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THAT CELEBRITY YOU JUST SAW? THAT WAS JUST A DOPPELGANGER

HERE'S THE situation: You're walking down the street, or perhaps sitting in a restaurant. In your periphery, you notice someone who looks just like Jessica Biel, Michael Jordan or perhaps John Boehner.

Do your eyes deceive you? Maybe.

But the person is a dead ringer for the actress/athlete/ politician. You'd swear it.

As likely as not, you've been duped by wannabe VIPs. They live among us in Hampton Roads.

Don't blame these faux celebrities. They can't help that they resemble – strongly – people with nationally recognizable faces.

It's my job to blow the locals' cover. Or at least to give them their 15 minutes of fame.

Yep, it's time for my not-quite-annual, semi-serious column on look-alikes in the region. These folks could stand in as stunt doubles on a movie set. People have stopped them in public, insisting they're somebody else.

You might not agree. But they sure look famous to me. Joanne Batson, chief executive officer of the Food-bank of Southeastern Virginia for the past 10 years, and actress Kaitlin Olson, who plays "Sweet Dee" Reynolds on the manic sitcom "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia."

Batson, 64, tells me she doesn't see the resemblance. "Of course, I don't have a problem if you're putting me next to a (nearly) 40-year-old." Olson is 37. Both have blond hair and long, angular faces.

Shawn Ellis, Maury High School math instructor and Norfolk's Teacher of the Year, and Warren Sapp, retired pro football defensive lineman. Ellis knows they could be clones. Another pigskin link: Ellis is assistant coach of the Maury football team.

"I was in a hotel almost two years ago," Ellis said. "Somebody stopped in their tracks and was about to ask me for an autograph."

He's large like Sapp – about 6 feet 2 inches, 300 pounds, though Ellis notes he's not as strong or as muscular as the onetime Tampa Bay Buccaneer. Both were born in December 1972.

Roger Petersen, general counsel for litigation for Norfolk Southern, and David Letterman, talk show host, or Bud Selig, Major League Baseball commissioner. I say Selig, especially when the 53-year-old Petersen wears eyeglasses. The attorney, though, notices the likeness to the late-night host.

So do others. "In a restaurant one time," Peters-en said, "I didn't think a person would let me leave without an autograph."

Cheri Green, Old Point National Bank assistant vice president, and Chandra Wilson, actress on the TV drama "Grey's Anatomy." I saw a photo of Green, 34, in a bank ad in The Pilot. Green is 5 feet 2, Wilson is 5 feet even.

Green says she doesn't see similarities to Wilson, 43; more people think her husband looks like a celebrity – either boxer Shane Mosley or actor Taye Diggs. But her sons, ages 5 and 2, were excited by the attention. "They think I'm beautiful," Green said.

Awww.

Shawn Day, Virginian-Pilot editorial writer, and

Andrew Toole, basketball coach at Robert Morris University. OK, Toole isn't exactly a celebrity, but he's appeared on television nationally when his team plays well in the Northeast Conference tournament. Both Day and Toole have boyish faces that suggest their relative youth: Day is 31, Toole is 32. Day questions any resemblance.

Fine.

But look-alikes, dear reader, are in the eye of the beholder.

Roger Chesley, 757-446-2329, roger.chesley@pilotonline.com, pilotonline.com/chesley



ROGER CHESLEY

OPINION
