

Trivia cap-sules / Lots of nickel knowledge under those Snapple closures

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"A duck's quack doesn't echo."
"A snail breathes through its foot."
"Fish cough."

You learn a lot reading the inside of Snapple caps. You choose your flavor - lemonade or pink lemonade or peach iced tea or whatever - and you twist the cap. It opens with a jaunty, snappy "Thwop!" You flip the cap over and there it is, a "Real Fact" to ponder as you gulp.

"A camel has 3 eyelids."
"Slugs have 4 noses."

"Lizards communicate by doing pushups."

The facts on Snapple caps are incredible, astonishing, mind-blowing. To read Snapple's 229 Real Facts is to realize that the world is more strange and wondrous than you'd ever imagined.

"Squids can have eyes the size of a volleyball."

"Oysters can change from one gender to another and back again."

"Mosquitoes are attracted to people who have recently eaten bananas."

The world according to Snapple is full of marvels and oddities. It's a place where "beavers were once the size of bears" and "a sneeze travels out of your mouth at over 100 miles an hour" and "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star was composed by Mozart when he was five years old."

So it should come as no surprise to dedicated readers of Snapple caps that the story of the caps is full of weird little facts that could appear on Snapple caps if Snapple ever decided to create Snapple caps about the history of Snapple caps.

The idea for Snapple's Real Facts was born early in 2002, during what seemed at the time like an ordinary Snapple marketing meeting.

"We were thinking of a way to entertain our customers," recalls Maura Mottolese, Snapple's VP of marketing, "and we thought, 'The real estate under the cap is unused real estate now.'"

It wasn't always unused real estate. Back in 2000, the real estate was used for jokes. But, Mottolese admits, the jokes were "pretty sophomoric" ("If the No. 2 pencil is the most popular, why is it still 2?").

"We were looking for something out of the ordinary that they wouldn't know and wouldn't even know they'd want to know," says Marke Rubenstein, executive vice president of Snapple's ad agency, Deutsch Inc.

And they needed these facts fast - in time to get them onto Snapple caps before the spring Snapple-drinking season. Rubenstein sent orders to Deutsch offices in Chicago and Los Angeles, demanding that they find weird facts on the double.

Within weeks, Rubenstein and Mottolese had a list of 300 weird facts. They whittled it down to the 109 Real Facts that appeared on Snapple caps in 2002. In 2003, they produced a second list of 120.

Along the way, scores of facts were rejected. If truth be told, some facts just aren't good enough to be Real Facts.

"They have to fit within the Snapple brand persona," says Mottolese, who shoulders the awesome responsibility of making the final decision.

She's a little vague about just what, exactly, constitutes Snapple's "brand persona." She also declines to give examples of facts rejected by Snapple.

"I wouldn't want to say," she says, "because I wouldn't want to see it in print."

Fortunately, Rubenstein was less secretive, and she faxed a list of 14 rejected facts that you will never see on a Snapple cap, including these:

"The sixth most common phobia is that of vomiting."

"Baby polar bears often hum as they nurse on their mother's milk."

"Brad Pitt was once a driver for strippers."

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