

Editor's notes:

February 2008, Volume 23-5

*February, when the days of winter seem
endless and no amount of wistful recollection
can bring back any air of summer.*

-- Shirley Jackson

Cheer up! This month is not a total loss. Here are a few dates that might put a smile on your face:

Quebec's Winter 'Carnaval', February 1 - 17 -- Quebec City is the place to be for the 54th winter carnival. The carnival has always been known as a great winterfest, but this year will be even more special because it also coincides with the celebration of Quebec City's 400th anniversary. The famous Grand Parade will surprise and amaze spectators with spectacular new elements -- such as two 24-foot tall marionettes with moving joints -- creative lighting, and multimedia projections. And as always, Quebec's 'joie de vivre' will help you forget it's cold out there.

Groundhog Day, February 2 -- While waiting for the groundhog this year, consider that these hibernating mammals also go by "woodchuck," "marmot," and "whistle pig" -- the latter because groundhogs sometimes emit a loud, sharp whistle when frightened. Let's hope for clouds; legend has it that if the groundhog sees his shadow, we're in for six more weeks of winter.

Year of the Rat, February 7 -- The Chinese New Year marking the Year of the Rat -- the first of 12 signs in the Chinese zodiac -- starts today. Those born under this sign are thought to be energetic and adaptable, and they make strong leaders. Rats can be charming, but they can also be manipulative and short-tempered if things don't go their way. The Year of the Rat comes around every 12 years, and past Rat years include 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, and 1996. Famous people born in Rat years include Wolfgang Mozart, William Shakespeare, George Washington, Leo Tolstoy, Charlotte Bronte, and Truman Capote.

Valentine's Day, February 14 -- This holiday of love represents the single most profitable 24-hour period for florists and is a boon to candy and card companies.

50th Anniversary of the Daytona 500, February 17 -- This year marks the 50th annual running of the "world's greatest race," the NASCAR championship. In the inaugural race in 1959, Lee Petty went nose to nose with another driver, and it took officials three days to study the film and declare Petty the winner. Petty is the father of Richard Petty, who has won the Daytona 500 a record seven times.

The History of the Heart Shape

While it may sometimes seem that Hallmark Cards or St. Valentine himself first created the ubiquitous heart shape, historians say that it dates back thousands of years, with some anthropologists alleging that heart shapes have even been found in cave drawings. Pierre Vinken, author of *The Shape of the Heart*, says the earliest rendering was on a pottery jug produced in South America circa 1000 BCE. Most historians agree that in Medieval Europe, the heart shape was used on playing cards, tapestries, and paintings. By the 17th century, the popularity of exchanging Valentines in England helped proliferate the shape even further. But opinions differ on exactly how the shape came to be.

Here are some of the theories:

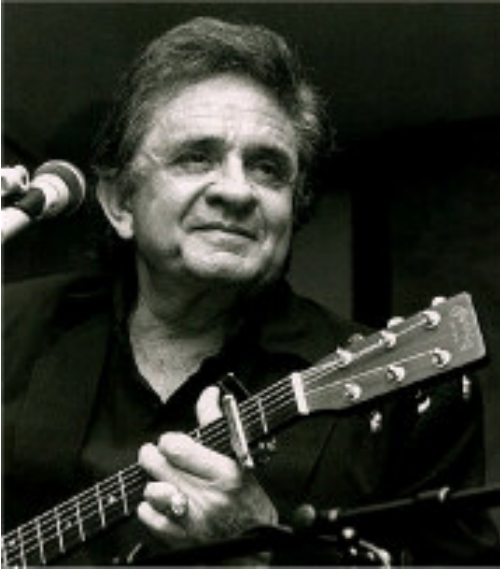
- ♥ The Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote that the heart was an organ with a three-chambered vessel with a rounded end at the top and a point at the bottom.
- ♥ In the ancient city of Cyrene in Northern Africa, coins depicted the heart-shaped seeds of the now-extinct silphium plant. These were used as a contraceptive, thus linking the shape to romance.
- ♥ The back and wings of a dove form a heart-like shape. The dove was associated with Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love.
- ♥ The heart shape may be a crude attempt to portray an actual human -- or perhaps cow -- heart.

