

\$9.95 U.S.

Mischief, thou
art afoot.

—Will Shakespeare

Reference/Humor
ISBN-13: 978-1-4236-0366-5
ISBN-10: 1-4236-0366-4
5 0995
9 781423 603665

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Mischief

THE POCKET GUIDE TO



BART KING



THE
POCKET GUIDE
TO
Mischief



Mischief

OF THE RICH AND FAMOUS

"MISCHIEF IS A MOST PROFOUND PLEASURE." —Frank Herbert

Many (maybe even most!) of the leaders and famous (or infamous) people in history were mischief makers. They were the brave women who looked at how unfair the world was and said, "I can do better than that." They were the stalwart men who saw stupidity and asked, "Why do we have to do it that way?" And they were the delightful children who ganged up on the neighborhood bully and hit him with wet noodles until he said, "Uncle!"

YES, IT HAS BEEN HISTORY'S MISCHIEF MAKERS WHO HAVE HAD THE COURAGE TO POINT OUT THINGS LIKE SLAVERY, GLOBAL WARMING, AND TURTLENECK SWEATERS ARE BAD.

And these are also the people who pulled off some of the greatest hoaxes and practical jokes of all time. Their achievements include the Boston Tea Party, the “War of the Worlds” radio broadcast of 1938, and the Cheese Whiz Disaster of 2008.

In fact, if you look hard enough, you’ll see that mischief makers perform services that we never thought about before, even when they don’t mean to. For example, hackers try to make trouble by sneaking into other people’s computers and programs. This is very, very wrong! But by doing so, the hackers let everyone know about weaknesses that exist in their computer security systems. That means the hackers are performing a valuable service for free!

So this chapter is devoted to some of the

most mischievous wisenheimers who believed that if you can’t laugh at yourself, try laughing at others instead.

JACK NICHOLSON is a famous actor who supposedly has a clear plastic toilet seat at his house. Inside of it is coiled a large dead rattlesnake. This makes sitting down an exercise in bravery.

MOLLY IVINS was a writer who used her newspaper column to have fun and make fun. Molly thought that there were two kinds of humor. One was the kind that made people laugh about the mistakes that we all make and share. “The other kind holds people up to public contempt and ridicule,” Molly said. “That’s what I do.” But Molly made it a rule to only mock important people. “When you use satire against powerless people,” she said, “it is like kicking a cripple.”

Ivins especially liked to write about Texas. When politicians from all over the state got together for meetings, Molly

wrote that “every village is about to lose its idiot.” And here she is writing about a foolish congressman: “If his IQ slips any lower, we’ll have to water him twice a day.” Ivins so hated the city of Dallas, she described it as a place “that would have rooted for Goliath to beat David.”



In 1776, **GEORGE WASHINGTON** was preparing to cross

Butterfingers and Beaujolais

The older a fine wine is, the more expensive it is. In 1989, a wine merchant tried to sell a bottle of wine from 1787 (it had once been owned by Thomas Jefferson) for over \$500,000. Holding the bottle up to show it off, the wine merchant dropped it. The bottle broke. *No sale!*

Quick Mischief

- ★ Know someone who sleeps with their mouth open? Put a kazoo in their mouth.
- ★ Put a “for sale” sign in your neighbor’s yard.
- ★ Hide alarm clocks all over the house and set them to go off at different times.

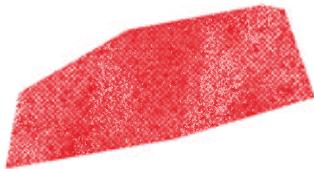
the Delaware River. (There is a famous painting of this trip.) Getting into his boat, Washington was concerned to see a heavy man named Henry Knox onboard. Washington said, “Shift that fat a**, Harry. But slowly, or you’ll swamp the boat!”

THE MYTHBUSTERS are Jamie Hyneman, Adam Savage, and Peter Rees. These guys created a TV show where they take urban legends and put them to the test. It takes a special person to answer questions like: Can a microwaved jawbreaker explode in your mouth? (Yes.) Does quicksand actually suck you under and drown

you? (No.) Can people row fast enough to pull a water skier? (Yes.) Would a penny dropped from the Empire State Building kill someone? (Nope.) Can you learn something while watching these guys blow things up? (Yes!)

Special bonus score: To Jamie Hyneman, for saying, “We take large objects and make them into very small objects.”

JACK “LEGS” DIAMOND was an American gangster in the 1920s who survived many shoot-outs with rival criminals and the police. This led him to brag, “The bullet



hasn't been made that can kill me.”

Diamond was shot to death not long after that.

ANDRE BRÉTON was a French artist and mischief maker. Before he died, Bréton made arrangements for his body to be taken to the graveyard in a moving van.

EDDIE HASKELL was the fictional neighbor kid on the TV show *Leave It To Beaver* (1958–1963). Eddie was sarcastic, sneaky, two-faced, and a born mischief maker. As June Cleaver said, “Eddie has that look about him that makes you think something’s always about to happen.” In fact, Matt Groening—the creator of *The Simpsons*—based the character of Bart Simpson on Eddie Haskell. Eddie was the kind of guy who would kiss up to your parents, and then when they turned their backs he would start picking on you. But the oily Eddie also hatched some fairly creative schemes. And most importantly, he usually got someone else