

# Think global warming is fuss about nothing? Look what one little volcano did to the whole of Europe!

Benjamin Franklin became first American Ambassador to France in 1776 when he was 70, and remained there until 1785.

French society welcomed him as he took the trouble to learn the language and the rule of etiquette.

While he was there he continued to produce scientific papers, and one entitled "Meteorological imaginations and conjectures" in 1784 described an unusual phenomenon.

"During several of the summer months of the year 1783, when the effect of the sun's rays to heat the earth in these northern regions should have been greatest, there existed a constant fog over all Europe, and great part of North America.

*This fog was of a permanent nature; it was dry, and the rays of the sun seemed to have little effect towards dissipating it, as they easily do a moist fog, arising from water.*

*They were indeed rendered so faint in passing through it, that when collected in the focus of a burning glass, they would scarce kindle brown paper. Of course, their summer effect in heating the earth was exceedingly diminished.*

*Hence the surface was early frozen.*

*Hence the first snows remained on it unmelted, and received continual additions.*

*Hence the air was more chilled, and the winds more severely cold.*

*Hence perhaps the winter of 1783-4 was more severe, than any that had happened for many years.*

*The cause of this universal fog is not yet ascertained.*

*Either it was adventitious to this earth, and*

*merely a smoke, proceeding from the consumption by fire of some of those great burning balls or globes which we happen to meet with in our rapid course round the sun.*

*And which are sometimes seen to kindle and be destroyed in passing our atmosphere, and whose smoke might be attracted and retained by our earth.*

*Or whether it was the vast quantity of smoke, long continuing to issue during the summer from Hecla in Iceland.*

*And that other volcano which arose out of the sea near that island, which smoke might be spread by various winds, over the northern part of the world, is yet uncertain."*

Franklin considered the possibility that the "dry fog" in France was due to a celestial body striking the Earth.

In England, Bedfordshire poet William Cooper wrote that in the summer of 1783;

"Such multitudes are indisposed by fevers in



Benjamin Franklin at the Court of France

Panic and fear were widespread as smog, acid rain and extreme weather prevailed.

Thousands of miles away things were even worse.

In Iceland nearly a third of the population died as the volcano known as Laki belched forth its sulphurous poisons and caused atmospheric cooling with the resulting extreme weather.

From local records it is known that the Laki eruption began on June 8, 1783 and lasted eight months.

Over 14,000 cubic kilometres of lava and ash spewed out and covered an area of more than 500 square km.

It is thought that ten separate earthquakes caused the volcano to erupt a similar number of times causing new cracks to open releasing the gases.

The eruption then became "Hawaiian-style fire fountains" throwing out even more lava.

The fire fountains reached heights of 800-1400 meters and the ash fell throughout mainland Europe causing cooling throughout the northern hemisphere.

Although its effects equalled the Great Fire of London, it has largely been forgotten.

In England alone it took over 23,000 lives and it spread from Scandinavia throughout Western Europe.

One small volcano in Iceland created the worst natural disaster in Europe in modern times.



Eruption Mount Krafla Iceland

*this country that farmers have difficulty gathering their harvest, the labourers having been almost every day carried out of the field incapable of work and many die."*

Newspapers reported the presence of thick smog, and a dull sun, "coloured like it has been soaked in blood".

The toxic cloud first reached Britain on the 22 June 1783.

In his Naturalist's Journal, Gilbert White reported: "The peculiar haze or smoky fog that prevailed in this island and even beyond its limits was a most extraordinary appearance, unlike anything known within the memory of man."

The cloud, which contained sulphur dioxide and sulphuric acid, lasted for many weeks and attacked the lungs of its victims, killing many from all walks of life throughout western Europe..



Hawaii Fire Fountain

## A BEER BEFORE IT STARTS



A man came home from work, sat down in his favorite chair, turned on the TV, and said to his wife, "Quick, bring me a beer before it starts". She looked a little puzzled, but brought him a beer. When he finished it, he said, "Quick, bring me another beer. It's gonna start."

This time she looked a little angry, but brought him a beer. When it was gone, he said, "Quick, get me another beer before it starts." "That's it!" She blows her top, "You b\*stard! You waltz in here, flop your fat \*ss down, don't even say hello to me and then expect me to run around like your slave getting you beer after beer. Don't you realize that I cook and clean and wash and iron all day long??"

The husband sighed and said, "Oh sh-t, it's started."

An old couple were sitting at the breakfast table one morning when the wife says, "Just think, fifty years ago we were sitting here at this breakfast table together". "I know," the old man said. "We were probably sitting here naked as a jaybird fifty years ago." "Well", Granny snickered. "Let's relive some old times." So they two stripped off and sat down at the table. "You know, honey," the little old lady breathlessly replied, "My boobs are as hot for you today as they were fifty years ago." "I'm not surprised," replied Gramps. "One's in your coffee and the other is in your porridge"

One night, as a couple lays down for bed, the husband starts rubbing his wife's arm. The wife turns over and says, "I'm sorry honey, I've got a gynaecologist appointment tomorrow and I want to stay fresh". The husband, rejected, turns over. A few minutes later, he rolls back over and taps his wife again. "Do you have a dentist appointment tomorrow too?" A blonde pushes her BMW into a gas station. She tells the mechanic it died. After he works on it for a few minutes, it is idling smoothly. She says, "What's the story?" He replies, "Just cr\*p in the carburetor". She asks, "How often do I have to do that?"