AFI's Top 10 Musicals

If cabin fever or snow days are filling your house with the sounds of squabbling, opt for a melody diversion with one of these musicals top-rated by the American Film Institute.

1. Singin' in the Rain
2. West Side Story
3. The Wizard of Oz
4. The Sound of Music
5. Cabaret
6. Mary Poppins
7. A Star is Born
8. My Fair Lady
9. An American in Paris
10. Meet Me in St. Louis

Hall of Famer: Johnny Cash, February 26, 1932



Johnny Cash was born J. R. Cash in Kinsland, Arkansas. His parents could not agree on a name, so they used only initials. As a boy, he worked alongside his siblings and parents picking cotton and singing gospel songs. His mother taught him to play the guitar, and by age 12, he was writing his own songs.

After a four-year stint overseas in the Air Force (which didn't allow initials for a name and issued him the first name John), Cash returned home and married his first wife. He worked at a variety of jobs in Memphis while trying to break into the music business. His deep baritone voice and rockabilly style got the attention of record studios, and in 1955, Cash signed with Sun Records, a Memphis label.

His first releases were only moderately successful, but soon singles such as "Folsom Prison Blues" and "I Walk the Line" were topping the charts. Though Cash never spent more than single-night stays in jail, he greatly identified with prisoners and often performed free, most notably at Folsom Prison and San Quentin. He became identified as "The Man in Black" because of the black clothes that he usually wore as his way of identifying with the "poor and beaten down."

Cash married his second wife, June Carter of country music's legendary Carter Family, after an onstage proposal in 1968. In 1980 at 48, Cash became the youngest inductee into the Country Music Hall of Fame. Over the course of his remarkable 50-year career, he won 11 Grammy Awards, wrote more than a 1,000 songs, released dozens of albums, and sold more than 50 million records. Cash died at 71, four months after his wife's death in 2003.

Over the past 50 or so years, nearly every Canadian pop artist has recorded at least one song with the word "love" in the title. See if you can pick the missing words in these song titles from the list below.

1. _____ *Are the Ways of Love: Paul Anka, 1963*
2. *Catch the Love* _____ : *Staccatos, 1967*
3. *Love Has* _____ *Me: April Wine, 1985*
4. *Love* _____ : *The Guess Who, 1981*
5. *Can't* _____ *on Love: Gordon Lightfoot, 1973*
6. _____ *Love: Paul Anka, 1958*
7. *Sweet Love* _____ : *Stampeders, 1976*
8. _____ *Girls in Love: Loverboy, 1983*
9. _____ *From Love: Bryan Adams, 1980*
10. *Love at Last* _____ : *The Mercey Brothers, 1984*
11. *Love and* _____ : *Blue Rodeo, 1990*
12. _____ *of Love: Bryan Adams, 1987*
13. *Love Becomes* _____ : *Strange Advances, 1988*
14. *Why Do* _____ *Fall in Love?: Diamonds, 1956*
15. *Love and* _____ : *Parachute Club, 1987*

MISSING WORDS:

Sight, Electric, Understanding,
Sex, Hidin', Compassion, Lite,
Crazy, Wondrous, Remembered,
Depend, Fools, Parade,
Hot, Late, Bandit, Victim

1. Wondrous, 2. Parade, 3. Remembered, 4. Lite,
5. Depend, 6. Crazy, 7. Bandits, 8. Hot, 9. Hidin',
10. Sight, 11. Understanding, 12. Victim,
13. Electric, 14. Fools, 15. Compassion

Answers:

Mardi Gras

Mardi Gras, or "Fat Tuesday," starts on February 5th 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. In the mid-1800s, a group of New Orleanians formed to organize future Mardi Gras parades and parties.