”.*



Note That When Pictures Are Available, they’re included with the story — usually fairly small, and with the ability to click to see them larger.

March

Strike 2: Last summer, Volusia County (Fla.) Sheriff Mike Chitwood took sick leave. It was the first time in his 33-year career that “Iron Mike” took sick leave, but Covid-19 forced it on him. It looks like he had to do it again after riding his bicycle near his home. “Next thing I know, boy, I got hit hard from the rear,” the sheriff said. “I go flying off the bike and all I could tell you was it was a burgundy-colored car, because the mirror was impaled in my back.” The impact also broke his leg and caused other injuries. Worse, it was a hit and run, but a witness with a dashcam caught the whole thing, and the woman driving has been arrested for leaving the scene of an accident with serious bodily injury. What distracted her? No, not texting while driving — that’s just *so* 2019. “She says she was shopping on Amazon on her phone.” (RC/Miami Herald) ...*Oh, you can get a lawyer on Amazon now?*

April

Usually One must Go to a Bowling Alley to Meet a Man of His Stature: Police in Charleston, S.C., responded to a bowling alley on the report of a fight. By the time they arrived, the fight was over. Pano Michael DuPree, 58, started an argument with his girlfriend, witnesses say, and allegedly grabbed her from behind in a chokehold. That was ended when a witness stepped over and punched DuPree in the face, knocking him to the floor. He was taken to the hospital by ambulance and, once officers got statements from multiple witnesses, they headed to the emergency room and arrested him for assault and battery. DuPree has been in trouble before: during a 2012 traffic stop in Utah, he punched a trooper in the face, and while the two wrestled, he bit the trooper’s arm hard enough to break skin. Other officers pulled him off and he was arrested. In that incident DuPree’s license to practice law — he’s a lawyer and former Charleston County Prosecutor — was suspended for nine months. At the moment, the state’s Bar lists DuPree as a member in good standing. (RC/Charleston Post and Courier) ...*If “out cold on his back” is included under the definition of “standing.”*

May

63 Years: A Massachusetts family well knew the story: an aunt and uncle had hidden cash in their home. They’re now long gone, and descendants wanted to sell the house, but their probing so far hadn’t turned up the cash cache. Their niece thought maybe the attic, and considered getting a metal detector, but after “decades” still hadn’t made progress. She called Keith Wille of Connecticut, who has a Youtube channel about treasure hunting. It took him less than an hour to find it: a box with evidence it had been hidden in December 1958. “The family now has closure on the cash,” Wille said. “They can sell the house.” The cash was dated as early as the 1930s and totaled \$46,000 — the equivalent of \$421,600 today. (RC/Springfield Republican) ...*Or, if it had been invested in the S&P 500, \$3.46 million.*

Each Issue Also Has a Headline of the Week. A 2021 example:

They Needed a Study for This?
Are Cats Psychopaths? New Research Says, Probably
WTSP Tampa (Fla.) headline

June

Sly: “Isabella said, ‘It’s my body,’” said a mother in Delray Beach, Fla. “And I said, ‘Well, it’s my body until you’re 18.’” With many parents refusing to let their children get vaccinated against Covid-19, kids are sneaking out behind their backs to protect their own health. “I want teenagers to be able to say to pediatricians, ‘Hey, I have this right,’” said Kelly Danielpour, 18, who created VaxTeen.org to help kids find scientific vaccination information, and how they can legally get vaccines without parental consent. It covers all vaccines — she started the site prior to the coronavirus pandemic — and shows some local or state governments allow minors as young as 11 to be vaccinated without parental permission. (RC/New York Times) ...*In my day we just had to keep our parents from knowing we were having sex.*

July

The Little Old Lady from Pasadena: When she took her 11-year-old granddaughter to karate class in Salt Lake City, Utah, Carole Taylor thought, “Wow, this is mental and physical. This would be a good thing for someone my age to do,” she said. She joined the class. She and her granddaughter trained together, and “We both got our first-degree black belts at about the same time.” Now, after 15 years of training, Taylor, now 83, has earned her fifth-degree black belt in the Chuck Norris System — and Chuck Norris himself bestowed the honor. “I was able to bow to him, turn around, he put [a black gi] on me,” she said. “I turned back around and bowed, and then he grabbed me and hugged me so hard, he actually pulled me off the ground almost.” Norris, who is now 81, said he had not been working out lately, and “I had inspired him to go back and to begin to train again, and that made me feel very, very good.” (RC/KSL Salt Lake City) ...*Because right then she knew she could take down Chuck Norris if she wanted to.*



