

# Some Things I Should Clear Up...

Whenever I take a road trip, I find myself wondering about random things. Since I don't have access to the internet while I'm on vacation to look up these random things, I make a list to look up when I return home. Here is some of my look-up list from the trip to New York we just took:

– Are there bears in Pennsylvania? YES! I was wondering this as we were driving through their beautiful wooded hills, but I was still surprised to learn that there are black bears (who aren't always black) in PA. In fact, bears can be found in 50 of PA's 67 counties!

– Where did the airplane land in the Hudson River a few months ago? As I was looking at the Hudson from our hotel room, I was wondering if we were viewing the very spot (or crossing it on the ferry) where the plane landed. I found that it was just north of where we were. We probably would have seen it happen from our room; definitely from the boardwalk behind the hotel, and definitely if we had been on the ferry.

– What was that story about the chicken who lived for many years without his head? I don't know how this one came up in conversation, but it did, so here are the details as printed in wikipedia.com: *On Monday, September 10, 1945 at 6:45AM PST, farmer Lloyd Olsen of Fruita, Colorado, had his mother-in-law around for supper and was sent out to the yard by his wife to bring back a chicken. Olsen failed to completely decapitate the five-and-a-half month old bird named Mike. The axe missed the jugular vein, leaving one ear and most of the brain stem intact. On the first night after the decapitation Mike slept with his severed head under his wing. Despite Olsen's botched handiwork, Mike was still able to balance on a perch and walk clumsily; he even attempted to preen and crow,*

although he could do neither. After the bird did not die, a surprised Mr. Olsen decided to continue to care permanently for Mike, feeding him a mixture of milk and water via an eyedropper; he was also fed small grains of corn. Mike occasionally choked on his own mucus, which the Olsen family would clear using a syringe. When used to his new and unusual center of mass, Mike could easily get himself to the highest perches without falling. His crowing, though, was less impressive and consisted of a gurgling sound made in his throat, leaving him unable to crow at dawn. Mike also spent his time preening and attempting to peck for food with his neck. Being headless did not keep Mike from putting on weight; at the time of his partial beheading he weighed two and a half pounds, but at the time of his death this had increased to nearly eight pounds. In March 1947, at a motel in Phoenix on a stopover while traveling back home from tour, Mike started choking in the middle of the night. As the Olsens had inadvertently left their feeding and cleaning syringes at the sideshow the day before, they were unable to save Mike. Lloyd Olsen claimed that he had sold the bird off, resulting in stories of Mike still touring the country as late as 1949. Post mortem, it was determined that the axe blade had missed the carotid artery and a clot had prevented Mike from bleeding to death. Although most of his head was severed, most of his brain stem and one ear was left on his body. Since basic functions (breathing, heart-rate, etc) as well as most of a chicken's reflex actions are controlled by the brain stem, Mike was able to remain quite healthy. Other sources, including the Guinness Book of World Records, say that the chicken's severed esophagus passage could not take in enough air properly to be able to breathe; and therefore choked to death in the motel. So Mike the headless chicken lived for about 18 months without a head.

– Kent State Massacre – We saw lots of signs for Kent State on the trip, and we decided there must be a few campuses. We were wondering where the massacre happened, what year, how

many people were killed, and what happened to the murderer. Kent State happened in Kent, Ohio (a little bit outside of Cleveland and Akron – so that was the same Kent State University we saw signs for). 4 students were killed and 9 wounded, some paralyzed for life. But what makes this massacre significant is that the students were shot by the Ohio National Guard – not a lone gunman gone crazy. The 3 adults in the car decided that if Kent State would have happened in more recent times, it would not be nearly as historically significant because sadly, there are many more of these types of massacres nowadays. However, I don't think any of us realized that it was the National Guard doing the shooting – which I should have; I remember studying this in Sociology class, but apparently the knowledge didn't stick...

– Murder in Small Town X – Do you remember this reality show? It was basically like a reality show of a murder mystery; there were actors, witnesses and victims. I thought it sounded cool, but I didn't watch it when it aired even though I wanted to. I was in the middle of moving out of the state I grew up in for the first time and busy with my first 2-year-old. The show was cancelled, but what was significant about it was this: The final episode aired on September 4, 2001 – exactly one week before the infamous terrorist attack on the US – 9/11. And the last contestant standing, the guy who won the jeep and the \$250,000 prize, Angel Juarbe, was a firefighter from New York who perished in the attacks one week after the final episode of the show aired.

– What the heck does “poppy” mean? In a bizarre episode I forgot to put in my trip diary, my husband pulled up to a full serve gas pump in New Jersey without realizing it. The attendant came out and tried to take the nozzle away from my husband, who said, “I already swiped my card.” – he had no idea what this guy was doing since he didn't know he was in full serve. The attendant snapped, “Stop asking so many questions!” and proceeded to pump the gas and kept calling my

bewildered (and very tired) husband “poppy” and “boss”. As we pulled away from the gas station, we noticed we had in fact been in the full serve area, but that still didn’t clear up the mystery of all the alleged questions my husband asked and what the heck poppy means. I remembered an episode of Cops I had seen where a perp kept calling the cop “poppy”, and the cop was getting extremely irritated. “Stop calling me Poppy!”, he said, to which the perp replied, “I’m sorry poppy” and it kept going on and on like that until the cop finally charged the guy with something and hauled him off to jail, probably because they guy really just couldn’t help himself from saying “Poppy”. So what does it mean? When I looked it up, all I found was stuff about flowers and something about a nickname for a grandpa (sorry Hon!). But I tried changing the spelling, because it seemed like the guy was speaking spanish, so I tried to spell it in Spanish, and I came up with Papi. When I looked that up, I was scared about the results – it was one of those wiki-answers places, so here is a direct quote: *“To me, papi means: Daddy, Baby, My Love...you say it to the boyfriends, husbands, and sons...if you are in a committed relationship. If you are single, then to a man you have an interest in getting to know alot better.”* Giggling, I read this quote to my husband, and his eyes got really wide and he insisted that I do further research on the subject. I don’t have a lot of time on my hands for this kind of stuff, so I found the fact that different cultures have different meaning for Hispanic terms, and apparently it’s common for Dominicans to call other males “papi”. But it seemed to be condescending when the attendant was saying it, and I’m not sure I even have the correct spelling of papi. Anyone want to offer any help on this? Any spanish-speakers out there? Mary, you love a good mystery, I hear ☐

Well, anyway, that’s about everything on the list, or all I have time to put into a blog post, anyway. I hope you learned something, least of all the randomness 3 adults talk about on a very long road trip when the kids are asleep! Some day, I

will probably have internet right there in the car with me to look up these things. In fact, I will probably be *blogging* on the road trip – let's just hope I'm not the one driving!