

Editor's notes:

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What are you doing this month's Friday 13th? Even if you don't suffer from triskaidekaphobia -- the fear of Friday the 13th -- our society still shuns the number 13 in a host of interesting ways:

- More than 80 percent of high-rise buildings lack a 13th floor.
- Most airports do not have a gate 13.
- Airplanes do not have an aisle 13.
- Hospitals and hotels regularly have no room number 13.
- Many cities do not have 13th streets or avenues.

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Here are a few dates that we can look forward to this month:

April Fool's, April 1 -- In 1983, Joseph Boskin, a history professor at Boston University received wide-spread publicity for his claim to have discovered the origins of April Fool's Day. He said the celebration began during the Roman Empire when the emperor Constantine was told that the fools and jesters of the court could rule the kingdom better than he could. In response, Constantine supposedly appointed a jester as ruler who promptly decreed that only the



absurd would be allowed in the empire on that day. Although the Associated Press picked up the story and it ran in many newspapers across the country, Professor Boskin had the last laugh because none of it was true -- it was his own April Fool's Day prank.

Palm Sunday, April 1 -- The calendar marks the Sunday before Easter, and the sixth Sunday of Lent, as Palm Sunday. It recalls the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem riding upon an ass, with his followers shouting "Hosanna" and scattering palms in his path. In the Roman Catholic and some Protestant churches, ceremonies of the day include the blessing and distribution of crosses made from palm leaves and the recitation of Biblical accounts of Christ's crucifixion.

Tartan Day, April 6 -- Both Canada and the United States celebrate this day to honour those of Scottish descent. Many signers of the Declaration of Independence were Scottish. Famous living Scots include Sean Connery, J.K. Rowling, and Rod Stewart.

Easter, April 8 -- This is the most important event of the Christian faith. It celebrates Jesus Christ's resurrection, following His crucifixion. It represents His victory over death and the new life all Christians gain in His name.

Easter is the culmination of a six-week period of solemn religious observance, beginning with the start of Lent, a time of fasting and penitence.

Easter Sunday is a joyous occasion. Many churches hold outdoor sunrise services, welcoming the dawn as a symbol of Christ's light coming back to the world.

125th Anniversary of Jumbo's arrival, April 9 -- On this day in 1882, Jumbo, the famous elephant who stood 11 feet 6 inches and weighed seven tons, was first brought to the United States by circus titan P.T. Barnum. He purchased Jumbo from the London Zoo for \$10,000. (equivalent to more than \$450,000 in today's dollars). The name "Jumbo" is derived from Swahili for "chief" but now is synonymous with "large."

Jumbo was killed September 15, 1885, crossing railroad tracks in St. Thomas, Ontario. The collision derailed the train, and 150 people were required to haul the elephant's body up an embankment.

Anniversary of Canada's Constitution Act, April 18 -- On this day in 1982, Canada's government enacted a new set of fundamental laws and civil rights to replace the British North America Act of 1867. The new constitution was signed by Queen Elizabeth at Parliament Hill in Ottawa, 25 years ago.

Tax Day, April 30 -- What more can we say? This is the day that you truly realize how much goes to the government.

The Bedroom Ban on TVs

April 23 to 29 is TV Turnoff Week and a good time to examine your family's viewing habits.

According to the Kaiser foundation, 68% of 8-to-18-year-olds have a TV in their bedroom. Yet multiple studies have shown that having a television in a child's bedroom can lead to obesity, sleep problems, and poor school performance. For example, a study by researchers at Johns Hopkins and Stanford University showed that children with TVs in their bedrooms scored significantly lower on school achievement tests than children without TVs in their bedrooms.

Another study showed that having a television set in the bedroom directly affected a child's quality of sleep, and heavy television viewing in any room made it harder for children to fall asleep and to get a full night's sleep.

Origins of Phrases

Did you ever wonder where certain expressions originated? Here are a few sources:

“High on the hog” -- affluent living. Only the wealthy could afford the choicest cuts of pork, which were located at the top part of the animal’s haunches.

“Face the music” -- confront the consequences of your actions. Some think it began with the ceremony in which disgraced British officers had to face regimental drummers when they were expelled from the service. Or the phrase may stem from the theatre, where to face the music was to face the audience, since musicians were in the pit at the front of the stage.

“Dressed to the nines” -- to be dressed flamboyantly or very well. It follows from the tailors’ practice of using nine

yards of fabric to make a single suit. This expensive method allowed every panel to be cut along the same grain, ensuring that the suit hung well.

“Pull your leg” -- to tell false tales as a joke originally meant to make a fool of someone. It is believed to have come from a practice of London street thieves who would trip passersby with a wire or walking stick and steal their wallets while helping them up.

“Push the envelope” -- to go beyond reasonable expectations. “Envelope” is an aviation term referring to an airplane’s performance capabilities. To push the envelope, originally meant to fly an aircraft at or beyond its recommended speed or height limits.

Table Manners at Work



If ever there’s a time and place to mind your manners it is at a business meal. “Employers and clients can see how polished a person you are and how you treat other people,” explains Beverly Langford, author of *The Etiquette Edge: The Unspoken Rules for Business Success*, adding that it’s wise to be particularly polite to restaurant employees. “How you relate to the wait staff -- are you courteous, or do you treat them like they’re at your beck and call -- will clue others in to how you probably treat co-workers and subordinates at work.” Showing courtesy and respect for all is also simply the right thing to do.

Become a Reader

Allyson Lewis, author of *The Seven-Minute Difference: Small Steps to Big Changes*, says the way to become smarter, more competent, and more competitive is through reading, and she recommends starting with just 10 pages a day. “This one simple micro-action could change your life forever,” she says, “Because 10 pages a day -- times 30 days -- equals one 300-page book a month or 12 books a year.”

Vitamin C’s 75th Anniversary

Raise a glass of orange juice to toast the scientists who isolated Vitamin C 75 years ago. On April 1, 1932, Charles King, a professor at the University of Pittsburgh, announced that he had successfully isolated the nutrient. Around the same time, Hungarian biochemist Alber Szent-Gyorgi discovered a compound called hexuronic acid in his investigations at Cambridge University.

Later research showed that Vitamin C and hexuronic acid (more commonly called ascorbic acid) were the same substance. The effects of Vitamin C were first noted in 1747 by a Scottish naval surgeon, James Lind, who discovered that citrus foods prevented scurvy among sailors, a disease that caused softening and bleeding of organs, tendons, skin, and gums. By 1795, all British sailors were given a daily dose of lime juice, which soon earned them the nickname “limeys.”

Vitamin C has also been purported to offer numerous other health benefits, chief among them, reducing the severity and duration of the common cold. However, research into these benefits has yielded mixed results, and many in the medical establishment await more definitive proof.

Fight Insomnia with Yoga

If you have trouble sleeping, you may want to try practicing yoga. According to research, yoga can lower overall stress levels that keep you tossing and turning at night. Study participants practiced yoga exercises for 45 minutes every evening for eight weeks and reported that they fell asleep faster, by an average of 30 percent, and woke less often, by an average of 35 percent. If you can’t find a yoga class to take in your area, there are numerous videos available to teach you the postures and breathing exercises.

