
John 'Ol' Chumbucket' Baur & Mark 'Cap'n Slappy' Summers | pirate authors

John 'Ol' Chumbucket' Baur & Mark 'Cap'n Slappy' Summers, Creators of International Talk Like a Pirate Day, will be the Pirate Guests of Honor this year.

Talk Like a Pirate Day: Who are The Pirate Guys?

They didn't have a dream, not even plan. It was more of a whimsical notion. But that — and a lot of chutzpah — was enough to take them from a YMCA racquetball court to radio, television and newspaper appearances around the world, a book deal and a staggering 19 million hits on their Web site in just one month.

They are the Pirate Guys, Mark "Cap'n Slappy" Summers and John "Ol' Chumbucket" Baur, two friends from Albany, Ore., who created the holiday, International Talk Like a Pirate Day and took the idea way too far.

One asset they did have going for them was John's wife, Tori, who recognized that the pirate thing might not make them all rich and famous overnight, but it would be a lot more fun than "work."

Mark Summers was born in Seattle and grew up there, the fourth of five brothers. His maritime background includes his father, who was an engineer on Boeing's Marine System Division working on projects such as the jet foil, and his grandfather and uncles, who were fisherman on Washington's coast. Mark earned a master's degree in social work at Portland State University and works as a school social worker.

John Baur hails originally from Chicago, where he was the only son among eight kids. After earning a bachelor's degree in political science, John worked in the daily newspaper business for 23 years. He then worked two years as a science writer for Oregon Sea Grant at Oregon State University. He is now editor of Growing Edge, a magazine devoted to hydroponics and controlled environment agriculture.

International Talk Like a Pirate Day was nothing more than a private joke for several years until John happened on the e-mail address of Pulitzer Prize-winning humor columnist Dave Barry. The two sent off a message to the syndicated writer telling him about the holiday. Barry wrote a column about it in 2002. Suddenly the two were besieged with requests for interviews. With the help of a friend they launched their Web site, www.talklikeapirate.com, and the next fall saw the holiday's popularity grow exponentially.

But there's a good chance that wouldn't have happened without Tori. She was born in California and has lived all over the world, and perhaps that gave her the flexibility of viewpoint needed for what happened next.

After Talk Like a Pirate Day exploded, John and Mark talked a lot about writing a book, but they didn't do anything about it until Tori tired of hearing them talk. She went out and found them a literary agent who wanted to read their book, so they had to write it. That book became "Pirattitude" which was published by New American Library and is in its seventh printing. They have a new book coming out next fall, "A Pirate's Life For Me" to be published by Kensington Books.

When John's university contract expired, Tori convinced him to put his energy into the pirate business instead of finding another "regular job" right away. When they started getting their first requests for appearances, she helped put an act together and became "Mad Sally" to join in their performances. Due to Mad Sally's drive — or maybe her madness — the three found themselves in 2006 taking part in the ABC reality show "Wife Swap." She took the country by storm as Mad Sally went into an uber-organized, appearance driven household and tried to show them how to put some pirattitude in their lives.

She did all this while raising six children and being a full-time college student, last year earning her bachelor's degree in English graduating magna cum laude from Oregon State University.

THAT'S pirattitude.