

## Editor's notes:

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This month is ushered in by April Fools' Day. This tricksters' day is thought to have originated in 1582 when the change to the Gregorian calendar moved New Year's Day from March 25 (around the time of the spring equinox) to January 1. Those who forgot were April fools. Others say it is an unlucky day because Judas, betrayer of Christ, was born on this day. It is also known as All Fools' Day.

I hope that we are not fools to believe that this month will finally bring some nice weather. Here are a few more dates to ponder this month:

**Ponce de Leon discovers Florida, April 2, 1513** -- Juan Ponce de Leon discovered Florida when he landed at the site that became the city of St. Augustine. He claimed the land, which he thought was an island, for Spain and named it Florida, probably because it was then the Easter season (Pascua Florida).

Legend has it that Ponce de Leon was seeking not only gold and other riches, but also a fabled spring with waters having the power to restore youth. He turned south, exploring the coast to Key West, and proceeded up the west coast. He reportedly never found his fountain of youth. In fact, on a second trip to Florida, Ponce de Leon was mortally wounded in a battle with the natives.

**International Children's Book Day, April 2** -- The International Board on Books for Young People hosts this day on the anniversary of Hans Christian Andersen's birth (in 1805) to inspire a love of reading and to call attention to children's books. Publishers report that for every 10,000 manuscripts submitted for children's books, only three are published.

**Buddha's Birthday, April 8** -- This day is the most important among Buddhism's holidays. The founder of Buddhism had the given name Siddhartha, the family name Guatama and the clan name Shka. He is commonly called the Buddha, meaning in Sanskrit "the enlightened one." He is thought to have lived in India from about 563 B.C. to 483 B.C.

**Cherry Blossom Festival, March 29 - April 13** -- The world famous cherry blossom festival in Washington D.C. began in 1935 to commemorate the 1912 gift of 3,000 cherry trees to Washington from Mayor Yukio Ozaki of Tokyo, an expression of the growing friendship between the two nations. In 1915, the United States reciprocated with a gift of flowering dogwood trees. The first Cherry Blossom Festival was held in 1935, sponsored by civic groups in the nation's capital.

The event expanded to two weeks in 1994 and today includes such activities as the Smithsonian Kite Festival, a sushi and sake tasting, fireworks, a 10-mile run, and a lantern lighting ceremony. A Japanese street festival is scheduled for parade day, April 12, and cultural performances will be presented daily on a stage at the Tidal Basin throughout the festival. More than a million people visit Washington each year to view the cherry blossoms and enjoy the celebration.

**Pink Moon, April 20** -- The Native American tribes of the Northeast used to refer to the first full moon of April as the pink moon after the colour of wild ground phlox, one of the earliest blooming wildflowers. Other tribes called it Full Sprouting Grass Moon and Egg Moon; coastal tribes called it Full Fish Moon because this was the time of year that the shad swam upstream to spawn.

**Bugs Bunny Debut, April 30, 1938** -- This rascally rabbit first appeared in a Porky's Pig cartoon called "Porky's Hare Hunt," Mel Blanc, the original voice actor for Bugs and numerous other famous cartoon characters, said the unique accent was a blend of the Bronx and Brooklyn dialects. As the mascot for Warner Brothers, Bugs Bunny was one of the first cartoon characters to get a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

## National TV Turnoff Week, April 21-27

The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests children should not watch more than two hours of TV a day. Recent finding published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine show that children who watch more than this amount are prone to obesity and high blood pressure. Specifically, children who watch two to four hours of TV a day are two and half times more likely to have high blood pressure as kids who watch less than two hours; children who watch four or more hours a day are more than three times as likely to have high blood pressure.

## 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."

## 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.

## The Story of Raggedy Ann and Andy

Raggedy Ann, beloved by children for nearly a century, first appeared as a faceless rag doll that artist and cartoonist Johnny Gruelle found in the family attic in the early 1900s. Gruelle painted a smiling face on the doll and gave it to his daughter, Marcella, who adopted Raggedy Ann as her constant playmate. In 1915, Gruelle submitted a drawing of Raggedy Anne to the U.S. Patent Office.

When Marcella was a teenager, she died tragically from an infection. Her father dealt with his grief by writing down and collecting all the Raggedy Ann stories he had told his daughter when she was younger. The first Raggedy Ann collection of stories, along with commercially produced Raggedy Ann dolls, appeared in 1918. A year later, Gruelle patented Raggedy Andy, and for the next two decades, wrote and published a Raggedy Ann and Andy book nearly every year, as well as other children's adventure stories and fairy tales.

## Canadian Mounties

In 1873, the Canadian parliament voted on legislation to establish the North-West Mounted Police, a force to maintain peace and order in the country's northwestern region, an area that today includes most of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, the Yukon, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories.

Their red uniforms emphasized their ties to Britain and differentiated them from American blue military uniforms. A primary purpose of the force was to stop American whiskey peddlers from trading guns and alcohol with the Indians for buffalo hides. Later, they assisted settlers by building forts, battling prairie fires, and helping in medical emergencies.

In July 1874, the first group of Mounties began a dangerous and difficult journey across the continent. A detachment arrived in Alberta in October, and by 1875, had brought law and order to Canada's western frontier. In 1920, the service was renamed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, a unique body that is a national, federal, provincial, and municipal police service. There are over 20,000 Mounties on the force today.

## Early to Rise

According to a recent Gallup poll of 1,000 adults, most people said they were morning people. Specifically, they were asked when they were at their best. Here is the breakdown:

Morning ( 5:00 am to 11:59 am) -- 55%

Afternoon ( Noon to 4:59 pm) -- 15%

Evening (5:00 pm to 10:59 pm) -- 20%

Late night (11:00 pm to 4:59 am) -- 6%

Poll participants were also asked which hour of the day was their most productive, and the top three time slots were 10:00 am, 9:00 am, and 8:00 am.

### Everything I Need to Know I learned from Noah

- Don't miss the boat.
- Plan ahead. It was not raining when Noah built the boat.
- For safety's sake, travel in pairs.
- Build on the high ground.
- Speed isn't always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.
- Two heads are better than one.
- Remember that the ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.

### All I Need to Know I've Learned from Trees

- It's important to have roots.
- In today's complex world, it pays to branch out.
- Don't pine away over old flames.
- If you really believe in something, don't be afraid to go out on a limb.
- Be flexible so you don't break when a harsh wind blows.
- Sometimes you have to shed your old bark in order to grow.
- Grow where you're planted.
- It's perfectly okay to be a late bloomer.
- Avoid people who would like to cut you down.
- You can't hide your true colours as you approach the autumn of your life.

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