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About New York

City's April Fools: They'd Be Jailed In Pittsburgh

By WILLIAM E. GEIST

The trouble with April Fool's Day in New York City, of course, is that there's no way to tell who's kidding and who's not.

It's really just another day in New York. Yesterday, for example, Phil Clemons reported seeing two penguins getting into a limousine outside the Inter-Continental Hotel and no one locked him up. He wasn't kidding. "They're guests," a spokesman for the hotel explained of the sighting, adding that the penguins had been ordering platters of herring from room service. The two, Pete and Penny, work at Sea World in Florida and were in New York on a promotional tour.

Mr. Clemons, an aspiring actor, has been asking about a nice, one-bedroom apartment in Manhattan for under $650 a month. "Are you kidding?" people reply.

Bob Golub was out selling "Bob's Lucky Potatoes" on Wall Street. He used to be kidding about the lucky potatoes, which he sells from a suitcase at the corner of Liberty Street and Broadway. Not anymore.

Mr. Golub said he makes as much as $100 a day selling his potatoes, which he marks with a felt-tipped pen, to superstitious stockbrokers. "This may sound peculiar" — why stop now? — "but I sprinkle them with lucky water from my grandmother's well," he said.

> For some, there is an extremely fine line between being crazy and chic.

"There are guys making $500,000 a year walking around here with lucky potatoes in their suits," he said. The price of a potato is whatever customers wish to give. He once received a $200 tip from a stockbroker who hit it big with a potato in his pocket. Another customer won several thousand dollars in the lottery and bought Bob a tuxedo.

"I'm from Pennsylvania," he said. "And I'll tell you something: If you did this in Pittsburgh, they'd lock you up."

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Now if you lived in Peoria, not New York, and someone told you to rush over to a beauty salon offering the latest thing — lion urine treatments — you would realize immediately that it was April Fool's Day. And if you were foolish enough to go to the salon and ask for the treatment, everyone would have a good laugh.

Not so in New York, where people were going to Corallo's Hair and Skin Salon on West 72d Street, asking for lion urine on their hair and — guess what? — getting it.

"I don't know if it will become a huge fad," said Esther Cohen, who works for a publishing company and has regular treatments to make her hair shine. "When I tell people I have lion urine in my hair, some recoil. It smells like bananas, actually, but it still might be hurting my career." She said the idea hadn't shocked her at first, because her previous hairdresser wrapped her head in Time magazines.

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Stan Wunderlich insisted he wasn't kidding either. The investment banker was preparing for today's "Backwards Mile Race" — chicken feed for Mr. Wunderlich, who runs the New York Marathon backwards. About 150 "retro-runners" are expected to compete in the race at 12:45 P.M. in Battery Park, sponsored by the New York Health and Racquet Club and WQHT-FM.

Advocates say there are lots of health benefits to running backwards, and Mr. Wunderlich said it's great for building up neck muscles since you look over your shoulder all the time. "You could easily be run over," he noted. "There are a lot of crazy people in New York."

"When people see me running they go crazy," he said. "I guess there is a fine line between being crazy and chic. With all of the corruption on Wall Street, it's good for people to see investment bankers do normal things after work, like this exercising."

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Stephen Holzinger wasn't waiting yesterday for April Fool's Day to express his enthusiasm for dog-wear.

Mr. Holzinger brushes dogs, spins wool from their hair and makes hats, sweaters, vests and gloves. Mr. Holzinger, an associate professor of advanced cooking at the New York City Technical College in Brooklyn, said he got the idea when he was walking his dogs and noticed he was freezing and they weren't.

"I made a vest for a man who wanted to look like his Norfolk terrier," he said, proudly, "and I think he does."

"To market the clothes would be insanely expensive," he said, noting it takes him one hour to make an ounce of dog wool. "But then again, this is New York."

Joey Skaggs was making preparations yesterday for the second annual April 1 Parade down Fifth Avenue. He said that a King of Fools is to be named (last year's was Ferdinand E. Marcos) and that this year's nominees include Col. Oliver North, Sylvester Stallone, Joan Rivers, Ivan F. Boesky, President Reagan and Nancy Reagan. People are invited to participate by dressing up as their favorite fool or by dragging a float.

Bill Mulcahey showed up in costume for the parade last year and found that he was about the only one there. Mr. Skaggs may be the only one in New York who really is kidding.

"It's hard to know," Mr. Mulcahey said. "We have the same problem with Halloween in the East Village."