

Tall Animal Tales – *Rolf Harris*

Bad Luck Bees

How's this for bad luck? An angler was fishing from the banks of the Rio Negro in the Amazon when he was suddenly attacked by killer bees after his line got tangled in a tree. To escape from the huge swarm he jumped into the river – and was eaten by piranha fish.

Dangerous Golf

The Elephant Hills golf course in Zimbabwe is renowned among the golfing fraternity for the many hazards a player might come across. I'm not talking about bunkers, sand traps or lakes – but the various wild animals from the banks of the Zambesi that use the greens and fairways for grazing. After one tournament in 1977, Sam Torrance of Scotland told officials that it was one of the hardest courses he had ever played. He complained, 'I encountered baboons at one hole, warthogs at another and heard a rhino only a short way away in the rough.'

He was lucky, though. British golfer Noel Hunt found himself having to take a shot from a shallow pond, just yards from where a crocodile was sleeping. He took off his shoes and socks and waded into the pond, while his partner Warren Humphries watched his rear, 'armed' with his trusty eight iron. Hunt recalls that this was one of the fabled shots of his career.

Wriggling Mattress

Mr and Mrs Diehl of Quakertown, Pennsylvania, needed a new mattress, so they went to their local department store and, after trying many out, chose the one which seemed the most comfortable. The trouble was, although it had been perfectly good in the store, the Diehls couldn't get a good night's sleep. Mr Diehl accused his wife of wriggling around in the night, while Mr Diehl claimed she did no such thing – it was *he* who was doing all the wriggling.

This went on night after night, and in the end they had a close look at the mattress and nearly collapsed with fright. Living in it was a twenty-six-inch snake!

Strange Smuggler

Alerted by strange bulges and frenzied wriggling in an airline passenger's trousers, customs officials at Miami airport stopped the man and uncovered a hoard of rare animals. The smuggler, a Barbadian pet-shop owner named Rodney Carrington, had put on two pairs of trousers and then dropped no fewer than fifty-five four-inch-long rare red-footed turtles between the two pairs. He pleaded sheer insanity.....

Porcupines and Brake Fluid

The US Forest Service had to close a campsite in South Dakota's Little Spearfish Canyon officially when it was discovered that porcupines had been crawling under camper's vehicles and gnawing on their brake lines in order to drink the brake fluid, to which they'd become addicted. A spokesman for the Forest Service, Galen Roesler, stated that, 'Obviously, if people get into their car in the morning and start down the canyon and suddenly discover they don't have brakes, well, that can be

a real hazard.’

Seagull Striker

A seagull scored the vital goal in a junior football match between Stalybridge Celtic Colts and Hollingworth Juniors in Greater Manchester in 1999. Thirteen-year old Colts striker Danny Worthington had let loose with a thunderous volley that looked set to soar over the crossbar – until the gull swooped down and headed it straight into the back of the net! 3-1 to the Colts!

Understandably there was some controversy over the goal, but experienced referee Damien Whelan allowed it to stand. ‘If the all does not go out of the pitch area, it can’t be disallowed,’ he explained to the bemused players. His decision was later upheld by the Football Association. Spokesman Steve Double said, ‘To the best of my knowledge a seagull has never scored a goal in football before. The referee was right. Whether the ball hits the referee, a dog or any other animal, even a seagull, if it goes into the net it is a goal. Our commiserations to the losing team – and the seagull.’

Too Fast?

A successful long-distance runner knows how to pace himself. So, when British athlete Chris Stewart saw a local runner come rocketing past him at breakneck speed during a fifteen-mile road race in Kenya, he just laughed to himself. After all, his opponent would soon tire. Chris decided he was happy maintaining the same slow, steady pace – until he glanced over his shoulder and realised that the other runner had actually been fleeing a rhinoceros that was not bearing straight down on him.

Surprised Sheep

Peter Croke was playing golf at the Southerndown Golf Club near Porthcawl in Wales when he hit a wild shot on the seventeenth fairway. The ball came squarely to rest – in the back end of an unfortunate sheep. The sheep had been grazing peacefully but - understandably worried about this new turn of events – it sprinted off on to the green with the ball still wedged. Eventually the ball did get shaken loose, thirty yards nearer the *right* hole, making it a simple putt for Peter. The rule books were dutifully consulted, and, although there was nothing specifically covering these particular circumstances, it was decided that he could play the ball from where it fell.

Publicity Parrots

Publicists are often asked to arrange weird and wonderful things to promote a new feature film, but probably the strangest stunt in Hollywood history was dreamed up by film mogul Sam Goldwyn. He went to see his studio publicist Arthur L. Mayer and told him about a brilliant idea he’d had to promote his new film starring Mae West and called *It Ain’t No Sin*. ‘I want seventy parrots all trained to squawk out the title!’ he told Mayer. ‘It’ll be a knockout. It Ain’t No Sin! It Ain’t No Sin! The papers will love it!’ It was a formidable task, but Mayer succeeded in finding seventy of Hollywood’s most talented and highly paid parrots and had them coached relentlessly by a team of top animal trainers until they could squawk out ‘It Ain’t No Sin’ loud and clear on cue. He called up Sam Goldwyn and asked him to come and see the parrots for himself. ‘Forgot about that,’ said Sam. ‘We’ve changed the title of the movie to *I’m No Angel*’. Mayer quit on the spot.

