

# BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THERE REALLY IS A WORLD EAST OF NEW YORK

I write this in a very light-hearted frame of mind, so there is absolutely no need for anyone to feel offended by what they read.



A few weeks ago and alike the fox alongside, I was at ease in my bed and following a pursuit popularly known as sleeping. As far as I can determine, most people do this at a reasonably predictable period in the twenty-four hour diurnal and usually, in Biblical terms, “*when darkness covers the earth.*”

So, there I was in a profoundly horizontal position and being a nuisance to absolutely no-one – not even myself, so it can reasonably be argued that peace prevailed in my house.

But then, the strident ringing of the telephone by my bed effectively shattered my slumbers. The instrument alongside my pillows is fitted with a loud bell because once I am asleep, it needs something akin to an earthquake to wake me. Sleepily, I reached for the receiver and promptly put the mouthpiece to my ear which, in terms of ease of communication, was perhaps not a sensible move. Untangling the flex from my wrist and still groping in vain for the bedside light, I finally managed to answer the call, expecting that for anyone to ring at such an hour, it could only be a family emergency.

It wasn't – though for the person making the call, it was clearly an emergency - of sorts.

*“Oh, Jaaaahn?”* said a very American voice.

*“Speaking,”* I replied in a sleepy tone.

*“Jaaaahn, this is .....I've forgotten his name. I'm calling you from El Ay. That's in California?”*

*“Yes. I'm aware of its location.”*

*“See here, Jaaaahn – I got your phone number off of the 'net and I wanted to know if you could help me about white sidewalls on a TR4?”*

*‘Off of?’* I speculated for not the first time. When the hell will people of any nationality actually learn to speak grammatical English???

*“In what respect, exactly?”*

There was a brief silence.

*“Er, Jaaaahn, I hope I'm not disturbing ya? I'm just leaving the office to go home?”*

*“Disturbing me? No, not really. I was only putting the finishing touches to my own homemade atomic bomb!”*

A puzzled silence.

I continued. *“Without putting too fine a point on things, I think you should know that I'm asleep. At least, I **was** asleep until you called. I hope you understand?”*

*“Hey. A quick snooze in your favourite chair after supper, huh?”*

*“No. A little more than that. Truth to tell, I'm in bed – asleep. As I've just made clear, I was asleep before you rang as it just happens to be four-thirty in the morning here!”*

There was another brief pause, as though the caller was trying to work out exactly what I had said.

Then came a question I found a little surprising.

*“Oh. Did I wake ya?”* The question was followed by an indulgent chuckle.

*“In a word, Yes.”*

No apology.

*"Gee that's strange. Most won't have gone to bed yet in New York - and that's four hours ahead of where I am."*

Oddly, there was no further apology – even though I pointed out (as politely as I could) that British Summer Time is plus five hours on whatever it might be in New York – and the difference is constant.

He entirely ignored that and proceeded to acquaint me with a prolonged tale of woe about the difficulty he was having obtaining white sidewall tyres – the narrow band version. It seems he'd been offered several types with varying band widths – but wanted to be sure *"he wasn't getting screwed and choosing the wrong variant."*

Ye gods, yet another '**originality at all costs**' freak!

This statement of prevailing difficulties in the ultimate restoration of a sixty plus year old car, then headed off into the stratospheric regions of whether suspension trunnions should be greased or oiled - and finally, a detailed resumé on the weight of oil to use in SU and Stromberg dashpots - and why, would be most helpful.

I have to say (with regret) it was all getting rather tiresome but I tried to make allowances for the fact the caller was obviously an enthusiast – but I wasn't prepared to put up with it much longer. Politely, oh so politely, I asked for his number and promised to call him back when I had obtained the answers to his questions.

I indicated *"it wouldn't take all that long to get an answer I hoped would help."*

He was pleased as punch at this revelation and said he awaited my call with interest.

*"Would I be long?"* he asked.

I said I didn't think so and could probably let him know within twenty-four hours. Would that be alright?

He thought it would.



We hung up – and somehow I returned to my slumbers.

At about lunchtime the next day and having determined the approximate width of narrow white sidewalls from an old friend who had retired from Dunlop, I returned the call.

A very sleepy voice answered after what seemed an eternity of a ringing tone.

*"Huh?"* it grunted.

In my very best and cheerful voice of 'the-sun-has-got-his-hat-on-and-it's-coming-out-today', I said, *"sorry to bother you, but just before I go down to the pub for my lunchtime pint, I thought I'd give you an answer to the question you posed a few hours ago about your white sidewalls? Apologies for the delay, but it's taken all morning to get reliable answers to your questions – but here we go. Whitewalls were about an inch and a half, though Dunlops and Goodyears were slightly different."*

All of a sudden, I found myself somewhat rudely interrupted.

*"Who the \*\*\*\* is this? Do you know what time it is?"*

*"Er, Yes. It's about a quarter to one."*

*"Perhaps it is buddy - but it's three o'clock in the \*\*\*\*ing morning here!!!!!!!!!"*

*"Oh, did I wake you? It's lunchtime in England and mainland Europe's only an hour ahead of British Summer Time."*

After just one more expostulation on his part, there was an audible click in my earpiece and the dialling tone was heard.

Isn't human nature a very strange thing?

In the spirit of helping out a fellow enthusiast, you do your best to get the required info. Then, having obtained it, you make a transatlantic call at your own cost - and at

peak rates I might add, only to get the phone slammed down on you before you've even really started to answer the points raised.

And when you do all this, the very last word shouted at you as the call is terminated, is *“\*\*\*hole!”* – and the satellite handled it perfectly.

Crisp, clear, unmistakable – it went zinging out into space and was promptly bounced back to the UK's steam-operated telephone system - and without further let or hindrance, into my little three hundred year old cottage home.

I conjecture that *“\*\*\*hole”* has never travelled so fast – or perhaps even so far? I'm inclined to think that because of its clarity, it might have even possessed state-of-the-art 'digital' properties. What a triumph for technology!

But doesn't such a response tend to corrupt your faith in human nature, or am I just a mite too sensitive? Just two words such as *‘thank you’* would have been courteous and demonstrated gratitude – but *“\*\*\*hole!”* was my only reward.

As I replaced the telephone handset on its cradle, I briefly pondered why it is that just a few of the people I meet or occasionally encounter, are so far up their own *\*\*\*\*holes* that they think only of themselves and their own unique needs.

Perhaps they're all so mentally maladjusted that they entirely fail to understand there really are things called world time standards - both west of El Ay and east of New York as well? We have to assume such individuals are so obsessed with what they want, that they just don't seem to have the mental 'nous' to perform one little human process, called thinking – or perhaps they just don't care?

On occasions, I wonder how some people actually manage to get through the course of one day without a disaster confronting them and all this only serves to remind me of a notice my former maths teacher had pinned to the front of his classroom desk.

It said:

***“CONSIDER THE FACTS.  
You'll often find it can make a world of difference!”***