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## The World Fully Franked

And so because you asked, the name's Frank.

Frank Bumm.

Yeah - I agree. I reckon Frank's a stupid name too. I'd much rather have one of those strong, trendy Old Testament names like Joshua or Jonathon. Or Trixie.

My first choice Old Testament name was Maha-shalal-hashbaz. But my mother couldn't spell it. Neither could I when I was born.

I suppose a name like Maha-shalal-hashbaz could get you into big trouble at school. I mean, imagine having a whole roll call dedicated to just one name.

I suppose Frank's alright. It's better than being called Scum. That'd really clash with my surname.

And I suppose Frank's better than being called Salmon Rushdie. I'd hate to be named after a fish. Especially if the fish was a crossed-eyed flathead.

I went to school with a guy who was named after a fish. His name was Screwamullets. Yeah, I know - it's not even proper English. Should be Screw-them-mullets.

Our headmaster decided that no-one was allowed to say Screwamullets' full name in public. He hates bad grammar. So Screwamullets had to have different bits of his name on different rolls. Poor bugger had to do four laps of the playground just to get his name marked off.

Couple of times he missed a lap.

So a note went home to his parents saying that bits of Screwamullets were not attending school. If this did not change these bits would be caned, suspended and/or expelled.

I think they made good on their threats too, but the details were sketchy. There was this rumour that the headmaster had suspended Amullets, but I seem to recall it was always the Screwy bit that was getting into trouble.

Old Screwamullets. You'll never guess what we called him for short. Peter. Strange, coz his name was George. George Screwamullets. He ended up changing his name by deed pill. Everything's so convenient these days. He changed his name to Mulletson. Said he looked it up in a book and he liked the meaning: "son of a mullet". I don't think he ever became a brain surgeon.

I had a fourth cousin who became a Brain-surgeon. You see, a few generations ago, that side of the family tree had been very selfish with their surnames. My great-great-grandfather was Mr Bigge. And he married a Gertrude Foote. So they became the legendary Bigge-Footes of Melbourne. Their son Arnold rather recklessly fell in love with one of the Arnotts-Biscuit-Fruitcake-Prendeghasts of Yarra Glengowrie. So the whole thing was Bigg-Foote-Arnotts-Biscuit-Fruitcake-Prendeghast-Bracket-Yarra-Glengowrie-Close-Bracket. The bracket words slipped in when Arnold was reciting the name to a rather dim celebrant at the registry, and under Family Law, once it's written down on a form, the name has to stand. The whole wedding ground to a halt when they couldn't find enough pens to sign the marriage certificate.

And so the name passed down the generations to my fourth cousin. He was always getting worked over at school, coz by the time the teachers had marked off his name, all the other kids had missed their bus.

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So he was always having to come up with an excuse for not fighting, and one day during his ritual bus-stop bashing, he blurted out, "Just the face! Just the face! Don't break my hands. I'm a brain surgeon!" And right there he got this blinding flash to change his name to Tobias Brain-surgeon. It stopped the punch-ups but now he gets asked really difficult questions at parties. Especially since he's a green grocer. He usually answers these questions by rubbing his chin and saying, "Take two cauliflowers and call me in the morning." I don't know if it's good medical advice, but it really works for him as a pick-up line.

Seeing my fourth cousin being bashed up all the time, really made me glad that mum ditched the Bigge-Foote-Arnotts-Biscuit-Fruitcake-Prendeghast-Bracket-Yarra-Glengowrie-Close-Bracket references. When she married dad she made a firm decision to spend the rest of her days just being a Bumm.

The Bumms were a very mixed family. My mum was a Mormon. My sister was a Moonie. My Dad was a Certified Practising Accountant.

It was Dad who really screwed me up.

When I was young he used to force me to go to Sunday school, but after a while it got a bit boring, so when I turned 27 I just stopped going altogether.

It was about then I got a job with the Tobacco Institute as a billboard graffitist. I had to go around defacing advertisements for healthy products. I came up with some great slogans like, "Fruit juice melts brain cells." "Apples - think what they're doing to your lungs." "Milk kills - that's why they don't tell you what goes into a cow." But it wasn't all negative stuff. I put some great catch phrases on cigarette ads too, like "Tobacco restores your health", or "Calm down - take a cigarette" and "Medical authorities - what do they know?"

I also had to write pro-tobacco letters to the papers. Things like, "you have more chance of being run over by

a truck than by a cigarette”, and “no-one ever drowned in tobacco”.

Strangely, none of these withering arguments were ever printed, so one day the boss called me in and said, “Bumm, we’re showing you the door.”

“Nice door,” I said.

“Well, I’d like to see you on the other side of it”, he said.

So I cut a hole in it for him.

My next job was as a cab driver. I would have been a brilliant cab driver except I have no sense of direction. I once got lost for 3 weeks - in a roundabout. I still managed to get the full fare out of the Japanese tourists in the back seat though. They just staggered off laughing and shouting, “Is better than saki! Better than saki!”

And I’m hopeless in traffic. Like, there was this time when I just took off at the lights, cut off the car next to me, slammed on the brakes, gave the guy the finger, and then realised I wasn’t even in my car.

Once I just dropped the clutch, hit the accelerator, blew tyre smoke all over the car next to me, and then I noticed he was a cop.

Another time I tried to do the right thing and help this poor bugger push start a car. Then as he drove off I noticed it was my car.

There was this other time when I was driving around with this totally ear piercing squeal coming from the brakes all day, and then I get home and noticed the cat’s disappeared.

