

Editor's notes:

Psychologists say that more couples -- whether dating or married -- split during January than any other. They speculate that the stress of the holidays and the desire to make a fresh start in the new year are contributing factors.

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The Stanford University School of Business tracked a group of its MBAs 10 years after they graduated to determine what accounted for their success. Their grade point averages were not a factor, but their ability to talk to others was.

Communications experts say that when visiting a new client, engage in small talk with the receptionist, as well as the business owner or manager. If you'll be visiting this company in the future, make notes of the conversation so that you can follow up with questions such as, "Did you enjoy the vacation you were planning?"

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'January' comes from "Janus," the Roman god of gates and doors. He had two faces -- one to look in each direction, symbolizing beginnings and endings.

Here are this month's offerings:

New Year's Day, January 1 -- In some countries, this day is referred to as "Everyman's Birthday" because all citizens become one year older then, regardless of their actual birth dates. Horse racing has long observed this practice. All registered thoroughbreds become one year older on this day.

Resolution Week, January 1-7 -- According to a study by the University of Washington, over 100 million North Americans make New Year's resolutions. The study found that it's easier to start new good habits -- like exercising and flossing your teeth -- than it is to break bad habits like smoking or drinking too much alcohol and caffeine.

Gloomiest Day of the Year, January 22 -- According to the mathematical calculations of the British psychologists Dr. Cliff Arnall at the University of Cardiff, the Monday closest to January 24th is the unhappiest day of the year. Factors that make it so included post-holiday blues, the return to work, mounting bills, the challenge of New Year's resolutions, and the chilly temperatures for those in the Northern Hemisphere. But cheer up -- spring is 58 days away.

Bubble Wrap Appreciation Day, January 23 -- Engineers Alfred Fielding and Marc Chavannes first invented their sealed air product in 1957 as a textured wallpaper. That did not sell, so they offered it as insulation for greenhouses, which didn't sell either. In 1960, they convinced IBM that bubble wrap would be the perfect shipping material for the company's new mass-produced business computers. Bubble wrap has been protecting delicate items during shipment ever since.

6 New Year's Resolutions

"A New Year's resolution is something that goes in one year and out the other."

However, if you really, really, are trying to stick to some resolutions, here are a few suggestions:

1. Register to vote. As the old slogan says: If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem.
2. Get or renew your passport. In 2007, Canadians flying to the States will need one.
3. Read a really good book. If nothing in the bookstores seems appealing, check out a classic from the local library.
4. Buy a scale and tape measure. Weigh in at least once a week and use the tape measure for your waist -- more than 35 inches for women and 40 for men signifies a risk for diabetes and heart disease.
5. Plant a tree. In the spring, ask a local nursery for help in choosing a good variety for your area.
6. Write your will. This is especially important for people with young children.

For last year's words belong to last year's language. And next year's words await another voice. And to make an end is to make a beginning.

-- T.S. Eliot

H a p p y N e w Y e a r !

Famous Birthdays: *Christian Dior*

Fashion designer Christian Dior was born in Granville, a coastal town in Normandy, France, to a wealthy family. As a young man, he wanted to be an architect, but his parents urged him to study political science in hopes of a diplomatic career.



At 23, he opened an art gallery, but financial difficulties forced him to close it after several years. He sold fashion sketches to different haute couture houses and eventually became an assistant at one. When World War II broke out in 1939, Dior served as an officer for a year until France surrendered.

After the war, a textile manufacturer helped him open his own fashion house. In 1947, Dior unveiled a vastly popular dress style deemed the “New Look.” It featured a cinched waist and very full skirt. Fashion experts credit its overwhelming reception to the fact that it was a luxurious contrast to the stark fashions necessitated by war-time rationing. Royalty and Hollywood stars were among his clients.

Many also deem Dior a pioneer of license agreements in the fashion business -- with sidelines in furs, socks, perfumes, ties, lingerie, and numerous other areas -- which helped to spread the Dior brand name around the world. While on vacation in Italy in 1957, Dior died at 52 from heart failure.

Language of the Fan

In Victorian times, fans were used not only for creating cooling wafts of air but for subtle communication between the sexes. According to curators of the Royal Collection in Britain, the message depended on how a lady held her fan.

For example:

A closed fan touching the right eye: *“When may I be allowed to see you?”*

Half-opened fan pressed to the lips: *“You may kiss me.”*

Covering the left ear with an open fan: *“Do not betray our secret.”*

Hiding the eyes behind an open fan: *“I love you.”*

Drawing the fan across the eyes: *“I am sorry.”*

Opening a fan wide: *“Wait for me.”*

Fan in left hand in front of face: *“I am desirous of your acquaintance.”*

Twirling the fan in the right hand: *“I love another.”*

Drawing the fan through the hand: *“I hate you!”*

The Invention of Velcro

The idea for Velcro, that handy fastener that appears on everything from clothing to camping equipment, came from a hike in the woods. In 1948, Swiss inventor George De Mestral and his dog returned home from their walk covered with burrs. De Mestral examined the sticky seed pods under his microscope and saw the small hooks that enabled them to cling to the fabric of his trousers. He set out to make a fastener that worked the same way, using hooks and soft loops. After much trial and error, he patented his invention in 1955.

The word “velcro” -- now a registered trademark -- comes from the French words for velvet (velour) and hook (crochet). He formed Velcro Industries, today a global company that sells its products to apparel, auto, electronic, and consumer markets worldwide.

Word Origins

Here are some origins of some common words, according to the book *No Kidding? The Miracle of Language*:

- ◆ Dr. Seuss invented the word “nerd” in 1950.
- ◆ John Locke created “billion” in 1690.
- ◆ Ben Johnson invented “diary” in 1581.
- ◆ John Steinbeck created “Okie” in 1939.
- ◆ Jonathan Swift made up the word “yahoo” in 1726

Burns Night



On January 25, hundreds of Scottish clubs and societies will meet to honour their favourite poet, Robert Burns, born in 1759. Dinners begin with “piping in the haggis,” a procession of people wearing kilts, led by a bagpiper. (Haggis is a large sausage.) Then the master of ceremonies reads Burns’ poem called “To a Haggis,” cuts the haggis and says the famous

Selkirk Grace, composed by Burns.

The evening finishes with Burns’ famous “Auld Lang Syne.”

Dear Customer: In September of 2007, Helix will be 39 years old! Actually, we don’t like to use the word ‘old’ around here, because we make every attempt to be young, vital, current, dynamic -- in short all of the qualities associated with youth. We will enter the new year in that spirit, and promise you our very best, always. Have a safe and joyous celebration! **Happy New Year** from your friends at Helix Courier Limited.