

Editor's notes:

August 2007, Volume 22-12

We waited so long for it and, alas, by August 6, we will already be at the half-way point of summer. But, even though the autumnal equinox of September 23 is fast approaching, cheer up. With all this global warming, maybe winter will be seriously delayed.

By the way, August was named to honour the first Roman emperor, Augustus Caesar, who lengthened the month to 31 days by taking a day from February.

Here are some dates of interest this month:

Columbus set sail for the New World, August 3, 1492 -- (Has it really been 515 years?) After receiving money from King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain, Christopher Columbus set sail for Asia in search of spice and gold with three ships -- the Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria. What he discovered instead were the Caribbean islands, which led to the settlement of the Americas.

Twins Day Festival, August 3-5 -- Twinsburg, Ohio, is host to the Twins Day Festival, held every year on the first full weekend of August. The first festival in 1976 brought 37 sets of twins; today, it attracts more than 3,000 pairs, (the largest annual gathering of twins in the world), as well as parents of twins, triplets, and other multiple births.

Festival highlights include a Double Take Parade featuring identical twins, twin talent shows, a group photo, and many twin contests for things like most look-alike/least look-alike twins.

Civic Holiday, August 6 -- Seven of Canada's 10 provinces celebrate this day off, which is traditionally held on the first Monday of the month to give workers a three-day weekend during the warmest days of summer.

Family Day, August 11 -- This is a great day for planning an outing to reinforce family relationships. It's easy for members of busy families to lose touch with each others' interests and activities. Take this day to put the outside world on hold and concentrate on what really matters -- your family.

Berlin divided, August 13, 1961 -- On this day, 46 years ago, the East German government closed the border between east and west sectors of Berlin, setting up barbed wire fences to discourage further movement to the west. Telephone and postal services were interrupted, and, later in the week, a concrete wall was built to strengthen the barriers between official crossing points. The dismantling of the wall was begun on November 9, 1989.

Left-Handers Day, August 13 -- For thousands of years, left-handedness was associated with the devil, and lefties were shunned or forced to make their right hands dominant. One example: the word "sinister" stems from the Latin root for "left." (By contrast, the word "dexterity" comes from the Latin root for "right.") Today there is less prejudice, but being left-handedness can be a challenge because most tools, office equipment, and household items are designed for right-handers.

In 1990, the Left-Handers Club was formed in Britain to encourage the manufacture of more left-handed products, keep members in touch with new developments, and support research into left-handedness. In 1992, the club launched International Left-Handers Day to increase public awareness of this characteristic. Recent studies estimate that between 12 and 15 percent of the population. Famous lefties include Napoleon Bonaparte, Marie Curie, Henry Ford, Bill Gates, Babe Ruth, and Leonardo da Vinci.



Elvis Week, August 11 - 19 - The annual celebration at Graceland honouring Elvis Presley, will this year mark the 30th anniversary of Elvis' death, and organizers are expecting a big crowd. More than 70,000 visitors showed up in 1997 for the 20th anniversary. This week will feature events throughout Memphis, including the Ultimate Elvis Tribute Arts contest, a merchandise and memorabilia show, memorial dinner, Graceland scavenger hunt, art show, and sock hop. Attendees can take in Elvis movies and music on the mansion's lawn and participate in the 25th annual 5K race to benefit cerebral palsy research.

In the annual Candlelight Vigil, fans walk up the driveway to Elvis' grave site carrying a candle. The vigil lasts from the evening of August 15 through the early morning hours of August 16, the date of Elvis' death. The 30th Anniversary Concert on the 16th features a video-taped Elvis Presley performing with the accompaniment of live singers and musicians. Graceland, Elvis' 14-acre estate, welcomes more than 600,000 visitors every year.

Body of work

Can you match these body-related expressions to their definitions?

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|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. by the skin of your teeth | A) be nervous |
| 2. toe the line | B) lie or trick someone |
| 3. tear your hair out | C) do what you're supposed to do |
| 4. in the blink of an eye | D) quickly |
| 5. have your head in the clouds | E) keep at a distance |
| 6. have butterflies in your stomach | F) easily |
| 7. pull the wool over someone's eyes | G) just barely |
| 8. hands-down | H) start out badly |
| 9. get off on the wrong foot | I) get upset |
| 10. keep at arm's length | J) daydream |

Answers:

1G; 2C; 3I; 4D; 5J; 6A; 7B; 8F; 9H; 10E

The History of the Hammock

Historians believe that the Mayan Indians of Central America were the first to invent hammocks 1,000 years ago. The earliest hammocks were woven from the bark of hamak trees, thus the name. Fishermen and sailors used their nets for both work and rest, and hammocks spread to South America and throughout the islands in the Atlantic. Christopher Columbus is said to have brought several hammocks from the Bahamas back to Europe. In the 1800s, the British used hammocks in their prisons to save space. More than half a million are still sold annually in North America.

History of Rhinestones

The first rhinestones were chunks of rock crystal plucked from the Rhine River on Austria's western border. In 1775, a French jeweller, George Frederic Strass, came up with the idea of coating cut or faceted glass with metal powder to produce an object that closely resembled diamond jewellery. The only problem: each stone had to be individually hand-crafted, so it was not much cheaper than the real thing. In 1891, however, another jeweller, Daniel Swarovski, built a glass-cutting machine that not only cut cost, but cut glass with a previously unmatched precision and brilliance. Most of today's rhinestones are produced in Austria and the Czech Republic, using the same technique, and backed with metal foil to enhance their sparkle.



Those telephones at Helix just keep on ringing and ringing, and we are very happy about it. Summers usually slow down a bit for us in the courier and messenger business. Employees of our customers take holidays and things aren't generally quite as hectic. This summer, things just seem to keep on zooming along. We like it. We appreciate your faith in us and will do everything we can to keep up our superlative service.

You may hear voices occasionally that you might not recognize when you call us. Please bear with us. When things are busy or when someone is away on holidays, everyone answers the telephone here. Your time is valuable and we do our best so that you won't have to wait a dozen rings until someone answers your call. If, on occasion, we are a little slow to answer your call, please forgive us. Have a happy summer!