

Historical Coincidences... That Will Leave Your Head Spinning

| By: Turx |

Have you ever had a series of events happen to you that seemed almost too strange to be a coincidence? The truth is, statistics tell us that of the world's seven billion people, many people each day should have a coincidental occurrence happen to them. Still, some are so amazing that they are almost unbelievable. Enjoy these strange but true tales of some of history's most unlikely happenings.



What are the odds that your electric meter will read exactly the same digits as your phone number? According to writer and author Marilyn vos Savant in *The Power of Logical Thinking*, the chances are pretty high... of that happening to someone.

Basically, of the billions of people in the world, given a number of years, the odds for one of them to match electric meters to phone numbers (or, in another example, matching a serial number to a social security number) becomes almost a certainty. In other words, according to her, coincidences are mathematical certainties. As Dr. Frederick Mosteller, an emeritus mathematics professor at Harvard, was quoted in *The New York Times*, "With a large enough sample, any outrageous thing is apt to happen."

Albert Einstein, on the other hand, would disagree. He believed that, "Coincidence is G-d's way of remaining anonymous." Others, like novelist Vladimir Nabokov, take a different route altogether, as noted in the following anecdote: "A certain man once lost a diamond cufflink in the wide blue sea, and 20 years later, on the exact day, a Friday apparently, he was eating a large fish—but there was no diamond inside. That's what I like about coincidence."

Cambridge University's Professor David Spiegelhalter's take on coincidences is that, "Sometimes they are lucky, sometimes unlucky; sometimes just mind-boggling." According to him, coincidences typically break into these basic categories:

- Surprising repetitions: for instance, when you've had no contact with someone for ages, then find two connections to them very close in time. Or when, over several years, multiple members of the same family are born with the same birthday. Or even a repetition of a really rare event—like winning the lottery twice, or your life being saved twice by the same person!
- Simultaneous events: for example, when two people phone each other at exactly the same time.



On November 12, 2001, American airlines flight 587 crashed shortly after departing New York's JFK airport. The state of New Jersey has two Pick 3 lotteries each day, and that day's first winning number was 587, and second was 578. Strange?



Coincidence becomes irony when the results are the opposite of what would normally be expected.



Conspiracy theorists saw strange coincidences in everything that had a connection with the 9/11 attacks.

- Parallel lives: such as when two people in a small group find they share a birthday or an unusual name, or when two people discover their lives match each other in bizarre details.
- Uncanny patterns: imagine picking letters in Scrabble that spell your name.
- Unlikely chains of events: perhaps your

false teeth fell overboard and you found them inside a fish that you caught 20 years later.

Most coincidences in this article fall into one of these categories.

A King's Handsome

It would seem that in the long and colorful history of the Italian people, King Umberto I was the first person named Umberto to show an interest in the acquisition of a national throne. Of course, that is why he was known as Umberto I. But it could have been someone else entirely.

King Umberto was once travelling through the cozy little town of Monza, on July 28, 1900, and he stopped in a quiet little restaurant along the route. The owner came out to personally assist him. The king was astounded when the restaurateur approached him and offered to take his order—not because the owner was taking his order, but because he looked *exactly like him!* All the way down to the majestic mustache!

"What's your name?" the king asked.

"Umberto," answered the kind gentleman.

"As am I," replied King Umberto! The two started chatting because how often does one meet one's exact double who even possesses the same name?

As the conversation between the identical-looking Umbertos proceeded, things started getting a little bit weird....

And just when you thought it couldn't get any more bizarre:

It turns out they were both born on the same day, March 14, 1844.... And they were both born in the same town as well.

Each married different wives, of course, but both women were named Margherita. The two couples had gotten married on the same day, and each had a son named Vittorio.

And the day that Umberto opened his restaurant was the very same day King Umberto was crowned.

Wait, it isn't over yet:

While some kings would have felt threatened by such a double, King Umberto did not feel that way. He enjoyed the meal and the company of his fellow Umberto. Before leaving Lowly Umberto, King Umberto invited him for an official visit to the royal palace, an offer which Ordinary Umberto readily accepted. The king retired to his royal house in Monza, together with his aide, General Emilio Ponzia-Vaglia.

The following day the king asked if anyone had noticed the presence of the other Umberto, his eagerly anticipated visitor. No one had. Finally, word reached the king that the other Umberto had been killed in a shooting accident (he was cleaning his gun and accidentally shot himself). King Umberto, having learned nothing from this coincidental story, was assassinated mere moments later.

The chain of coincidences is ever more amazing, because it all happened in just two



King Umberto traveling in his royal carriage.



King Umberto I.