August

Rapid Mistake: After a massive research and manufacturing ramp-up, Abbott Laboratories, a \$20 billion (sales) American drug and medical device manufacturer, had two factories making its “rapid test” to diagnose Covid-19 infections. “This is ultimately what Abbott was built for,” boasted CEO Robert Ford. In June, Abbott closed its Illinois factory making the tests and laid off 2,000 employees. At the other factory in Maine, employees were ordered to stop making the tests, and instead destroy all the remaining tests kits in inventory — about 8.6 million of them, which had expiration dates well into next year. They also canceled contracts with suppliers for the raw materials to make the tests. “The [sales] numbers are going down,” site manager Andy Wilkinson told shocked workers. “This is all about money.” By the time they were done, the Covid “Delta variant” was spreading wildly, and demand for the test skyrocketed. Abbott is now trying to hire back the employees it let go. (RC/New York Times) ...*When Wilkinson is fired, he’ll be told “This is all about image.”*

September

It Was That or the Stick: Carmel Sepuloni, New Zealand's Minister for Social Development, was doing a media interview on Zoom from her home when her young son burst in behind her to show her something. "That moment when you're doing a LIVE interview via Zoom," she posted on Twitter afterward, "and your son walks into the room shouting and holding a deformed carrot shaped like a male body part." When she told him she was working, the boy thrust the vegetable toward the camera. "Yes, we were almost wrestling over a carrot on camera," Sepuloni added, "and yes, I'm laughing about it now but wasn't at the time!" (RC/New Zealand Herald) ...*Well, her son at least demonstrated he's very advanced in his social development.*

October

Non-Blind Date: David Kessler, 25, of Framingham, Mass., scored a date online, on Tinder. It's unclear how the date went, unless you count that when Kessler took the woman home, she ran inside, slammed and locked the door, and called police. When officers arrived Kessler was still outside, holding a duffel bag. An officer searched the bag and found a switchblade — illegal to carry in the state. The officer also recognized unspecified "materials" that "could" be used to make pipe bombs, which provided cause to search Kessler's car. That's when officers called in the bomb squad, closed the street, and evacuated nearby homes. Kessler was released on \$5,000 bail, but must wear a GPS monitor at all times because the judge declared him "dangerous." (RC/Framingham MetroWest Daily News) ...*So... can I call you again?*

November

Ploy from a Boy: It doesn't appear that Cobb County (Ga.) Superior Court Chief Judge Robert D. Leonard received a court petition for an official ruling, but he issued one anyway: an "Order Banishing Elves on Shelves in Cobb County" — which "represent a distraction to school students and a risk to the emotional health and well being of Cobb's young children." He posted his order on Twitter with the comment, "I am a public servant and will take the heat for you. My gift to tired parents." The judge told a reporter that the tongue-in-cheek decree "gave some folks an out." But, he added in his tweet, "P.S. - If you love your elf, keep your elf. No contempts." (RC/Atlanta Journal-Constitution) ...*Next year's best-selling toy: Judge with a Grudge.*

December

Reason for the Season: The Roman Catholic diocese of Noto, Sicily, has made a public apology after Bishop Antonio Stagliano told a group of children Santa Claus doesn't exist, and that Santa's traditional bright red suit trimmed in white fur was created for promotions by the Coca Cola company. "On behalf of the bishop, I express my sorrow for this declaration which has created disappointment in the little ones," said diocese spokesman the Rev. Alessandro Paolino, "and want to specify that Monsignor Stagliano's intentions were quite different." (RC/AP) ...*Right: he meant to say Satan doesn't exist.*

So... What's the *Weirdest* of These 12 Stories? See the next page!

The Weirdest of 2021

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More on the Story

The Story is Prime “True” Fodder, showing the obliquity of not thinking things through. That's where *This is True* comes in: it's “Thought-Provoking Entertainment” by using stories to not only point out the absurdities of humanity, but to give kids real-world examples of what the lack of thinking brings. That is an effective way to help children develop common sense.

Seriously, a leading American pharmaceutical research and manufacturing company *didn't know* that it wasn't just possible, but likely, that a new virus variant would pop up right about then?

“We couldn't just ship it [to other countries],” argued CEO Robert Ford, because the test had only been approved by U.S. regulators, not those in other countries. Um, they shipped a million tests to India; why not Africa? The World Health Organization had been trying to secure tests for developing countries, and didn't know that Abbott had an excess. The WHO “would have worked to facilitate whatever is needed” to get authorization, said Dr. Mariangela Batista Galvao Simao, WHO's Assistant Director General.

“I expect testing demand is still going to remain high, even as the vaccines roll out,” CEO Ford had said in a January earnings call, where he revealed the company had sold \$2.4 billion worth of tests in the 4th quarter of 2020 alone. “The big point here is the sustainability.” Nope: it was “all about money,” just as we might expect from a drug company.

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