And I really hate it when a semi-trailer has to tailgate. Once I was up to about 120 clicks, and this dirty big semi was half an inch off my rear bumper, so wham! I just stand on the brakes! You should have seen the look on his face! Actually, I missed it but he told me all about it when he came to visit me in intensive care.

I really can’t win with driving. I mean I’m the kind of guy who can be innocently driving home from this Italian restaurant and the cops will be breath-testing for

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garlic. One time I pulled into the breath-test bay and would you believe I can't turn the car alarm off. Then I realise I don't have one - I'd parked on the officer's foot.

Well after this, the cop really has it in for me, so he follows me home, and paints double yellow lines across my driveway. Next morning he had traffic lights erected at my garage door. That afternoon he booked me for hitting 35 cars - on a video game.

I've never had much luck with garages either. My regular service station rounds up \$11.09 to the nearest 20 dollars. And I've been a bit sus about them ever since I put my GT Falcon in for service one morning and got back a VW Beetle in the afternoon. Now my car makes so many strange noises it's been signed up as lead guitarist for a thrash metal band. And it's sure lost a bit of grunt. I mean, now I'm always getting burnt off at the lights - by push bikes.

I hate motorists who speed. Like the other day, this clown went flying past me doing around 160 in a school zone - he must have been, coz I was doing 130.

I was in a rush because of trouble at my job. The trouble is I don't have a job. But I was still in a rush to stand in line at Centrelink for 6 hours. They treat me very special at Centrelink. I've had 47 different career advisers. Now I have 47 different career options.

The best advice I've had so far is to take one of my hobbies and turn it into a job. Is there really a market for paper mache jewellery?

Another adviser said I should work on a TV show. So I thought up a new twist for a cooking show - under water. I put it in a letter to a TV executive but he wrote back and said I needed help. I wrote back, "Of course I need help you goose. You think I can produce this show on my own?" I never heard from him after that. I guess it was the recipe I had in the pilot - onion-flavoured chewing gum. Sad to see television being run by vegetaters.

I've been a vegetarian for years. Anything that goes with a good steak.

But don't get me wrong - I still love animals. In fact I'll eat anything you put in front of me.

I'm not your average animal liberationist. In fact, I'm very hard to pigeon-hole. I think it's my rebellious streak. Like when I walk down the street I just love to stand in 'no standing' zones. Sometimes I'll even stop in 'no stopping' zones. When I go to the supermarket, I go to the 8-items-or-less counter with 8 items. Then I buy a packet of Tic Tacs just to show them.

Or sometimes I'll go to the 8-items-or-less counter with nothing. Then I buy nine copies of the TV Week.

I think it's this culturally-challenged streak in me that causes people to constantly ask me, "Frank Bumm, what's life all about?"

I generally answer by telling them what life's not all about.

Like It's not all about just being a great guy. Especially if you're a girl.

And it's not all about these New Age beliefs either. Well, that's what my astrologer tells me. Actually, I don't believe in astrology but that's because I'm a Scorpio and we're just naturally sceptical.

Some people will believe anything. Some people will believe everything. Like creation and evolution. I used to believe both. Gave me a headache. Now I'd rather believe that something made everything rather than that nothing made anything. Or is that everything made nothing and anything made something? Or maybe everything and something banded together with nothing to make anything? I'm starting to get that headache again.

Life's not necessarily just about making money. In fact, my life isn't anything about making money. Although I did start out with nothing and I still have most of it left. Thanks to a second mortgage.

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I'm right into prosperity. I have 247 books on the subject. At 29.95 a pop, someone out there is getting pretty prosperous. This is a great comfort to me. So you see - money can buy you happiness in a vicarious kind of way.

Life's not just about having fun either. People do some strange things for fun. They go out and get so drunk they end up spending the night throwing up in a toilet bowl - and then they'll tell you what a great time they had. It's good to see people enjoying themselves.

Some people smoke grass for fun. I used to smoke eucalyptus leaves. They don't get you high, but boy they sure clean out your sinuses.

Life's not just all about being ultra-spiritual. I had friend who tried all that. You'd open his 'fridge and he'd have Praise Mayonnaise and Miracle Margarine. And he always drove a Honda - said it kept his family in one Accord.

Some people get so hooked on religion. They spend the whole weekend chanting. Then all week they study the sayings of their prophets. They'll even get into fights about it. Personally, I can't take Rugby League that seriously.

And life's not all about spending all your time in church. Like I used to live in a garage and not once did I turn into a car. Didn't even develop an oil leak.

Once I was in this church and I went up the front, so the preacher said to me that Jesus was going to come and live inside me. This freaked me out coz I was wearing a tight body-shirt and tight jeans at the time. Had visions of swelling up like the Incredible Hulk right there in the sanctuary. Not that I wouldn't want a body like the Incredible Hulk. It'd be a great advantage when bludging cigarettes. I reckon the Hulk must collect a lot of lighters too.

And with my luck swelling up like the Incredible Hulk in a place of worship would turn out to be some sort of mortal sin. I think I read that in Leviticus once. So

instead of eternal salvation, I'd end up with 40 years penance in a hairlined shirt.

I used to think life was all about having a good laugh. I still take this very seriously. In fact when I'm having a good laugh I get this really serious expression on my face. The heartier the laugh the more serious the expression. Once I went to an Eddy Murphy movie and I laughed so hard my face turned to concrete for 2 days. My whole body was jiggling with mirth but my face was like a driveway. It's quite entertaining to watch. My landlady sells tickets. It's a great way to pay the rent. In the end though, I reckon life's simply about developing a good name. Which aint easy when your name's Frank Bumm.

But I'm working on it.

How many A's in Maha-shalal-hashbaz?