

## Editor's notes:

We look forward to this month for no other reason than that January has come and gone. It also means just one more month, and spring is just around the corner. While we're waiting optimistically for the next season, here are some things to consider for February.

This month's name is derived from "februa," the name of a Roman festival of expiation or atonement, which was held during February. The festival's name itself comes from "febru," meaning "I purify by sacrifice."

**Groundhog Day, February 2** -- The theory behind this ancient tradition holds that if the groundhog sees his shadow on this day, which is halfway between the start of winter and the start of spring, six weeks of winter will follow; if he doesn't, look for an early spring. The predictor is likely to be a male because males emerge from hibernation sooner than females.

**Winterlude, February 4-20** -- This three-weekend festival in Ottawa was founded by the National Capital Commission in 1979 to celebrate the northern climate and culture. Activities include skating on Rideau Canal, snow and ice competitions, and winter sports demonstrations. Nearly 700,000 attend.

**Mardi Gras, February 8** -- Mardi Gras, or "Fat Tuesday," starts on February 8th this year, the day before Ash Wednesday, the start of the Lenten season. The "Gras" or "fat" refers to the feasting before the leaner days of Lent. Some historians trace



the celebration back to the ancient Romans, who held wild parties to herald the coming of spring. But most credit French immigrants who settled in New Orleans and brought with them their 16th century tradition of masked balls and parties. When the Spaniards took over the city, they outlawed these festivities, which were reinstated in the early 1800s after the United States took control.

Today, nearly 1.4 million people visit New Orleans for Mardi Gras.

**Valentine's Day, February 14** -- This day is the third most popular holiday for gift giving (after Christmas and Mother's Day). Some 68 percent of women buy presents (spending an average of \$78); 72 percent of men are givers, spending an average of \$171. (By the way, according to the Diamond Information Center, 10 percent of the 2.3 North American million couples who become engaged every year choose Valentine's Day to do so.)

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**Year of the Rooster, February 9** -- According to Chinese



tradition, people born in this year are hard workers and not afraid to speak their minds. They are talented and passionate in their interests, with appreciation for material goods and aesthetics. On the negative side, Roosters can be conceited, impatient, and bossy. The Year of the Rooster in the Chinese Zodiac recurs every 12

years. Past Rooster years occurred in 1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, and 1993.

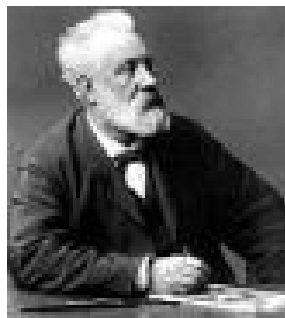
Famous Roosters include Yoko Ono, Jennifer Aniston, Steve Martin, and Regis Philbin.

### How about a heart-to-heart?

*On Valentine's Day, think about these "heartfelt" paradoxes:*

- ♥ How you can give your heart away but not be considered heartless;
- ♥ How a diminutive person can still be regarded as big-hearted;
- ♥ How we can have a change of heart without going to a heart surgeon;
- ♥ How we can be warmhearted or cold-hearted without any reference to body temperature;
- ♥ How, even if we meet a bleeding heart, there's no need to call a cardiologist.

### Father of Science Fiction



Writer Jules Verne, considered by many to be the father of this genre, was born in Nantes, France on February 8, 1828. Among his many famous novels were *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* and *Around the World in Eighty Days*. The former, his story of a nuclear submarine commander who farmed the sea floor for food and fought against the world's decadence, described

technologies and ecosystem concepts that were considered ludicrous in his time; today they are realities.

## The First Kiss

No one is certain when the custom of kissing began, but many anthropologists believe that mothers long ago would chew food for their babies, passing it from mouth to mouth. Another theory holds that kissing developed from sniffing, a common practice among many animals and peoples in primitive cultures, some of whom still rub noses as a greeting.

Romans kissed each other hello, and some believe they kissed their wives to see if they had been drinking wines. By the sixth century, kissing was an accepted expression of affection. The French introduced kissing as a part of courtship; dances were concluded with kisses.

## Beer Facts

Beer is made from barley, yeast, hops, water, and grains. Fermentation converts the simple sugars in the grains and barley into alcohol. People have been brewing beer for around 6,000 years. It is thought the Sumerians discovered the fermentation process, perhaps when a piece of bread or grain became wet and began to ferment. The oldest written recipe in the world, recorded 4,000 years ago in Mesopotamia, is for beer. The ancient Greek physician Hippocrates recommended beer as a mild tranquilizer. Today, the average adult drinks 21.7 gallons of beer each year.

Pennsylvania has had more breweries than any other state, including the oldest active brewery in the United States, Yuengling Brewery, in Pottsville. Worldwide, Belgium has the most brands of beer -- 400 -- and Czechs drink the most, an average of more than 42 gallons per adult each year.

## The History of Butter

Butter is one of humankind's first processed foods, dating back to at least 2000 B.C.E. The early Asian Indians, Hebrews, Arabs, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans used butter as food and in medicine and cosmetics. During the 11th to 14th centuries, butter was sometimes stored in wooden casks and buried in peat bogs, presumably to improve its flavour; archaeologists are still finding deposits of buried butter in Ireland and in Finland too. Today, butter consumption throughout the world is rising, thanks to an increase in refrigerators, with India accounting for nearly half of the world's consumption.

## Optimism is a career skill

Alan McGinnis, author of *The Power of Optimism*, says studies show that optimistic people communicate almost twice as effectively as pessimists. To maintain a positive outlook:

- Think of yourself as a problem solver.
- Look for multiple options when faced with a dilemma.
- Try to see the good in bad situations.
- Remember that setbacks are not permanent and mistakes can be remedied.

## Laying Down The Law

*Everyone's heard of Murphy's Law, but here are some lesser known legalisms:*

### Mitchell's Law of Committees

Any simple problem can be made insoluble if enough meetings are held to discuss it.

### Law of communications

The result of improved and enlarged communications is a vastly increased area of misunderstanding.

### Scott's Law

No matter what goes wrong, it will probably look right to someone.

### Weiler's Law

Nothing is impossible for the man who doesn't have to do it himself.

### Paul's Law

The sooner you fall behind, the more time you will need to catch up.

### Oliver's Law

Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.

### Sattinger's Law

It works better if you plug it in.

### Pohl's Law

Nothing is so good that somebody, somewhere, will not hate it.

### Fardick's Law

After things have gone from bad to worse, the cycle will repeat itself.

### Fanagle's Law

No matter what the experiment's results, there will always be someone eager to:

1. misinterpret them;
2. fake them; or
3. believe they support his theory.