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Memorandum

To: Trialists

Fr: Curtis Meinert

Re: Bullshit questions

If you saw My Cousin Vinny, you may recall the scene when the prosecutor (Jim Trotter III) asked the judge for permission to Voir Dire Mona Lisa Vito to assess her qualifications as an expert on cars.

Jim Trotter: Now, uh, Ms. Vito, being an expert on general automotive knowledge, can you tell me... what would the correct ignition timing be on a 1955 Bel Air Chevrolet, with a 327 cubic-inch engine and a four-barrel carburetor?

Mona Lisa Vito: It's a bullshit question.

Jim Trotter: Does that mean that you can't answer it?

Mona Lisa Vito: It's a bullshit question, it's impossible to answer.

Jim Trotter: Impossible because you don't know the answer!

Mona Lisa Vito: Nobody could answer that question!

Jim Trotter: Your Honor, I move to disqualify Ms. Vito as a "expert witness"!

Judge Chamberlain Haller: Can you answer the question?

Mona Lisa Vito: No, it is a trick question!

Judge Chamberlain Haller: Why is it a trick question?

Mona Lisa Vito: 'Cause Chevy didn't make a 327 in '55, the 327 didn't come out till '62. And it wasn't offered in the Bel Air with a four-barrel carb till '64. However, in 1964, the correct ignition timing would be four degrees before top-dead-center.

Jim Trotter: Well... um... she's acceptable, Your Honor.

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The trouble we face as researchers is that most questions we want answered, in the words of Miss Vito, are "trick questions".

Take the 1969 Public Health Cigarette Smoking Act (Public Law 91-222). It took the US Surgeon General to determine "That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health."

There was plenty of circumstantial evidence to support the statement, but definitive proof is beyond the scope of researchers. A trick question of sorts.

Most things we simply accept. For example, mask mandates in the COVID pandemic. Are they effective preventatives? The supposition is yes, but definitive proof is hard to come by. Another Miss Vito trick question?