

Senseless Selfies, Creepy Clowns and Trump's Triumph: This Year In Odd News

Searches for selfies led to many bad decisions, an outbreak of creepy clown sightings chilled even horror maestro Stephen King, and a hard-fought campaign ended with the election of former reality TV star Donald Trump as president of the United States.

Along with moments of triumph and tragedy, 2016 brought stories that ranged from weird to wonderful, funny to flummoxing.

New York's Museum of Modern Art rolled out an exhibit of emojis this month. In September, the Satanic Temple, which says it promotes separation of church and state rather than devil worship, found a new home in Salem, Massachusetts, best known for the 17th-century witch trials.

A man visiting New York in October sparked an evacuation of the city's Metropolitan Opera when he sprinkled the cremated remains of his mentor, an opera aficionado, into the orchestra pit.

SELFIE SNAFUS

One common theme among the strangest stories was that access to a camera and a desire for attention was a recipe for bad ideas.

A Texas teen in October crashed her vehicle into the back of a police car while trying to take a topless photo of herself.

"I asked her why she was not dressed while driving," the arresting officer wrote in an affidavit. "She stated she was taking a Snapchat photo to send to her boyfriend."

In April, a California man was sentenced to 20 years in prison for setting one of the state's worst wildfires after filming himself surrounded by the flames.

Courts ruled that the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution protects the right of voters in states including New Hampshire and Michigan to take selfies with their filled-in ballots.

The debut of Nintendo's Pokemon GO mobile-phone game, which sends players hunting for imaginary monsters on public streets, brought a wave of complaints, notably in July when a pair of obsessed teens accidentally but illegally crossed the border from Canada into Montana.

NO CLOWNING AROUND

A spate of summertime sightings of creepy clowns lurking near playgrounds, standing alone in the rain or allegedly living in previously abandoned cabins in woods around Greenville, South Carolina, led to a series of strange stories.

The alleged sightings spread north and caused panicked passersby to chase some pranksters. By Halloween, school principals were warning students not to show up in clown costumes.

The stories unnerved even author Stephen King, whose dozens of spine-chilling novels include "It," the tale of a supernatural being that appears as a clown.

"If I saw a clown lurking under a lonely bridge (or peering up at me from a sewer grate, with or without balloons), I'd be scared, too," King told his local newspaper, the Bangor Daily News, in September.

TRUMP'S TRIUMPH

The year 2016 also brought a race for the White House like none Americans had seen before, with the first female major-party candidate, Democrat Hillary Clinton up against

Republican Trump.

The real estate magnate's penchant for tweeting his opinions, as well as sometimes unsubstantiated allegations about rivals, colored the contest.

As early as May, Trump was making headlines when he posted a photo of himself eating a taco salad in honor of the Cinco de Mayo holiday – after he had threatened to deport millions of Hispanic illegal immigrants.

“Happy #CincoDeMayo!” tweeted Trump (@realDonaldTrump). “The best taco bowls are made in Trump Tower Grill. I love Hispanics!”

The president-elect showed a bit of humor early this month when he wore a business suit to a major donor's “Villains and Heroes” costume party.

Asked by reporters what he was dressed as, he mouthed the word “me.” {eoa}

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