

A big red barn

by BRIAN LOCKHART

I have always heard that farmers painted their barns red because they are large buildings and red was always the most inexpensive paint to buy.

However, I had a job actually making paint at one time, and there was no special ingredient that made red paint any less expensive than white, black, or green paint.

I think some farmer just painted his barn red one day because that's the colour he chose and other farmer's liked the way it looked and followed suit.

In fact if you take a drive through our rural area, most barns aren't painted at all.

Maybe the red barn theory is just one of those old wives tales someone made up and it stuck.

I'm pretty sure in this day and age, 'old wives tale' is probably an outdated phrase. Maybe it's more appropriate to say 'old person's tale.' Although maybe the word 'old' is also discriminatory, so maybe it should just be 'person's tale.'

Either way, there a lot of fun 'facts' we all learn that have become somewhat muddled over time or just aren't true.

A few years ago, word got out from 'sources' that you should be drinking a minimum of six, possibly eight, depending on the authority, glasses of water a day to stay hydrated and healthy.

While this new health news was great for the bottled water industry, it doesn't make a lot of sense.

If your body needs water, you have a very accurate built-in system that tells you when it's time to water-up. It's called being thirsty.

Doctors have since confirmed that, if you feel thirsty, you should drink something.

French Emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte, has always had the stigma of being rather short in stature, thus explaining why his 'little man complex' resulted in him conquering most of Europe to show the rest of them a thing or two.

Actually, Napoleon was of average height for a man of his era and country.

An English general once referred to him as 'that little corporal', which was intended as a derogatory slur regarding his position in politics and power.

However, the reference stuck, and for years, people thought Napoleon was a pint-sized dictator ordering all the tall guys around.

Here's another one - swimming after eating causes cramps, and you could drown if you decide to jump in the water before letting your food settle. I was taught that during my swimming lessons as a kid.

Apparently there is no truth to that at all. Even the American Red Cross has said that is just a myth.

The theory actually came from a Boy Scouts manual in the early 1900's, with no basis in fact.

How about the one that says the Great Wall of China is the only man made object that can be seen from space.

Where that idea comes from is a mystery. No astronaut every claimed to see it. While the Great Wall is long, it is narrow, maybe ten metres wide.

Common sense tells you that if you could see an object only ten metres wide from space, then you should be able to see every 100 metre football and soccer field on the planet with ease.

One of my favourites is the myth that a penny dropped from a great height will kill a person. This one I was taught in science class by a teacher who sternly warned if you dropped a penny from a tall building, it will go completely through a person's head and kill them. He even told us he knew of a place were people did this and the pavement below is filled with pennies that fire into the asphalt at such a speed they are buried six inches deep.

He was actually a great teacher, but I think he should have paid more attention in his physics/weight/gravity/air resistance class. A penny dropped from height is so light, if it did hit you on the head, the most that will happen is a slight 'boink' effect as it bounces harmlessly off your noggin.

The Myth Busters TV show even did a segment on this ? Myth busted!

Another good one - when you look up into the night sky, you see millions of stars.

Well, there are millions of stars, but you don't see most of them.

Noted astrophysicist, Neil deGrasse Tyson said during a lecture, 'When you look up in the night sky, you don't see millions of stars ? you see thousands. I've counted them.'

He also said, 'With automatic spell checkers running unleashed over what we compose, our era is that of correctly spelled typos.'

Who said scientists don't have a sense of humour?

Finally, Thursday the 12th, is just as rare as Friday the 13th.

Go figure.