Endal the Amazing Dog

Gulf War veteran Allen Parton was tragically injured in a car accident in the desert while on active service. He suffered severe head injuries and as a result spent three years in hospital, unable to walk or speak, and with no memory of his wife and children. He returned home with, in his own words, no purpose in life.

But all that changed when he was introduced to Endal the Labrador, a dog who has turned his life around.

Endal was trained as an ‘assistance dog, by the Hampshire-based charity Canine Partners for Independence, and acts almost as Allen’s personal assistant.

Allen says, ‘He can fetch everything from my razor to the breakfast cereal or knives and forks on command.’ All Allen had to do is say the word ‘gloves’, for example, and the dog looks around the room until he finds them, before taking them in his mouth and delivering them to his master. If one of Allen’s legs slips off his wheelchair, Endal grabs hold of the laces on his shoes, tugs and pulls the leg back into its proper place.

In the morning Endal goes into the kitchen and dutifully takes out his owner’s favourite breakfast cereal as well as his bowl. He also gives the post to Allen when it pops through the letter-box. One day Endal was watching Allen struggle to withdraw money from a cash machine. Without any prompting – or training – Endal took the card and put it in the machine, and, after Allen had punched in his PIN, took the cash and the receipt and gave them to his owner. He even helps in the supermarket, picking things off the shelves and putting them in the basket, then taking Allen’s wallet and handing it to the cashier.

People are amazed at his abilities. One day Allen boarded a bus with wheelchair access and Endal gave the driver his fare. Allen said that the poor driver was so taken aback, he looked like he needed a stiff drink to get over the shock!

Allen’s wife Sandra has said that she can’t exaggerate the difference Endal makes to their lives. ‘I can trust him to look after my husband, and that means I can have time to myself and leave them together instead of being with Allen twenty-four hours a day.’

As well as helping with the everyday chores, Endal is trained for a far more serious role – as a life-saver. Allen suffers periodic blackouts, and Endal can put his master in the recovery position and cover him with a blanket, then bring his mobile phone so he can summon help.

Today, both Allen and Sandra work as volunteers for the charity which gave them Endal, who was voted ‘Dog of the Millennium’ in a competition run by the magazine *Dogs Today*. Deputy editor Carolyn Mentith explained, ‘Endal is a very special dog. He has transformed Allen’s life. He does things most dog owners couldn’t even comprehend. He thoroughly deserves this award.’

Bandoola Save the Day

When the order for the evacuation of Burma was given in March 1944, Lt.-Col. John Williams had a difficult task – how to lead forty-five elephants, eight cows and 198 people to safety over a mountain range.

His fears were allayed, though, due to the invaluable help given him by Bandoola, a fifty-year old elephant who, despite his age, was agile and courageous enough to lead the procession.

With his rider seated on his head, using a long bamboo cane to direct the elephant’s feet, Bandoola began his ascent into mountains up to 5000 feet high. Strapped to his back in huge baskets were eight injured children. Despite the weight and the difficulty of the terrain, Bandoola never faltered. At times, the trail was so steep he was almost walking up on his hind legs. With the rest of the evacuees following, Bandoola led them along a narrow ledge, moving one foot at a time to test the ground and keep his balance.

Nineteen days later the whole party arrived safely in India, led triumphantly by Bandoola and the

modern-day Hannibal, Lt.-Col. Williams.

Prime Minister's Apology

The only official record of a British prime minister making a formal apology to a dog appears in a recent volume of Hansard, the record of all goings-on in the Houses of Parliament. It seems that as Tony Blair stood up to address the house during a particular heated Prime Minister's Question Time, he accidentally stepped on the paw of Lucy, David Blunkett's guide dog. At least he apologised.....

Some Animal Facts

Did you know hang-gliders are banned from national parks in Ethiopia because herds of antelopes apparently mistake them for giant vultures and stampede in panic!

Did you know crickets hear through their knees and cicadas through their stomachs, while snakes pick up sound waves through their tongues.

In 1936, Olympic gold medallist Jesse Owens beat a thoroughbred racehorse named McCaw over a hundred-yard course in Havana, Cuba. More recently, decathlete Daley Thompson raced a greyhound around Wimbledon dog-track at a fund-raising event. He covered the 290 metres in thirty seconds but finished second. After getting his breath back, Daley's first comment was, 'One more leg and I would've beaten him.'

Did you know that mosquitoes prefer to bite blondes.

Did you know that before stalking their prey, polar bears have been seen to cover up their distinctive black noses with a lump of snow!