During a lifetime we all collect information, both useful and irrelevant. Much of the trivia is received in passing and the truth of it can't always be verified. Here are some anecdotes that I've collected along the way. I can't testify to their accuracy, and they probably won't make you any the wiser, but hopefully one or two will raise a smile.

SOMEONE ONCE SAID...

...of a British political leader...

Attending a function, Winston Churchill found himself unavoidably cornered by an old adversary. The lady in question held a mutual dislike for Winston and after exchanging a few unpleasant comments she was becoming increasingly belligerent. At the end of her tether, she declared: "Sir, if you were my husband, I'd shoot you!" To which Winston replied: "Madam, if you were my wife, I'd give you the bullets!"

...of a professional golfer...

During a tournament, the weather had been worsening making it uncomfortable for the players. When the thunder and lightning started it was the last straw. Declaring it was too dangerous, organisers suggested to the players that it might be best to quit until the storm had passed. Lee Trevino stepped up and said he wouldn't mind carrying on because there was a sure-fire way of avoiding a lightning strike. "I'll just hold up my one iron," he mused. "Even God can't hit a one iron."

...of a well-known Australian saying...

It was used in the famous Aussie poem which almost became the National anthem. Those in favour of elevating it to this position probably liked it mainly because of the tune. The fact that it told the story of a wanderer who thought nothing of stealing put a few off, but not all. I do wonder, though, who would still have considered it a good idea, had they known the truth behind the ending and the title?
   The term, Waltzing Matilda, is often assumed to be an innocuous one suggesting something relatively pleasant. So, in the song, when the Troopers see that the Jolly Swagman has illegally acquired a stray jumbuck (sheep), they tell him that he will "...come a-Waltzing Matilda..." with them. No jolly dance, this one, nor a hop and a skip through the countryside. Waltzing Matilda describes the actions he will soon be performing as he dangles from the hangman's rope! I'd say the jumbuck got the better part of the deal.

...of another old saying...

These days we use the term generic or wysiwyg (wizziewig) - what you see is what you get, replacing the older phrase, warts an' all. Before the invention of the camera, paintings were often used to relay the likeness of a person when a face-to-face meeting wasn't possible. There was, however, concern by the artist that the one sitting for a portrait might be upset if a truthful portrayal was unflattering; and if the sitter was in a position of power, as was frequently the case, there was a danger of losing more than the agreed fee and future business. So, it was always wise to paint a subject in the "best light" and keep one's head. The recipient of such a painting, however, might not appreciate the artistic licence, as was the case with Henry VIII when he finally met his future wife, Anne of Cleves who, according to him, was

ugly and nothing like her portrait.

An advocate of unvarnished simplicity, Oliver Cromwell had no intention of being remembered in this politically correct manner. When he commissioned Peter Lely to paint his portrait, he told the artist to keep it truthful and not to flatter. Cromwell wanted a simple, honest rendition showing, "pimples, warts and all". And that's what he got, a painting of himself as plain and severe as the rule he imposed on the people of England during his time as Protector.

...and another...

Money for old rope tends to be used to describe something, generally a task, that is profitable and really easy to do. Actually, ages ago, people did get money for old rope. They were the unfortunates who were just one step away from the poor house and couldn't secure better employment. They would sit in dim light for hours, disentangling the fibres of rope-ends, often knotted, that had been cut from the main length because they were frayed or too hard to untie. Their rewards for providing this recyclable product were broken nails, sore and bleeding fingers, and a mere pittance in payment. Money for old rope - easy? You've got to be joking!

...of a rude gesture...

The two-finger salute, or ' V ' sign, has long been used as a derogatory way to insult someone from a distance. It is said to have originated in medieval times when archers were a force to be reckoned with. Following the capture of these deadly bowmen, their enemy would cut off the first two fingers of their hand so that they could no longer draw a bow-string. Why they weren't simply executed, I have no idea - perhaps the finger treatment was thought to be the ultimate punishment for a professional archer. Those who did manage to escape capture and retained the ability to inflict serious casualties would taunt the opposition from a safe distance with the two-finger salute, declaring: we've still got ours, and we're going to make you pay!

…of a Hollywood tough-guy…

British actor, David Niven, and his wife were dining out with Lauren Bacall and her long-time partner Humphrey Bogart. Renowned for his tough on-screen roles, Bogy, apparently, had some issue with their waiter and had tossed a few sardonic comments in his direction. The waiter took umbrage and the argument began heating up to the point where it looked like physical violence was on the menu, something Humphrey was used to, but only on the film set, it seemed. It wasn't he who landed the first punch, or any for that matter. Lauren was the one to take a mighty swing at the offending waiter. Just as in the movies, this was a signal for the entire place to erupt in mayhem, and in moments everyone was brawling. All, that is, except for David who had grabbed his wife and dragged her down beneath the safety of the table. That was where they came face-to-face with Bogy, talented actor and ultimate survivalist.

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