



When it comes to April Fools' Day, nobody is exempt, and there will be plenty of blame to go around. (Photo courtesy of Mark Rackay)



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

Make certain the disaster insurance is paid up, and batten down the hatches, because a full-blown, 3-alarm emergency is about to come a-calling.

April Fools' Day is just around the corner, and every amateur, prankster and wannabe jokester is going to start with the pranks.

I have several friends for whom April Fools' is not a "day," but rather a season. Their corny pranks and jokes will go on for a week or better, ad nauseam, until someone gets mad at them and threatens serious bodily harm.

I am completely numb to the pranks as I was raised by a grandfather who was the king of practical jokes. He did everything from eating my grandmother's dessert while she was in the ladies' room, and blaming it on me, to dressing up with a wig, trench coat, and beat-

nik-type disguise, and forcing his way into the neighbor lady's front door, trying to sell her a subscription to a dirty magazine, while her husband was at work.

April Fools' Day occurs on April 1 each year and has been celebrated for centuries by different cultures around the world. While the origin remains a bit hazy, the best speculation dates back to 1582, when France switched from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar. The Julian and the Hindu calendar had the new year beginning April 1.

People who were somewhat dense failed to recognize that the start of the new year had changed to the 1st of January, and continued to celebrate the April 1 date. These folks became the butt of jokes and hoaxes and were called "April fools."

One prank involved having a paper fish placed on their backs and being referred to as "poisson d'avril," or April fish, to symbolize a young, easily caught fish and a gullible person.

The day of jokes spread to Britain during the 18th century and became a 2-day event in Scotland, starting with "hunting the gowk." Gowk is a word for "cuckoo bird," and the victims were sent on phony errands and had "kick me" signs or tails hung on their backside.

Closer to home, the

nefarious day is celebrated, and some elaborate hoaxes have been perpetrated by newspapers, radio, and TV stations. In 1992, National Public Radio ran a spot with former President Nixon saying he was running for president again, only it was an actor, not Nixon, and the prank caught a gullible nation by surprise.

In 1996, Taco Bell duped people when it announced it had purchased the Liberty Bell and renamed it Taco Liberty Bell. Burger King brought out the Left-handed Whopper in 1998 and had gullible customers attempting to order one at their nearby restaurant. Our own Montrose Daily Press once published a fake edition front page, with a bunch of satirical articles, and some of the public fell for it as real.

Even outdoor people are not exempt from the April 1st pranks. At a large marina in the Florida Keys, early morning will find all the captains and mates scurrying around, getting their boats fueled up, iced down, and packed for the day's fishing charters set to leave the docks at 7 a.m.

Several of the boat crews got together in the late hours of the evening before April 1st and decorated the cockpit of one of the larger charter boats, a 52-footer with a full flybridge. The

morning of April 1st, the crew found their boat was taped off as a crime scene, complete with a fake body taped out in the cockpit. Fake blood and shell casings completed the setup. Seems everyone except the victims found the scene quite amusing. Fingers were pointed at me, the cop, as I was the only one of the group who had access to crime scene tape, but I maintain my innocence to this date.

Another story involved two hunting buddies. They both set up tent-style blinds in the woods, several miles apart, so they can go turkey hunting the following morning. One of the hunters relocated his buddy's turkey blind several hundred yards away, in a very large hay field. I hear it was pretty amusing watching the victim wander around aimlessly in the predawn darkness, searching for his missing blind, and defoliating all the shrubbery in the area with profane expressions.

I have been known to commit a few atrocities upon a few unsuspecting souls, to commemorate the holiday, and for my personal amusement. I will relate one story, and we shall call the victim "Carl."

Carl and I fished together on weekends and decided that Saturday, which happened to be April 1, we would take our families

out into the backcountry of the Keys for a family day of fishing. We both prepared our respective flats boats and fishing tackle the night before, so as to get an early start the next morning.

Carl placed his rigged fishing rods in my downstairs storage room so he could grab them in the morning. After Carl went home, I took it upon myself to strip off 30 feet of line from each reel, cut the line, and wind the cut portion back on the reel. Each outfit was already prepared with hooks and weights by Carl (we would be using live baits) and the outfits looked just as Carl had left them the night before, all eight rods.

The following morning, 25 miles into the backcountry, Carl and I anchored our boats "talking distance" apart. He baited up a hook, gave the rod to his wife, and she promptly cast the front 30 feet away. Carl was naturally high-strung, and this aggravated him to no end. Giving her a second baited rod, she repeated the performance. Carl made her sit quietly, and she was now forbidden to "touch anything" in his boat.

Carl then repeated the performance with his son, who threw away the first baited outfit, and the boy joined his mother as being "banned" from touching anything. By this time, Carl

was angry at everyone, and everyone was angry at Carl. Carl grabbed a rod to fish with by himself, and of course, threw the bait away into the water, along with 30 feet of line.

I could no longer stand the spectacle, and with tears of mirth streaming down my face, I told Carl what I had done. Fortunately, my boat was much faster than his, and he couldn't catch me. I understand his wife and son gave him the "silent treatment" for several days after the trip.

As this nefarious day approaches, prepare yourself, as you may become a victim of someone's prank. The best defense is a strong offense, and you might consider making a first strike. Personally, I am too old for such nonsense.

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BLM announces prescribed fire treatments in Tres Rios and Uncompahgre field offices

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is set to execute prescribed fire treatments this spring in the Tres Rios and Uncompahgre field offices.

These controlled burns aim to rejuvenate fire-adapted ecosystems,

safeguard Ponderosa pine stands, enhance wildlife habitat, and restore forest health and diversity.

The Carpenter Ridge project, situated north of Paradox Valley, CO, will cover 200 acres of oak brush and pine litter, promoting soil nutrient replenishment

and fostering native plant growth to benefit wildlife.

In the West Dolores Rim area, located east of Dove Creek, firefighters will utilize hand ignitions and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) to treat 2,591 acres of pine needle cast and mountain brush leaf

litter. This effort will mitigate brush and needle cast buildup, facilitating new plant growth and reducing the risk of severe wildfires.


Prescribed fire, conducted under suitable weather and vegetative conditions, enhances wildlife forage, boosts plant diversity, and

minimizes hazardous vegetation while improving woodland health.

Smoke permits have been secured from the Colorado State Air Pollution Control Division, ensuring adherence to atmospheric conditions conducive to safe burns.

Residents are advised

to stay informed about smoke-related health concerns and visit the Colorado State Air Pollution Control Division website for more information. Additional details on Southwest District prescribed fuel treatments are available on Inciweb and BLM's social media platforms.



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