

Hot Time in the Old Town

Much of the country is sweltering in the heat of the “Dog Days of Summer,” a term used for the hottest, most sultry days of the season.

The term, *Dog Days*, was coined by the ancient Romans, who called these days the *caniculares dies* (days of the dogs) after Sirius (the Dog Star), the brightest star in the heavens besides the sun.



The Old Farmer’s Almanac lists the traditional timing of the Dog Days as the 40 days beginning July 3 and ending Aug. 11, which was this past Sunday, coinciding with the ancient heliacal (at sunrise) rising of the Dog Star. But, the Dog Days aren’t over – if the thermometer has anything to do with it. This past Tuesday (Aug. 13) was the hottest day of the year – 100 degrees – in Cleveland, with the heat index in the 106 to 109 range. And throw in high humidity, too.

In the midst of it all, folks maintain a sense of humor. A good laugh can make uncomfortable conditions more bearable. As proof, I shall offer up a few stories and one-liners I have read this summer, and a few dredged up from the past, when we experienced similar difficulties. How about these:

- “It’s so hot that if you spit on the sidewalk, it would sizzle – except that it’s so dry it evaporates before it hits.”
- “It’s so hot it’s kind of like being bitten by a rattlesnake. If you stay still, you’ll be all right, but if you move around, you’re dead.”
- “It’s so hot I saw a mockingbird pulling a worm out of the ground, and he was using a pot holder.”
- “It’s so hot I’ve been boiling the creek water to cool it off.”
- “It’s so dry the Baptists have taken to sprinkling, the Methodists are using a wet rag, and the Episcopalians are handing out rain checks.”
- “It’s so hot I saw a dog chasing a rabbit, and they were both walking.”



(more)

- From a fellow from Louisiana passing through: “It’s so hot I walked by a mausoleum the other day, and all the doors were open.”
- From a Texan (who else?) visiting Cleveland: “It’s so hot my Cadillac boiled over one day last week, and I lost 200 head of cattle to heat prostration. But I ain’t hurt as bad as the big boys.”

Obviously, the imagination of some people is working overtime.

But then there are some stories that purportedly are based on fact, such as the one about the woman who put a foil-wrapped chicken on the rear window ledge of her car in the morning, and by the time she got home from work, it was cooked.



When it comes to the old favorite hot-weather stories, it’s hard to tell which came first – the chicken that lays poached eggs or the egg that gets fried on the sidewalk.

All of this doesn’t do much to help your day, but at least, perhaps, it tickled your funny bone.

– Beecher Hunter